

FAHP News, October 5, 2015

Delayed in Oil City: I was enjoying my second Transcontinental Reliability Tour for cars made in 1914 and earlier, chaired by Millard Newman under the auspices of the Veteran Motor Car Club of America. It was 1979, and the tour began in Key West and ended in Halifax, Nova Scotia. A complete digest of this tour was covered in “Weekly News” stories of 2/15, 3/1, and 3/15, 2010. Traveling in our Model 87, I had the company of another steamer, Brent Campbell’s Model 76, on the tour of nearly 4,000 miles. My companions were Gerry Brady and Jules Reiver, one at a time.

We had trouble on the Blue Ridge Parkway, long before reaching Oil City in northwest Pennsylvania. The new rims furnished by Elster Hayes, maker of wood spoke wheels for antique cars, were not heavy enough for our Stanley with its special tanks to carry 140 gallons of water and 43 gallons of fuel, in addition to our luggage, tools, and spare parts. Weldin Stumpf, then working at Auburn Heights, brought the rear wheels, rims, and tires from my 1912 Mountain Wagon to the spot on the Parkway where we were stranded, and we used these wheels and tires for the remainder of the trip. The front wheels were green with white sidewalls; the rears were red with black tires. With that emergency change, we were still on schedule and had not lost points for being late at our many check points.

In Pennsylvania, we were en route from Uniontown to Niagara Falls when our tour spent the night between at the Holiday Inn in Oil City. Soon after our arrival, I was called to the phone with Brent Campbell on the other end. He had broken something in his engine about 30 miles behind and was temporarily out of business. I was not of much help on the phone, and of course nothing of that kind could happen to me. Jules Reiver (my passenger) and I left Oil City the next morning in high spirits. About eight miles later, as we were crossing the Allegheny River on a long truss bridge, there was a jolt, the car came to a sudden stop, and the left rear wheel rolled on ahead unattached. The axle had broken just outside the wheel bearing, and our Stanley was blocking one lane of the two-lane bridge. So much for a perfect score.

Several cars on the tour stopped to help. Herb Lederer of Illinois, driving an early Cadillac, had several in his party along with his motor home pulling a trailer accompanying the tour. With manual help from several tour members, our car was moved on its three wheels into Herb’s trailer, and we heard from some locals that there was a one-man machine shop in the small town of Rouseville, a few miles off the tour route. Herb Lederer and his entourage delivered us to this shop (Mrs. Lederer even fixed us lunch in the motor home), and they were on their way. The problem was, it was then the afternoon of July 3. Everything would be closed on the Fourth.

The shop’s proprietor was an older man who lived next door and said he wasn’t going anywhere and would stay with us until we were back on the road. He went to his scrap pile and found a bar of steel he thought would be okay for the left half of the Stanley’s axle, which had broken. Jules and I got everything apart as fast as we could, and that evening our machinist friend was turning the bar to fit. He must have lent us his car, as we returned for a second night at the Oil City Holiday Inn about 2 A.M. On the morning of the Glorious Fourth, we were putting everything back together, and shortly after noon we were ready to fire up. The machinist and his friends needed a ride, which took valuable time, but his charge was extremely reasonable. By mid-afternoon we were on our way and made a fast run to Hamburg, New York, before darkness set in. The next afternoon we arrived at the Inn in the Park in Toronto, where, dead tired, we caught up with the other tour members who had spent a free day in that Canadian city.

As had we, Brent found a local machine shop that got him back on the road in about 24 hours, and he soon caught up to the tour. The last several days before we reached Halifax, however, he had a leaky boiler and nursed it along to make it in on his own power. The Model 87 was running well again, and we covered the last 66 miles from Truro to Halifax in 90 minutes, including the final two miles through the city to the Nova Scotian Hotel, the official end of the tour. On our way home, I showed Jules Reiver 70 m.p.h. for a couple of miles across southern Nova Scotia en route to the ferry at Yarmouth. I used the Model 87 a lot during the next two years, but the axle shaft made by our friend near Oil City broke in the same place near Stroudsburg,

Pennsylvania, en route to the 1981 Steam Car Tour at Sturbridge, Massachusetts. The next time, with the help of Frank Cooke, it was “fixed right.”

Work Report: On Tuesday, September 29, 13 volunteers were on hand, viz: Ted Kamen (in charge), Steve Bryce, Richard Bernard, John Bacino, Mark Bodenshtab, Paul Kratunis, Dave Leon, Brent McDougall, Mark Russell, Bob Stransky, Mac Taylor, Tim Ward, and Jay Williams.

Locomotive 401 was cleaned from its test runs on the previous weekend. The Lionel electric train layout was prepared for its use on October 4. The Mountain Wagon was also prepped for its runs on our upcoming Steamin' Sunday. The backfiring burner problem on the Model 740, having developed on its recent Dover weekend run, was studied, and a solution was decided upon. Great effort is going into getting the final work done on the Cretors popper so it can be displayed at our Steamin' Sunday, October 4. It is shaping up well and will be a real asset for FAHP when it is completed and operational.

On Thursday, October 1, nine volunteers were on hand: Steve Bryce (in charge), Kelly Williams, Tom Marshall, Ted Kamen, Mark Russell, Brent McDougall, Dave Leon, Bob Stransky, and Jim Personti.

The new throttle installation on Locomotive 401 was adjusted, which involved some modification in the linkage. It was then tested on air, and all appears to be good. The front truck on this engine was also checked over to make sure it is still in place (it checked out fine).

On the Model 740, the burner forks were removed, the copper washers annealed, and a bracket moved slightly to allow the fork nut to be pulled up tightly to make the seal. The area was then plastered up with a mixture of mineral wool and paste, and the burner is ready for testing. The Cretors assembly is nearing completion. The roof supports were fine-tuned for a proper fit, and the roof and engine were installed.

On Saturday, Mark Russell and Steve Bryce completed the final phase of the cosmetic restoration and the unit will be on display at our Sunday event. It is planned for initial operation at our Halloween event on October 25. Don't miss it!

We are pleased to report that Brent McDougall has finished his radiation treatments and is starting to feel better. Although with some pain and a lot of weakness, he has worked on the Auburn Valley every week through his treatment period, and we wish him a full recovery.

It is with sadness that we report the passing of Devon Hall's father, after a two-week bout with cancer. We extend our sincere sympathy to Devon, her mother, and the Hall family. Devon had just settled on her first home, located in Bridgeton, New Jersey.

Dan Citron, formerly of Delaware State Parks, worked his last day at Auburn Heights on Tuesday, September 29. Dan came with us seven years ago as Historical Interpreter for the site, but since the position of Park Superintendent had not been funded, he had to do it all. In addition to his specific duties of supervising the Preserve, preserving the furnishings and collections in the mansion, and training the docents for its interpretive tours, he was an active volunteer with FAHP and became proficient in the maintenance and operation of many of the cars in our collection. We congratulate Dan on his new position as Director of the New Castle Historical Society, and we wish him well. He plans to continue his volunteer activities with FAHP, and we hope to see him often. He will be missed.