

**The Alaska Highway:** In the late 1930s, Canada began construction of a major highway artery to connect Edmonton, the capital of Alberta Province, with the U. S. Territory of Alaska. Utilizing existing roads, such as they were, from Edmonton some 350 miles northwest to Dawson Creek, barely in British Columbia, the main “Alcan” highway with completely new construction would cover another 1,700 miles to Delta Junction, Alaska, where it would connect with the Richardson Highway, recently built by the United States, from the port of Valdez to the inland city of Fairbanks. The first major hurdle was crossing the Peace River, less than 50 miles from Dawson Creek, and a massive bridge was built, hundreds of miles from the sources of material. Late in 1939, however, when Canada entered World War II on the side of Great Britain, the emergency was in Europe, and the building of the Alcan Highway was put on hold.

Early in 1942, soon after Japan had attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor, two American islands in the western Aleutians were occupied by the Japanese, and it was feared the aggressors would attempt to invade North America through Alaska. The U.S. Government had little trouble in convincing the Canadians to expedite completion of the Alcan Highway, to be done on Canadian soil mostly by U.S. participation and expense. With a massive effort, the 1,700 miles of the Alaska Highway (the name Alcan was seldom used thereafter) was opened from Dawson Creek to Delta Junction in record time. Already connected to the port of Valdez and to Fairbanks, a branch off the Richardson Highway went westward to Anchorage and its major air base being built there. Army 6 x 6 trucks and other heavy vehicles could move, through Canada, from the Continental U.S. to its prized but vulnerable territory of Alaska. The total distance from Edmonton to Fairbanks was about 2,150 miles.

This part of North America was not completely new to continental Americans. When gold was discovered near Dawson City (no connection with Dawson Creek) on the Yukon River in the Klondike in 1898, the lure of instant riches brought thousands seeking an easy fortune. In those days, access to the Klondike was by boat to the port of Skagway in Alaska, then a 100-mile trek over White Pass to Whitehorse, a thriving frontier city on the Yukon River, wherefrom steamboats operated downstream (north) to Dawson. The narrow-gauge White Pass and Yukon Railroad opened within a year, making the journey over the pass much easier. Over 40 years later, the Alaska Highway would touch the Yukon River and pass through Whitehorse, then capital of Canada’s Yukon Territory, but Dawson City was off to the north with no strategic importance except to tourists.

I had always wanted to drive the Alaska Highway, but it was not to be. Ruth and I did finally get there in 1988, but with a large tour traveling in deluxe motor coaches. Even then, it was a 45 m.p.h. road, mostly gravel requiring massive scraping each spring. We came from Skagway on a good road over White Pass, parallel to the tiny railroad, and joined the Alaska Highway at Whitehorse. A few tourist facilities had been developed along the road, including a small town called Beaver Creek, where the tour company had built a primitive lodge. While we had good weather during our trip, heavy rains in the area caused massive mud slides that closed the highway just before we came along. The tour company did its best to find small airplanes to ferry passengers to and from the nearest air strips across to the other side, where another set of tour buses were also stranded. We flew in an eight-passenger plane, got a beautiful view of the countryside, and soon were on our way again toward Delta Junction and Fairbanks.

My Landenberg friend Oliver Eastburn and his wife, Edna, had two unmarried daughters living in Anchorage (one was an M.D., the other a C.P.A.), and the senior Eastburns drove over the highway in their motor home each summer for many years in the 1980s. About 1996, Ray Carr drove a specially made Stanley Model 70 from Anchorage over the highway and on to Bar Harbor, Maine, a trip of about 5,000 miles. I understand the Alaska Highway is now paved all the way.

**Work Report:** On Tuesday, June 24, 10 volunteers were on hand, as follows: Jerry Novak (in charge), Bill Schwoebel, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Steve Bryce, Dave Leon, Mark Russell, Ken Ricketts, Jerry Lucas, and Kelly Williams.

Several worked on the left rear wheel problem from the Model 607. It was determined that the wheel was really not damaged except for chipped paint, but that one of the wheel bolts had come out and several of the nuts on the others were loose. The other three wheels were thoroughly checked, the nuts were torqued to 40#, and lock nuts and Loc-Tite were used on the rear wheels. The 1/8" pipe extension from the safety valve was screwed back in place. The left-side hand brake rod was not properly connected, so this too was hooked up correctly.

Something caused the fuse to blow in the circuit to a stop light on the Model 735. The wiring was checked out. The Model 76 was "prepped" for the Independence Day parade in Hockessin, soon after which it will be loaded in one of our trailers for the trip to the annual Eastern Steam Car Tour at Lakeville, Connecticut.

One of the garage closets was cleaned out and made ready for a new coat of paint in connection with our new parts storage area at the north end of the carriage house. Window air conditioners were installed for the summer in the shop and museum. A load of scrap metal was taken to the scrap yard, for which FAHP netted something over \$350. Numerous brass flare fittings were removed and saved from old copper tubing destined for scrap.

On Thursday, June 26, 14 volunteers were on hand for the work session, plus five or six more who worked the children's field trip that morning, which included a train ride on the A.V.R.R. Those at the field trip included Dave Leon, Ed Paschall, Jerry Novak, Ann Bryce, and Linda Herman. At the evening session, the following took part: Tim Ward (in charge), Steve Bryce, Bill Schwoebel, Lou Mandich, Ed Paschall, Richard Bernard, Bob Jordan, Jim Personti, Eugene Maute, Gerhard Maute, Mark Russell, Dan Citron, Bob Stransky, and Tom Marshall.

The high-speed clutch was adjusted on our newly acquired Model T Ford. Our FAHP Library is being augmented by permanent notebooks illustrating some of the "Weekly News" editions of the past 10 years. The old snack bar, recent location of our parts storage bins, has been thoroughly cleaned, except for waste oil drums and will be used primarily for storage of gift shop items and outdoor Steamin' Day supplies. Two small things on the Model 607 are being brought to conclusion: 1) the electric switch-box installation and 2) the repair of the speedometer drive.

The Model EX was fired up and driven several miles for the first time this year. Except for pumping more cylinder oil than necessary, it ran like it just came out of the factory in 1908. On the Model 735, a new 30-amp fuse was installed, and a battery-disconnect switch was inserted. On the Model 740, the absorbent sock was replaced in the water tank, and the tank gauge was removed and cleaned. The tire pressure was checked on several cars. More final painting was accomplished on the north side of the garage.

The pipe rack in the "railroad shop" (under our regular shop) has been stripped of excess material, much of which was scrapped during the week. There is about 1,400 linear feet of 1/2-inch steel boiler tubing on hand, for which we would like to find a buyer. Also excess to our needs is a 1 1/2-inch-scale locomotive boiler, suitable for a 4-8-4 steam locomotive similar to those on the Auburn Valley Railroad. Special volunteers Linda and Bob McGovern and Tim Nolan continue to work on special projects or with chartered groups that visit Auburn Heights.