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Open Air Theatres: For the very first time, I saw an open-air theatre in the outskirts of Columbus, Ohio, just before World War II. It has been said that California led the Nation in many new innovations, but I found that certain Midwest cities also led the East in things like rental cars, trackless trolleys, and in types of recreation. By the summer of 1946, retail stores in Columbus seemed to be back to pre-war normalcy, long before sought-after goods were readily available in the East.

My first real experiences with open air theatres, however, occurred on the islands of the Western Pacific. Other than playing gin rummy and other card games (and an occasional soft ball game), the main outlet for a soldier's recreation was going to the movies. In the Army Air Force toward the end of the war, almost every squadron had its open-air theatre, crude as it may have been. On one of our first nights after arriving on Guam, a friend and I decided we'd go to a movie in a theatre of an adjoining squadron, probably only ¼ mile away. As we approached, the heavens let loose and we got soaked. To our amazement, no one paid much attention to the heavy shower; it was certainly not going to deter attending a movie show. We sat down on crude benches like all the other patrons, and enjoyed the picture and the fact that the rain had stopped. As the crowd left in the dimly-lit area, we realized that we were in an all-black squadron area, but nobody seemed to care. We were all there for the same reason and needed entertainment.

The theatre in our 55th Weather Reconnaissance unit was only about 50 yards from our barracks, and, with a different movie each night, I missed very few of them. Most of my friends went as much as I did. We knew every Hollywood actor and actress, no matter how minor. By late summer of 1945, our theatre had been improved so that the screen was surrounded by something like a stage in a real indoor theatre. Since I had nothing to do after being grounded with asthma, I applied for theatre manager, or something like that. My job was to exchange the films daily with a library on Harmon Field, and to operate the projector, which seldom worked properly. When the sound went bad, everyone yelled at the projectionist to correct the problem, which was usually impossible. There was a cartoon in "Stars and Stripes" showing a projectionist with film strewn all over the theatre, and he was up front trying to describe the movie's content to his audience. I never had to do that. At a commissary on Harmon Field (it may have been the same place where we exchanged films daily), they had spare projectors, and some technicians who supposedly could repair them. So, the next night, I would try again.

After the war, open air theatres appeared by the thousands in the U.S. Top-rated films were often shown there. Most who read this will remember them, and special experiences they had with their favorite girl. I went to many, but, so far as

I can remember, I only had a date on one occasion. We saw James Michener's "Hawaii" at an open-air theatre near Dilworthtown on Route 202. The open air craze faded by the 1970's, in many areas because the real estate was too valuable to devote for this purpose. As late as 1998, however, Ruth and I stayed at a motel at Monte Vista, Colorado, where we began and ended Bob Reilly's Steam Car Tour, and although we couldn't hear, we could watch the show at the open air theatre next door from our motel room.

Work Nights: Last week Bill Schwoebel and Tom Marshall worked on the 87, replacing a connecting rod on the engine, adjusting the pump drive and improving the pilot. Steve Bryce and Ted Kamen installed the new perch pole on the Model 76, and Lou Mandich, Jerry Novak and Bob Jordan finished installing the brakes on the car and started bleeding the lines. Richard Bernard cleaned out the burner forks on the 740. On the Model 725, Jeff Pollock and Art Wallace patched the hole in the smoke bonnet; Kelly Williams reattached the fuel lines and, with help from Bob Stransky and Tim Ward, fired up the car and took it for a successful test drive. Bill Rule worked on the EX, cleaning the check balls on the water pumps and replacing the check ball on the fuel pump and oiling the engine. Emil Christofano and Jeff Pollock continued reassembling the rear suspension of the Rauch & Lang. Butch Cannard and Bob Wilhelm began work on programming the signal system for the AVRR. Mark Hopkins continued securing the upper-level track bed on the museum's train layout.

Last week volunteers prepared for three events. Bill Schwoebel, Jerry Novak, Dan Citron, Dave Leon and Bob Jordan took the Model 87 to Old Dover Days on Saturday and had a successful day giving rides to 417 visitors. Also on Saturday, Steve Bryce and Tom Marshall took the Model 71 to Winterthur Museum for its Historic Autos Display. On Sunday, seven Stanleys and two Packards made the trip to Winterthur's annual Point-to-Point. The weather was near perfect, and the visitors kept the group busy answering questions concerning the cars and museum. We enjoyed snacks throughout the day and a nice lunch catered by the Boxler's. Many thanks to Rose Ann, Susan and all involved for the refreshments and to the hard work of the volunteers for making the weekend events a success. Sunday was a perfect day. Bill Rule and the Model EX had a minor problem on our return from Winterthur, but all is well now.