

June 6, 2005

Hello, Steam Team:

Very frequently I think about June 6. 1944, that is, THE LONGEST DAY. During the summer of 1943, those of us in Pre-Meteorology School at Brown University speculated and bet informally on where the Allies would invade Hitler's Fortress Europe.

Our guesses included everywhere from Greece to Scandinavia. Early on Monday, June 5, 1944, I, along with about 225 others, were commissioned 2nd lieutenants in Walker Memorial Hall at M.I.T. We had 10 days' "delay enroute" before reporting to our new location to forecast weather (in my case, Roswell, NM). Naturally getting home a.s.a.p. was of top priority, and I had hoped to take the noon train out of Boston which arrived in Wilmington about 7:40 P.M. However, my uniform, being made by "Chappie" Robertson, a one-armed tailor of Summer Street in Boston, was not ready (enlisted men had their uniforms provided; officers had to buy theirs). It could not be picked up until late afternoon, which meant the 11:00 P.M. train was the best I could do. I lugged all my other belongings to South Station and checked them into a locker, and then went to the movies to put in time. The night train was due in Wilmington at 6:06 A.M., and my father was always glad to meet me, regardless of the hour (no doubt telegrams and night letters were the means of communication). Just before 6:00 with the train right on time, I carried my several heavy duffle bags or whatever they were to the vestibule at the end of the coach, so I could throw them off onto the platform when the train made its brief stop at the P.R.R. station (now the Amtrak Station). The operation was successful and Dad was there. It was a typical June morning, and there had been very early morning showers. My mother had prepared a sumptuous breakfast, which we began before 7:00. We had the radio on, and the news was coming through that France had been invaded by the Allies. We soon learned it was Normandy, but the early news was speculative and inconclusive. Having been up all night, I went to bed for a long nap. That afternoon, nothing else was on our minds. How bad was the slaughter?

Had a beachhead been secured? Looking back to 1944, it seems to me it was at least 10 days before the Allies broke out at all, and made it inland more than 3 or 4 miles. Not until 1996, when Ruth and I toured southern England, did I realize how many British ports sent boats of all kinds to participate in the invasion. Every little cove or port along the English Channel, plus more on the Bristol Channel and even on the south coast of Wales sent help and reinforcements. I recall hearing that a few weeks after D-Day, the port of Cherbourg was handling more traffic than the port of New York. It all began on June 6.

Last Thursday night, June 2, we had one of the largest work sessions ever. 22 volunteers were here and worked on numerous projects, accomplishing important things. On Saturday I took the Mountain

Wagon to Greenbank Station of the Wilmington & Western to help them with an invitational event to gain financial support for the railroad. Fortunately, I was reminded Friday of this commitment, which I had forgotten- thus no mention of it last week. Jerry Novak joined me on very short notice, and loaded passengers, described our place, and handed out flyers, as only Jerry can do so well. On Sunday afternoon, 3 Stanleys were traveling locally for driving lessons, with students Hoffmeister, Robison, Baldwin, McNamara and Erikson and teachers Lucas, Schwoebel and myself. Butch Cannard printed a new supply of flyers for us. Be sure you pick up some this week if you can use them to good advantage!

Upcoming Committee Meetings: Publicity Committee, Tuesday, June 7, at Anne Cleary's home. Committee Chairs of Management Group, Tuesday, June 14, in the Museum. Please check Bill Schwoebel's E-mails regarding correct times. Committees of the Board, June 15 and 16 in the Museum. Board of Directors Meeting, Thursday, June 16, 7:30 P.M. in the Reception Room of the Museum.

June Events to be supported or attended: Wilhelm's Gas Engine Show, June 11 and 12 (morning and afternoon). New Garden Airfield's Annual Air Show, Sunday, June 12, 11:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. (or something like that). Burn Prevention Foundation Concours d'Elegance at Lehigh University, Sunday, June 19 (Bill Schwoebel and Butch Cannard plan to take our Model 71 which has been accepted). Also, Sunday, June 19, Fatherfest at the Helicopter Museum near West Chester (late morning-early afternoon). Tuesday, June 21, presentation on steam locomotion to Cub Scouts Encampment at Banning Park (John McNamara and myself). Thursday, June 23, Ice Cream Run with several of our cars to the Creamery at Woodside Farm, early evening. Saturday, June 25, Wilmington Rotary Club "charter event" at Auburn Heights, 5:00 to 8:00 P.M. Sunday, June 26, "Steamin' Sunday" at Auburn Heights featuring Independence Day, Chuck Erikson, chairman for the day. We would like to see good attendance from our group at these events, and encourage you to "sign up" if you can go with us, or volunteer for events at Auburn Heights Preserve.

We have talked about meaningful work projects for our evening sessions, and assigning interested volunteers to these projects. We would hope to have about 6 of these ongoing, with timetables of anywhere from a week to 3 months for targeted completion. At present, we don't have 6 to suggest, but here are 3: 1) Replacing all old track sections which still have 2 x 2 ties (there are probably about 12 sections without the tunnel and 30 if the double track through the tunnel is included). 2) Mechanical restoration of our Mobile Steamer (first will be to drop the burner and inspect and test the boiler). 3) Installation of our signal system for the A.V.R.R. (Ed Hoffmeister is already well along on this project). THANK YOU.

Tom

