

March 19, 2007

Hello, Steam Team:

We have just had the first snow and ice storm during Daylight Saving Time since World War II and it hates to leave. My experience with "time" over the years has been of some interest. In fact, the establishment of time zones in this country in the 1880's made it possible for railroad schedules to have some credibility.

In the 1930's when I was young, Wilmington and certain other places like Hockessin and Yorklyn in the northern part of the State observed Daylight Saving Time but the rest of the State did not. No one in the farming community (even around Hockessin) wanted anything to do with it. Some called it "fast time" or "new time". It went into effect the last Sunday in April and terminated the last Sunday in September. The Penn-Del Twilight League, popular with local trapshooters, began its weekly shoots the first Tuesday after Daylight Time began and usually terminated in early August. These usually got under way about 5:30, and had three good hours of daylight. We spent several summers in Rehoboth in those days. Weekly and sometimes twice-weekly, my father came home to attend bank board meetings in Kennett Square. Since Rehoboth was on Standard Time, he had to leave about 4:45 A.M. in order to be at his meeting by 8:30 D.S.T.

War Time, the same as Daylight Saving, began about 6 weeks after Pearl Harbor in the middle of the winter. I was at Mercersburg Academy that year and I recall going to the 8:00 A.M. class in the dark. The idea then was two-fold: to save electricity, and to give more time in the evening to work victory gardens (small truck patches recommended to raise much-needed food). Much of the garden work would have been done during Daylight Saving Time anyway, but at least War Time made it universal. Later I was told that around New York City they had "double Daylight" in the summer, but I can't verify that. Most places on earth were an even hour from Greenwich Mean Time, and this was the case in the continental U.S. and Canada. Hawaii, however, was 2-1/2 hours behind the West Coast. Time was very important in weather forecasting, and especially in aerial observing, in both of which I was involved. Number-coded weather reports were sent each hour by teletype from and to reporting stations all over the world, and from planes of reconnaissance squadrons in far-away places. Our B-24 "weather plane", flying mostly out of Guam, carried a crew of 10. In the U.S., most of these stations during the war were on air bases, army and navy. The first numbers of each coded message were for the date and time.

When Lincoln left his Springfield, Illinois, home for Washington in 1861, he was scheduled to speak in many cities and towns along the way, sometimes from the back platform of the train and sometimes from a hall or stage in the town itself. People often waited for hours to hear and see the president-elect. Part of the problem was that they didn't know what time it was, and that Lincoln didn't know, either. His most recent speech may have been at a place that was 15 or 20 minutes out of phase with his current one. We have come a long way; we are now set until sometime in November without changing our clocks. The trouble is, the weather outside has not caught on.

Speaking of weather, the railroad car painting, scheduled for last Saturday, was canceled. I know Anne Cleary and Art Sybell are anxious to get going on this again, so stay tuned. Herb Kephart modified the vaporizer for the Model K Stanley, Kelly Williams installed it, and we fired the car last Thursday night. We are not sure whether the smell is completely stifled, but it seems more manageable. Tomorrow night, we'll go at it again. I fired up the Model 76 yesterday and all seems good around the boiler and fittings. The safety valve let go at just over 500# and it wouldn't seat after that. This is Bill Rule's project, as he recently rebuilt the valve. I got the bonnet on today, and I may have it recovered by tomorrow night. If so, the car can be fired up again for further testing. I fear the water tank is leaking, so this may have to come out for repair. Bucky and I got the tank back in the Model 71 today and it needs to be hooked up. We have the floor in half the garage prepared for painting, but the cold weather has delayed it, as we want the building to be well-ventilated when we paint. Bill Schwoebel and Steve Bryce installed the rebuilt water level indicator on the 735, and it should be ready to go. Rob Robison reports that he is planning to complete the wiring soon. Jerry Lucas and the two Arts have lubricated several Stanleys and Jerry adjusted the reverse linkage on the Model 607. Richard Bernard is working on several small things on the Model 78 roadster and Mark Hopkins plans to finish the wiring on the 740. Dale Simpkins and Butch Cannard have taken the water column apart on the Mountain Wagon (at my suggestion) and found nothing wrong or choked up. That needs to be re-assembled. Anne Cleary and Steve Jensen have been painting the steam locomotives and they look very nice.

Six of us are signed up to go to the Friends Forum this Wednesday at 4 P.M.: Richard Bernard, Mark Hopkins, Steve Bryce, Rob Robison, Art Wallace and myself. Next Sunday, the 25th, a "Roarin' Twenties' car from here is supposed to be at Harry's Savoy Grille for the Hospice benefit, 11:00 to 2:00. The Steam Car Tour Committee is "digging in" with several sub-committees working on various facets of the June tour. 2007 memberships are rolling in; about 35 have renewed so far. Is yours included? Betty Hoffmeister plans to come Thursday to process these memberships. Many thanks and welcome to spring! Tom