

September 18, 2006

Hello, Steam Team:

Weldin V. Stumpf (1922-1990): Weldin was born on a farm on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the youngest of six children. About 1935 his family moved to Kennett Township, PA, and lived along Marshall's Bridge Road just two miles from Auburn Heights. From here he attended Kennett High School and was graduated in the Class of 1940. His future wife, Dorothy Fogg Stumpf (1924-2004) was in the Class of '42.

Out of high school, Weldin went to work for the Pennsylvania R.R. in the Wilmington Shops. Since steam locomotives were king, he soon became a boiler maker. Serving in a military railroad battalion in the European theater during World War II, he returned to the P.R.R. in 1945, and worked in the shops at Wilmington for the next 25 years. In the years before and after 1960 he "moonlighted" by working for his brother-in-law, Eugene Reese, a pharmacist in Kennett Square. My father bought his cigars from Reese's Drug Store, and Weldin soon learned that he and I had bought a steam locomotive and were moving it from Canada to Yorklyn with the hope of starting the Wilmington & Western R.R. He offered his services to get the old "steamer" running again. Through his direction and hard work, a few volunteers operated the engine on the Snuff Mill siding in the summer of 1960, but a lot more work was needed including the retubing of the boiler before it began tourist service on the W & W in 1966. During the first four years of the tourist operation, Weldin kept the equipment running- while some give me credit for starting the W & W, it would not have been possible without the knowledge, interest, and hard work of Weldin Stumpf.

Being knowledgeable on heavy steam equipment, it was natural that Weldin wanted to know more about steam automobiles. I invited him to go with me on the 1961 Glidden Tour in eastern Pennsylvania, and within 2 years my father agreed to sell him a Stanley which was considered surplus to us at that time- a 1913 20-H.P. Model 77. With help from my father, Stumpf soon had his car running, and drove it on two Glidden Tours in the mid-1960's. He also helped my father work on his quite complicated Double Steam Cars, a real challenge. Less than 2 weeks after my father died in 1969, Weldin approached me for a job, saying he had worked long enough for the railroad and that if I wanted to open Auburn Heights and its steam attractions to the public (which I had hinted I wanted to do), he would like to work for me to make that happen.

Weldin started work here in February, 1970, built the railroad trestle across the old vegetable garden, built the tunnel out of R.R. tank car bodies, supervised the building of the pond and the driveway around the house (for a Mountain Wagon route), built a model Delaware

River ferry boat that we named the "Jersey Shore", and a real steam-powered paddle-wheel steamboat that could carry about 8 passengers. A lot of steam-powered exhibits operated in the museum as well, being powered by steam from a large central steam boiler. This effort opened to the public in September, 1971, as the "Magic Age of Steam". In the summer of 1972, he and his wife Dorothy and 13-year-old daughter Joan participated with me in our Model 87 for about 3 weeks of the 8-week, 8,328-mile Transcontinental Reliability Tour for cars 1914 and older (we had the only "steamer"). After the "Magic Age" closed at the end of 1977, he and I took in Stanley mechanical work, and worked on probably 25 cars owned by others in the next several years. He also upgraded several of my cars. Retiring at the end of 1986, Weldin lived just four years, the last two in very poor health. His presence at Auburn Heights will never be forgotten. Like my father a generation earlier, he could build or fix anything.

We have completed a busy weekend, with 8 of our cars in use. Thanks are due all who worked last week and over the weekend to make this possible. The tiller-steered Model CX of 1905 was trailered to Longwood Gardens for display in front of the Conservatory, along with our Mountain Wagon which was driven over the road. The Robisons and the Reillys talked to those interested and promoted Auburn Heights for nine hours each day, Saturday and Sunday. Next weekend we do it again, probably with the 735 and the CX. Sunday was the annual Hagley Museum Car Show and 600 cars were registered from 1905 through 1986. The theme this year was "convertibles" and many fine examples were on display and in the parades. Several FAHP active members, through their membership in BRAACA (the local antique car club) are instrumental each year in helping Dan Muir, interim director of Hagley operations, stage this outstanding event. Jerry Novak was the volunteer chairman this year. We took 6 cars, 5 Stanleys and the electric. Two of our Stanleys were in the parades: the 1913 Model 78 roadster driven by Richard Bernard, and our 1908 Model H-5 "Gentleman's Speedy Roadster" piloted by Jerry Lucas. Also there were the Model K (Bill Schwoebel and Anne Cleary), the Model 607 (Rob Robison), the Rauch & Lang electric (Emil Christofano), and the Model 87 (myself). Chevonne Robison accompanied us with Rob's beautiful Cadillac convertible, Jerry Novak took his '25 Chevrolet, Bill Rule had his Morgan speedster, Emil had his '57? Chevy, Rose Ann had their '40 Packard convertible, and Sarah Stanley and Don Davidson were our guests and drove her '31 Model A pick-up truck named "Emma". I feel sorry that I did not mention last week that other members of FAHP would have been welcome to ride along and enjoy the show, as we always have enough empty seats. Please ask about it next year.

On Saturday morning, Ruth asked several of her docents to come and discuss the October 21-22 house tours. They came up with a plan which allows two bedrooms on the second floor to be shown along with the first-floor rooms. Bob Reilly has written a new release advertising our 2-day October event.

This will be clean-up week, dusting off the cars from their use, and preparing those going to Longwood next weekend. There is always minimal mechanical repair, and the H-5 will be looked over by Jerry Lucas, as he had trouble getting the fire on late in the day. Other drivers will need to address a few things on the cars they drove.

In addition, Ron Turochy and Art Sybell are still busy with "Little Toot" and Ron arranged with Shinn's Paint Store in Wilmington to donate to us the paint we will need to paint the whole train. Dale Simpkins cleaned up Locomotive #402 from the 9/10 training runs (Bill Schwoebel hopes to have more R.R. training this Saturday (or Sunday)), Ted Simpkins cleaned the water tank on the Mountain Wagon, and he and Emil Christofano made a new strainer screen for this tank. Walter Higgins lapped in the Mountain Wagon's throttle, and the "Wagon" ran 100% over the weekend.

The 1918 Model 735 is finally "out the door" but some cleaning, testing, and trim work are needed and the bonnet and hood need to be installed before it goes to Longwood next Saturday. Thanks to Jim Personti and Rob Robison, the new brakes seem the best I've ever known on a Stanley.

Bob Reilly has been concentrating on finalizing our 2007 budget in preparation for our Annual Appeal which will take place between now and the end of the year. He and I will also meet with Chazz Salkin, Matt Chesser, and Paul Nicholson on Sept. 25 to finalize our agreements with the Division of Parks and Recreation. On the 27th, about 15 secretaries working in the Division of Parks will visit Auburn Heights for an introductory tour. Jeff Bliemeister, curator of the AACA Museum at Hershey, was here last Friday, and we have arranged to lend them our Model EX from late October until April, 2007. Jeff also invited us to participate with the AACA Museum in the program they present to AACA's Annual Meeting in Philadelphia next February. This will be an excellent opportunity for us to promote FAHP among antique car collectors. Bob is away this week, nor will he be available to man our exhibit at Longwood Sept. 23-24. Bill Schwoebel and I have volunteered for part of the time, and more volunteers will be welcome. Free lunches are provided at Longwood's excellent restaurant. Happy Fall. I hate to see it come. Tom