

## March 24, 2014 Weekly News

**Ole Berner Vikre Jr. (1919-2001):** I have never known a more generous and talented man than the late Ole Vikre. A native of the Boston area, he was a civilian employee at the Charlestown Navy Yard and had a side business as a fully licensed electrician. In the former capacity, he would fly to distant places to inspect a navy ship that was scheduled to come to Charlestown for a major overhaul and to order in all the materials necessary to complete the work when the ship was in dry dock. In the latter, he rewired some of Boston's commercial buildings, which as late as 1975 were supplied from small direct-current generating plants.

In 1968, I got a call from a stranger with an unusual name (Ole), who had heard that my father, in the last year of his life, had a 1913 Model 76 Stanley for sale. He said he and his party would like to fly down in a private plane to inspect the car if someone could meet them at New Castle Airport. At that time, I had a 1964 8-passenger Cadillac sedan, and I thought I should use it for such an important party. When I picked them up, it was Ole, his brother Matthew (Bud), and the pilot, who was a good friend who had flown them down. My father was not able to meet them, but the Vikre brothers were favorably impressed with the car, and Ole said they would buy it for the asking price. I don't recall the details of how they picked it up. I think Ole knew Brent Campbell by this time, and Brent may have told him about the Model 76 for sale. Ole soon got the car running, and he used it some and then bought a Model 77, but it became apparent that his real interest was to learn how these cars were put together and to fabricate new parts exactly as they were made originally. Almost immediately, he became a dedicated friend to nearly everyone in the Stanley hobby, and his 30-year service to this group touched nearly all who owned and operated an old steamer.

An excellent machinist, Ole always wanted a challenge. First he made needle valves, throttles, steam and fuel pressure automatics, and pilots and sold them at cost to those in need. Then he copied one of Paul Bourdon's six-chime whistles and made several of them. He started repairing original Ashton-made Stanley gauges, and the Ashton people, still very much in business, suggested that Ole might make these gauges from scratch to save them the bother of individual repairing and turned over to him all the tools needed to build new Stanley gauges, correct in every detail. Ole rebuilt or supplied new gauges to dozens in the Stanley community.

Although I bought some things, Ole was always *very generous* to me. In September 1971, on the very first day of the "Magic Age of Steam" operation, he and the late George Schieffelin showed up in George's Model 735 Stanley to wish us well. When his daughter Faith lived in North Wales near Philadelphia, Ole would come to our shop unannounced and ask what project he could do for us. One day he made a jig and cut the slots in several pilot castings in almost no time flat. He would always bring a present, such as some perfectly crafted caps for water tanks on non-condensing Stanleys, some brass and some nickel-plated. Proud of his reproduction six-chime whistles, he gave me one (they sold for over \$400). He also made some 50# pilot gauges, which were (and are) very scarce and gave me two. I had a number of his throttles and automatics. When he heard I was planning a cross country trip in a Stanley and might need burner nozzles of different sizes for varying elevations, there arrived in the mail a burnished brass plate with 12 evenly spaced 1/4-28 holes, in which were screwed two nozzles each of six sizes, the nozzle size being stamped neatly on each one. My name was engraved on the plate. This was just another gift from my friend, Ole.

Ole and his wife, Charlotte, were active members of Tremont Temple, the largest Baptist church in New England. Like the Mormons, they tithed (gave 10% of their income to the church). For many

years, Ole, his brother Matt, and Brent Campbell would go on tours and to Hershey together. The Vikres's eldest daughter, Martha, had had an unfortunate first marriage, and it was a perfect match when Brent married Martha Lang in 1982 and adopted her three children. After many happy years, Charlotte Vikre passed away in the 1990s, and Ole continued to help Brent with his steamers and lived with them in Florida during the winter. He died in 2001 at the age of 81.

**Work Report:** On Tuesday, March 18, the following 12 volunteers answered the "call": Jerry Novak (in charge), Tom Marshall, Bob Jordan, Bill Schwoebel, Ted Kamen, Steve Bryce, Richard Bernard, Jerry Lucas, Ed Paschall, Ken Ricketts, Jeff Pollock, and Emil Christofano.

For the first time with its new burner, the pilot was lit on the Model K. It was a nice, blue pilot, but there was a pin-hole leak in the brazing where the nozzle housing fastens to the vaporizer, so the burner was not tested further. On the Model 740, the pilot was tested with the burner on the floor, and all looked very good. Also on this car, the right front snubber was rebuilt to match the left side. The flexible line between the engine exhaust and the condenser was found to be leaking, so this was removed for repair.

The broken pipe was repaired on our big Auburn Heights sign, and the sign is now in place. Many nice towels, donated by FAHP members, were cut up for shop rags. The heavy shipping crate to send four burner grates to California was completed. Work continued on electrifying houses on the Lionel train layout.

On Thursday, March 20, 14 volunteers were on hand, as follows: Bill Schwoebel (in charge, substituting for Dave Leon), Steve Bryce, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Tom Marshall, Jim Personti, Geoff Fallows, Gary Green, Bob Stransky, Richard Bernard, Tim Ward, Kelly Williams, Eugene Maute, and Gerhard Maute. The last set of drive wheels for Locomotive 402 were turned in our big lathe, which completes this phase of the locomotive rebuild. The three-nozzle burner castings to be sent to California were packed and sealed in the box for shipment.

The two rear tires on our newly-acquired Model 750 were replaced by good used tires gifted to us by Tom Heckman, and the car now sets on its four wheels with inflated tires, so it can be moved easily. It is destined for the Museum very soon where it will be on display as a Stanley in near-original condition. On the Model 740, the flange bolts were cleaned on the leaking flexible line. Some broken plastic track for removable letters was repaired on our big sign. A small amount of crushed stone was ordered for railroad ballast (it was delivered on Friday). We thank Yorklyn native Charlie Webb for donating and delivering this to us.

On Wednesday, Tom Marshall's Wells Cargo trailer was donated to FAHP, and it was registered and inspected in Delaware. Our larger trailer, originally owned by the late George Barczewski, has had its electrical problems repaired by Steve Bryce and Jerry Novak, and this trailer will now be inspected. On Friday, the pin hole in the new vaporizer for the Model K was repaired, and the vaporizer was installed again on Saturday.

Spring track work began on Saturday and Sunday in preparation for the AVRR operating season. About eight volunteers took part. The first trains are expected to run for the Easter Egg Hunts on April 12 and 19.