

March 20, 2006

Hello, Steam Team:

The first third of a "tour of a lifetime" in a 1912 Stanley, made in 1972, was described in the "News" of January 2. The second third has been a long time coming, so if you need to refresh, our website will do it for you (January 2 edition of the "News").

From June 13 to July 3, 1972, we had traveled from Yorklyn to Montreal, Minneapolis, Billings, and Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone National Park. After celebrating the 100th anniversary of Yellowstone on the Fourth of July, we headed through the beautiful Grand Tetons and then west into Idaho, with overnight stops at Idaho Falls and Sun Valley. Heading south from Sun Valley, there was a stretch of 120 miles between Twin Falls and Wells, NV, with no towns showing on the map. How would we get water for the steamer in this dry desert? Others on the tour offered to carry 5 or 10 gallons each and leave it alongside the road about half-way between. Before we left Twin Falls, however, we heard that a gambling place had sprung up at a place named Jackpot, just inside the Nevada border. Jackpot saved the day, as there were several buildings, a couple of which had running water. We took on enough to take us into Wells.

Again heading west across Nevada, we followed the old Overland Route of the "City of San Francisco", paralleled by that of the "California Zephyr", both crack trains still running in 1972. With a strong head wind all the way, we made it into Reno after overnight stops at Elko and Winnemucca and a brief visit to Harrah's Museum at Sparks on the edge of Reno. At one of our lunch stops at Lovelock, NV, a bouncer at a casino threw a couple of bags of rock salt into his water softener to accommodate our needs. At Reno, Weldin Stumpf, a former railroad boiler maker, decided he should open up the Stanley's boiler to see how badly it might be scaled from all the alkaline water we had been using. Surprisingly, he found it very clean; the precautions we had taken, plus the daily blow-downs, had been quite successful. So, we rented a car for the afternoon and went off to sightsee at Lake Tahoe and Virginia City.

The greatest challenge was still ahead. The tour route called for us to cross the Sierras at Tioga Pass, elevation 9,945 feet, the eastern gateway to Yosemite National Park. Leaving Reno at 5 A.M., we were in Lee Vining, CA, nearly 150 miles to the south, at 11:20 and took on water. Not 100 yards later, the steep mountain road began, with a climb of nearly 6,000 feet in elevation in the next 12 miles. The Stanley, heavily loaded with all our tools, spare parts, four people and their luggage, and full tanks of water, never gave up. About 8 miles up, we stopped, jacked a wheel, pumped water for 10 minutes or so, and then went on to the top, crossing the pass at 12:30.

Dropping 6,000 feet again into Yosemite Valley, 60 miles ahead, took

all afternoon, as before any brake modification on our 1912 car, we had only the two wheel rear mechanical brakes and the compression of the engine (in reverse) to hold us back. Not many of the multitude of people in Yosemite Valley that night paid any attention to us, but it had been a great day, and one of the most memorable accomplishments I have experienced in a Stanley.

The route from Yosemite to the end of the tour in San Diego was relatively uneventful. Spending two very hot days and nights in the Central Valley (at Fresno and Porterville), we stayed at the new Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, visited Disneyland, and on the final day went into Mexico and had lunch in Tijuana. The final banquet of the 4,100-mile tour from Montreal was held at the Sheraton Hotel on Harbor Island in San Diego, and all 21 cars that started had finished, almost half with perfect scores. The Stanley was PERFECT! The final chapter, 7 weeks from now, will bring us home.

We still need tourists to take the bus trip with us to the B & O Museum in Baltimore on Saturday, April 1. Rob Robison reports there are still seats available on the 49-passenger bus, which will leave the parking lot opposite Auburn Heights at 9 A.M., and return about 4 P.M. The cost is \$22.50 for members and \$32.50 for non-members, with a \$4 discount for children in both cases. The rate includes round-trip on the bus plus admission to the Museum. We are promised that the train there will be running (the first day of its season) and the car shop will be open. I met Dave Shackelford, curator of the Museum, Saturday night at the Wilmington & Western banquet, and he is looking for us. Lunch is on your own- most will want to take advantage of the railroad cafe at the museum. Get in touch with us by March 23 if you can go!

Our four travelers returned home from Amelia Island last Tuesday, with our Models K and 71 in excellent condition. They had perfect weather, an excellent show, and a good time. Congratulations to Bill Schwoebel, Bill Rule, Butch Cannard, Jerry Novak, and Emil Christofano for carrying the day for us, representing well the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve, and for taking such good care of the cars. Butch remained in Florida and is expected home in early April after a trip on the Amazon River in Brazil. As reported last week, Bob Wilhelm won a prize and was amply recognized for the restoration on his Model 735. Tuesday and Thursday nights were good work sessions with a lot accomplished without me. The flu bug finally hit, but all is well now and I'm back to normal, whatever that is. Bob Reilly organized the evening on Tuesday and Bill Schwoebel on Thursday- many thanks. Bob flew home last Wednesday after an intense 5 weeks on the job, and will return again this Wednesday, 3/22. He plans to attend 3 "State" meetings in two days, Thursday and Friday. Mark Hopkins will accompany him Thursday evening, and I Thursday morning (at Bellevue) and Friday afternoon in Dover with Chazz Salkin.

Chuck Erikson and Dale Simpkins have agreed to co-chair our

June 3-4 public opening at Auburn Heights. We are seeking an important theme for this weekend. The AAA magazine has promised us an article just before this date, so that should help attendance. We've talked about some "hands-on" things that young patrons can enjoy which won't be that difficult for us to do. We'll be pulling everything together in the next month or so. Bill Schwoebel and Steve Jensen have also checked over the A.V.R.R. track and made notes of what work must be done before operation begins. The train is scheduled to run on April 30 for the Wilmington Friends School charter; then again, probably on May 15, for pre-schoolers' rides.

Rob Robison is beautifying many things under the hood of the Model 735, which he wants to complete before we set the boiler back in.

Walter Higgins has the burner about completed except for insulation. Bob Wilhelm was here last Thursday, and with several witnesses inspected the inside of the boiler again after our attempted cleaning process. I've been trying to do more washing this week with limited success, and I think we'll now have to fire up the car after all is back together, blow it down several times, and think the boiler is then satisfactory. John Hopkins was here Saturday, removed the hood and bonnet from the Model 725, and disconnected the piping at the top of the boiler. That car will be moved to the upper garage this week for its boiler change.

In about a month, the second edition of the "Auburn Heights Herald" is due out. We are endeavoring to get outstanding articles written by experts on appropriate subjects. Rob will be asking several of you to help, and I know you will. Mike May, our director from northern Michigan, plans to be here about March 29 and stay until after the B & O trip on April 1. At least two Board committees on which Mike serves plan to meet during that time. Stay tuned, and best wishes to all. Tom