

APRIL 13, 2009 F.A.H.P. NEWS

Easter Sundays, 1926 -1939: Yesterday, Ruth and I enjoyed a pleasant Easter Sunday and a delicious dinner at her niece's home near Harrington, DE, as we have done annually for at least 20 years. It reminded me of Easters of long ago when my 3 cousins and I, all born in 1924, would be the beneficiaries of Easter Egg Hunts made possible by our parents. Unfortunately, my father took home movies of all of them.

My recollection is that Easter was seldom a pleasant day, weather-wise. It was usually cold and windy, but that did not deter us. Often one or more of "we kids" would be sick, and the hunt had to be postponed for a week or two, but never canceled. Sometimes it was held at my cousin Eleanor Marshall's parents' home in Yorklyn, and sometimes at the twins Bob and Alan Mancills' parents' home at Mendenhall (PA), but it seemed over half the time it was at Auburn Heights. All these properties had big lawns with lots of bushes, highly suitable for hiding eggs. Unfortunately, as with all home movies, the adults did all they could to stay out of the picture, so there is little footage to show our parents in action. Once in a while my mother and my aunts appeared briefly, and my grandmother Marshall ("Lizzie") appeared once about 1928. My father never showed up, as he was the photographer. There was entirely too much footage of the kids' meanderings- very uninteresting for viewers, then and now.

In 1926, Eleanor and I, being 8 or 9 months older than the twins, were running around hugging each other while the twins were located in an express wagon, and reasonably comfortable to stay there. Eleanor's sister, Lorraine, was becoming quite a young lady at nearly 14, and the twins' big brother, "Normie" Mancill, was 11. They tried to play "catch" with some sort of ball, but neither was very good at it. The "hunt" was more of a charade than anything else, but Eleanor and I seemed to be hunting for something in the bushes around Auburn Heights.

As we grew older, year by year, the hunt became more competitive, but there never were winners or losers. All of us were dressed up in our very best: the women with nice dresses, long overcoats, and fancy hats, usually with beads or a plume or something, and the men with their best business suits, white shirts, dark ties, long overcoats, and felt hats. Even we kids were dressed in our best, but as the day wore on were often a "sight" after frolicking in the yard at top speed. If only I could have dressed like my father and my uncles! (I always hated short pants).

In the 1930's, the Easter Egg Hunt alone was not enough to keep us occupied, so peddle cars, velocipedes (tri-cycles), express wagons, and scared white rabbits were introduced into the activities. When we became teen-agers, we were really not interested in hunting eggs any more, but we enjoyed each others' company, and the adults didn't want to give up on the idea, either. 1939 was the last year. Feeling quite like adults, and dressed nearly like them, we smiled as we rolled eggs toward a target a few feet away to see how many we could get into a marked circle on the grass. The smile was to indicate that we were really too mature to do this silly stuff, but we would comply one last time for the faithful photographer. Coincidentally, my father lost interest in taking home movies about that time, and allowed me to practice with his Bell & Howell movie camera that I enjoyed very much, off and on, for many years. 16 mm. movie film was expensive, especially after color was available, which limited my movie-taking.

Hopefully, the railroad crew is ready to start moving toward the opening of the Auburn Valley, at least for training, in May. This work entails the usual track maintenance, a considerable amount of work on Jim Sank's diesel locomotive on lease to us, and the rebuilding of the turntable, some by outside contract. Art Sybell has offered to get out the old model "Landenberg Branch" stations to touch up so they can again be located along the Auburn Valley main line, and a flat car with a different seating plan is being studied to accommodate people with special needs. Today, Butch Cannard and I tried to adjust the Mountain Wagon steering gear box, it can be looked at in more detail tomorrow night at the work session, and then the car needs to be tested on the road, not only for the steering but for the mesh of the rear engine gear as well. Steve Bryce and Walter Higgins have taken most of the parts to be used in our "hands on" Stanley engine display (for the museum) for a thorough cleaning in Walter's parts-cleaning tub. When everything looks satisfactory to them, the engine will be re-assembled, a wooden stand made for engine and rear axle, and a crank arrangement fabricated so it can be turned over by hand, to educate the public on how a Stanley engine propels a car. On the Model 607 project, Bob Jordan and Steve Bryce have assembled most of the parts to be nickel plated, based on Charlie Johnson's advice on what is correct for this 1914 model. Anne Cleary chaired a good Events Committee meeting last Tuesday, and refinements to this year's schedule of events and charges for same were finalized.

On Thursday, April 16, at 5:00, the Executive Committee of the Board will meet in the FAHP office. That same evening during the early period of the work session (6:30-8:00?), Ruth Marshall and Dan Citron will appreciate some help in the house for the polishing of silver pieces on display before the house opens for the season (for two special groups) later this month. Ruth will have all necessary supplies.

Rob Robison is assembling articles for the next edition of the "Herald". We have the lead article written by Dick Wells, and Mike May has offered to do the technical article. Catherine Coin and I will be helping Rob gets things together, as his business is taking most of his time right now, and he has limited hours to work on the Herald for the next two months. If any of you have thoughts or articles you'd like to submit, please let one of us know so we can consider them. Time is of the essence, as we hope to get the spring edition out in early May. Articles written from a woman's point-of-view will be especially appreciated. Tom