

July 5, 2005

Hello, Steam Team:

Albert Clifford William Murray (1896-1981): Clifford was a black man (we never would have called him that) who worked at Auburn Heights for 50 years. His mother, Ida Murray (1866-1953), worked for my mother as a cook, laundress, and house cleaner, and lived in the apartment over the garage from 1928 to 1933. She was a wonderful woman of the "old school", and excellent at the jobs she undertook. When my parents were looking for an outside handy man in 1929, her only son Clifford was looking for a job. Ida said she could not recommend him, but she knew he was honest. One Sunday afternoon in early September, he came for an interview which was held on the front porch of Auburn Heights (it had summer outdoor furniture, rope rugs, awnings, and rose trellises in those days). The next thing I knew Clifford was washing one of my father's Packards under the shed in front of the garage. We soon became fast friends, a relationship that lasted until his death in January, 1981.

Clifford thought he had lost his job on New Year's Day, 1930. He had taken my grandmother's cousin, Gertrude Whittock, back to her apartment in Media, and was returning alone in my mother's 1929 Packard sedan, when he turned over on the ice on Miller's Hill, just east of Kennett Square. He was unhurt and the car was restorable; he made up for this mishap many times over in the years to come. My mother called him "Clifford", my father "Cliff" or "Murray", and I had many names for him, as he did for me. Some of mine: "Cliffey", "C. Murray" (the way he signed his name), and "Crimmin". His names for me included "Jack" and "George". He was known all over Yorklyn as Cliff, and very popular with the local population. He was a pillar in Chippey Chapel A.U.M.P. Church and the black community in Hockessin. I got him into trouble more than once, such as the time I dared him to jump across the mill race in his hip boots. He made it, but sprained his ankle.

During World War II, Clifford could have gone to work in the mills for a lot more money than he was making here, but he stayed with my parents because he knew they needed him. In the 1930's he had helped my mother with her rock gardens, and after the War he helped my father with his antique cars, in addition to his other duties including some house work. When he could no longer work every day, I encouraged him to come when he felt like it, and this he did until 1979, 50 years after his first visit. At his funeral service, the family asked me to sit with them in the front row, and I was honored to do so. I've been wanting to tell you about my friend Clifford for a long time; he was very special.

Independence Day has come and gone, and it was a glorious Fourth. The F.A.H.P. participation in the Hockessin parade was the

largest ever: there were 11 of our cars, plus Jerry Novak in his '25 Chevy, Rose Ann Hoover in her '40 Packard, and Chuck Erikson in his '72 Eldorado. All made it to Mitchells' for ice cream after the parade. The only mishaps occurred to yours truly, who lost a hub cap from the Model K somewhere on the road, and who backed into the garage door at Auburn Heights with the Model 87 in the evening before going to the Fireworks display at Hockessin in the evening. Rob Robison and I hunted for the hub cap between here and Mitchells', and the two Steve Jensens did the same on Yorklyn Road and the parade route, but with no luck so far. As to the other problem, the garage door is slightly damaged, but the car appears to be unscathed. There are always excuses, and mine is the pedals jumped into reverse when I applied steam to pull out. Fortunately, I have found a hub cap correct for the K. Many thanks to all who drove and prepared cars for the Hockessin parade, and congratulations for a job well done!

I don't know that this has been an official event for us, but the Rockwood Museum's parade and Ice Cream Festival is this Saturday, July 9 (the festival continues through the 10th). The parade is very short, less than one mile, and starts near the intersection of Philadelphia Pike and Washington Street Extension, about 12 miles from Yorklyn. If anyone is interested in attending, drivers are asked to line up by 10 A.M. Saturday. The cars are parked and on display following the parade. Some "freebies" are promised.

This week, we can clean up and go over cars from yesterday's activity, take down any remaining red, white, and blue decorations, continue with track work, and replace the vaporizer on the Model EX. In addition, those planning to attend the annual Steam Car Tour in Connecticut July 17-23, will have some more minor "prepping" to do on the Models 87, 76, and 725. The 725 needs a little pilot work. Bob Wilhelm is helping with the circuitry for the Auburn Valley signals, and we may be ready to start installing signal foundations and begin ditching for installing wire by the end of this week.

We are trying to develop a Logo for the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve, and a few suggestions prepared by Bob Bruce, a friend of Mike Jones, have been on the bench in the garage. Bill Schwoebel and the Management Group would like more input from our members, so if you can sketch or draw, please let us have your ideas a.s.a.p. Anne Cleary has called an Events Committee meeting at her house for July 12 at 7:30, and I would like to establish some shop and mechanical practices. This may not require a meeting, but can be discussed with the working members at the next few work sessions. Bill Schwoebel met Jean Toman yesterday and she has agreed to meet with us in a few days to discuss future publicity for our events. We also have had an offer through John McNamara to help us, especially regarding public service radio spots. Finally, we'll set a date for a general membership meeting, but this may not be until late July at the earliest.

Enjoy the Good Ole Summer Time.

Tom