

MARCH 17, 2008 F. A. H. P. NEWS

A Winter Trip to Sunny California: For the first ten days of February, 1957, I visited California to call on three friends, do some sightseeing, and enjoy the mild winter climate. As a travel agent, a rental car and lodgings were free, but domestic airlines would not give agents a discount (foreign carriers would give complimentary trips off-season). I flew from Washington to Los Angeles on a night tourist flight for a one-way fare of \$160. This was a few years before the advent of commercial jet airplanes, and the night flight on an American Airlines DC-6 stopped at Love Field in Dallas enroute.

As dawn broke over Arizona, I told the stewardess I was a travel agent, and asked if I could visit the cockpit. In a moment, she came back and invited me up. The captain was an older man nearing retirement and the co-pilot told me we were flying with one of the pioneer American Airline pilots, his number 45 designating he was the 45th pilot American had hired. He circled over Palm Springs, situated against a mountain, before we landed at Los Angeles about 7 A.M. I transferred to a new Hilton Hotel in downtown L.A., and enjoyed a Gray Line Tour (also free to agents) of Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, etc. on a beautiful day.

The next day I picked up a '56 Plymouth with bald tires from the Avis agency, which I was to drop in San Francisco about 8 days later. I planned to visit Bill and Peggy Carr in their new home in Pacific Palisades- they had occupied our third floor apartment at Auburn Heights during World War II when he was a captain in the Air Transport Command, flying out of New Castle Air Base. I called and Peggy said to come on out. When I knocked on the door, she invited me in and told me Bill had been killed the day before in an air crash; he was a test pilot for Douglas Aircraft. I felt terrible, and asked what I could do for her. She said it would be a big help if I would take her 11-year-old son, Dick, for the day. We went to the Port of Los Angeles where I had a pass to board one of the Matson Line's new ships, the *Monterey*, about to go into service between California and Australia-New Zealand. I felt awkward to spend the night in the Carr home, but she insisted. The next morning, I said good-bye and headed for San Diego, and then back to Disneyland.

Disneyland was 1-1/2 years old and it was off-season. I had a great time, especially talking to the steam railroad people and those who ran the *Mark Twain* steamboat. Someone told me I should go to Walt Disney's home about 10 miles away where he had a 1-1/2"-scale steam railroad (this was 3 years before the building of the first "Auburn Valley"). I didn't have nerve enough to do that, so I went to Knott's Berry Farm, where they were running a 3-foot gauge steam train from Colorado and several Cretors Steam Popcorn Wagons. Then I visited an old army buddy, John Longley, in Porterville, CA, where an excellent full breakfast cost 88 cents. John passed away about 4 months ago.

I wanted to visit Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, adjacent to one another in the Sierras south of Yosemite. Rain turned to snow above 4,000 feet, and when I reached Giant Forest Lodge in Sequoia at about 7,000 feet elevation, it was coming down an inch every five minutes. No one seemed to be around, but I was undaunted and headed onward toward Kings Canyon. Soon I was driving in snow nearly a foot deep with bald tires (and of course only rear wheel drive). Ascending a very long and steady grade I finally lost traction and had to stop. I couldn't start again, and there may not have been anyone within 10 miles. I decided to reverse to the bottom of the grade, which was nearly two miles back. Taking it very easy, and holding my breath, the second time I made it, went over the highest point, and started to descend toward Fresno in the valley. Below 4,000 feet, it was raining again, and this persisted as I drove to Merced and into Yosemite Valley. I stayed at the wonderful Ahwahnee Hotel with its huge fireplaces keeping the lobby warm.

The last couple of days were spent in the Bay area, where I stayed at the old Palace Hotel on Market Street in San Francisco. Liking movies as I did, I saw *Oklahoma* for the very first time at a theatre near the hotel. On a Sunday, I drove to Sunnyvale and visited an old Roswell (NM) friend, Anthony Rippo, and met his wife Ollie and their 5-year-old son David for the first time. Before I turned in the car, I crossed the Bay and visited Barney Becker at the former Doble Steam Car factory in Emeryville. Unfortunately, he had not driven his F-model Doble to work that day from his home in Walnut Creek, as he did frequently. Again on an overnight flight, I flew from Oakland to Washington, with a connection to New Castle Airport, to end a pleasant and memorable ten days.

A lot of meetings are coming up, 3 of which are sub-committees working on the Strategic Plan. Jerry Novak has called the Buildings and Grounds sub-Committee for Tuesday, March 18 at 5:30, Steve Bryce has scheduled the Program sub-Committee for Thursday, March 20, at 4:30, and Larry Thurrell has planned to meet with his Development sub-Committee on Tuesday, March 25 at 4:00. Anne Cleary has the monthly Events and Scheduling Committee meeting scheduled for Tuesday, March 25, also, the latter time being 7:00 P.M. All the above will be in the F.A.H.P. office on the second floor of the Carriage House.

In addition to the above, the third lecture in the series on Stanley cars, this time by Bill Schwoebel on burners, will take place in the Museum's reception room on Thursday, March 20, at 7:30 P.M. Bill has a tentative date to take our Model EX to Allentown on Friday, March 21, where it will be on loan for several months to the new America-on-Wheels Museum. The annual *Friends Forum*, comprised of "Friends" groups in the Delaware State Parks, will be held at Poly-Tech High School in Dover on Wednesday, March 19, at 4:30. We are hoping Richard Bernard, Art Sybell and Catherine Coin can attend. If anyone else would like to go, he or she is welcome (up to 5 total).

Tom