

March 12, 2007

Hello, Steam Team:

Having made many trips in Stanley cars over the years, including my first "Trans-Con" Tour from Montreal to Tijuana in our '12 Stanley (total mileage 8,328), it seemed I should use my '32 "yellow Packard" for such a trip. I was not sure this "modern" Packard would make the trip challenging enough, but it turned out to be both challenging and very enjoyable. In late July, 1974, a trip was planned with my good friends, Pownall, Peggy, and Andy (age 13) Jones from here to northern New England, where we were to meet Frank and Eloise Gardner and their friends the Fishers who planned to travel in Frank's '29 Packard 7-passenger touring car. When we got home, we had covered 1,280 miles.

The Packard was running well as we left home on a hot summer afternoon, but it started to miss and soon snorted to a stop near Boyertown with the fuel line vapor-locked. Although leaded gasoline was still in use, the regular octane of 87 proved too high for the Packard, originally designed to run on 76-octane fuel. Sunoco sold a lower grade rated at 86 octane, and we put in as much as the tank would hold after only 45 miles. We were able to putter along through the afternoon until a heavy thunderstorm occurred in the Rip Van Winkle country, and the cool, damp air made the Packard run 100% again. We spent the first night at Kingston, NY.

The next day we crossed the Hudson and made our way through the northwest corner of Massachusetts and into Vermont. We were expected at Woodstock, summer home of the Gardners, by dinner time. In mid-afternoon, another hot day, we paused at Plymouth, Calvin Coolidge's birthplace, to tour the 3 or 4 buildings open to the public. As we got into the Packard to leave, we were surrounded by many spectators, and as I tried to start the car, white fumes arose from the louvers in the hood; obviously the carburetor was flooded and the fuel was running across the very hot manifold. We expected fire to break out in the middle of the crowd of tourists, as the motor wouldn't start to get away from them, but the car would DRIFT, and it was down-hill. Successfully we drifted 1/10 of a mile away from the throng and I stopped and raised the hood. That was what the raw fuel needed: a little air to light it off, and we had a FIRE! I asked Andy Jones to run up the street to a restaurant and get a fire extinguisher, and he was fast; so fast that he photographed the conflagration and then took off for the extinguisher. He got back quickly but the fire was subsiding and we decided not to douse it. The needle valve in the carburetor had apparently stuck open and the bowl had filled and run over, with the electric fuel pump continuing to feed the fire.

The paint on the top of the hood was badly blistered, but no other damage was done. I called Frank Gardner, told him of our plight, and asked if he would drive to Plymouth (about 15 miles from Woodstock) to follow us in, as I was not sure we would make it. This he did gladly but we made it on our own power to his private garage in Woodstock village. That night he allowed me to use his lathe to reface the point on the needle valve, and we had no more serious trouble on our trip (we had vapor-lock

one more time at the top of the Mohawk Trail on our return). Peggy Jones sewed a yellow banner that we tied across the top of the hood to hide the blisters, and we labeled it "1932 Packard".

After spending 2 nights in Woodstock, we drove with the Gardners and Fishers to the White Mountains of New Hampshire and stayed at the attractive Spalding Inn, just down the road from the Mountain View Grand near Whitefield where the '04 Steam Car Tour was headquartered. In gorgeous weather we left Whitefield after two nights, said good-by to the Gardners and the Fishers, and drove to the Old Tavern at Grafton, Vermont, another very enjoyable spot. On our last night away, we splurged and stayed at the Lake Mohonk Mountain House in the Catskills. On August 4, my mother's 89th birthday, we arrived home in the evening after coming through rain and flooded roads on the final portion of the trip. It had been a wonderful week.

Meetings and work projects moved along well last week. The Events Committee met on Tuesday night and the Steam Car Tour planning committee on Thursday. From the latter, some assignments were made to get things rolling on the overall operation of the tour. All active volunteers will be queried soon about their desired participation the week of June 18-22, in helping handle our visitors and in driving or riding in our cars on the daily tours themselves. Once we have an estimate of the number of volunteers wanting to be involved and on which days, we can work out the details and what cars we will be using. There will be a questionnaire enclosed with your new membership card. It appears we will have a large and exciting tour. Watch for details!

An efficient work party Saturday morning (Rob and Chevonne Robison, Brent McDougall, Art Sybell, Art Wallace, and Steve Jensen) under the direction of Anne Cleary sanded, cleaned and prepared the wooden R.R. cars for priming and painting. Kelly Williams removed the vaporizer from the Model K, and Herb Kephart has modified it for better alignment, nozzles to mixing tubes. This can be replaced this week, and the burner tested. The Model 76 is ready to be fired up for initial testing since installation of the new boiler. The hood has been lined with FiberFrax and a new layer of DipLag applied to the insulation on the boiler of the Mountain Wagon, all done by Dale Simpkins and his son Ted. Dale is also cleaning the water column, as we believe it may be choked in the bottom of the boiler. The "kidney gaug" water level indicator from the Model 735 has been rebuilt and the magnet intensified by Steve Bryce, Bill Schwoebel and Butch Cannard, and this, too, is ready for installation on the car. Jim Sank has striped much of the body, so the striping is almost complete. Art Sybell has the lumber on hand for the building of a new closet in the Museum for storage of Gift Shop items. Emil Christofano and Jerry Novak have taken or sent most of the exhaust system from the '32 Packard to Borla East in New Jersey for the correct fabrication of a new stainless exhaust assembly. The working groups of Walter Higgins, Jerry Lucas, and Rob Robison have quite thoroughly lubricated our condensing cars, and volunteers Art Wallace and Art Sybell have become professionals at this work. Mark Hopkins has been assisting Walter and Rob with electrical wiring on these cars and Steve Bryce has checked the loose wheels on the 725. A few things on the Models 607 and

78 are also being addressed. We are awaiting the return of the new water tank for the Model 71, after which this car can be finished and made ready for the season. Steve Jensen has painted the boiler jackets on both locomotives, and Joe Boxler and Ted Simpkins have helped with many projects. These teenagers are always glad to help out wherever needed and they are good! I often overlook the hard work of Butch Cannard in many areas, including computer trouble-shooting and printing of FAHP literature. Rose Ann has taken apart one of the Museum exhibits and is preparing for a minor face lift there for the 2007 season, and she has received an estimate for installing a new ceiling in the main room and reception room. We are not sure we will be able to accomplish this work immediately. Dan Nichols is usually on hand to help where needed, and the faithful Chuck Erikson and the Maute brothers continue their diligent sorting and filing of shop items and important literature. It is good to see Bill Schwoebel getting better with each visit, and we were especially glad to see Jim Personti back on Thursda night, thanks to his friend Jeff Fallows. I fear I have missed someone; it is dangerous to mention names for chance of omission, but it is also important to recognize the contributions and dedication of our corps of volunteers. THANK YOU, one and all!

Bob Reilly leaves for Colorado tomorrow, to return about March 23. The Friends Forum at Blue Ball Barn is on Wednesday, March 21, starting at 4 P.M., and so far Steve Bryce, Mark Hopkins, and Rob Robison have indicated their desire to attend. We can send one or two more if any of you would like to go and learn what other Friends groups are doing in the many Delaware State Parks. Just let me know by E-mail or by phone at (302) 239-6379. On Sunday, the 25th, we are scheduled to take a car, either the 740 or one of the Packards, to the Hospice benefit at Harry's Savoy Grille on Naaman's Road. Tom