

June 4, 2007

Hello, Steam Team:

**70 YEARS AGO:** In 1937, the Depression had been around for 7 years (some think it started in '29, but the stock market crash was at the end of October, '29, so 1930 was really the first year). Some feared it would last forever. Government support and welfare as we know it today was non-existent. I was with my father one day when he stopped in at the Packard agency in Wilmington and salesmen like Warren Collins and Byron Rawson had long faces. Apparently there was very unfavorable economic news, but this 13-year-old did not understand the full meaning. It was hard to sell Packards or even Studebakers in that environment.

Everything was not bad in '37, however, and there was hope on the horizon. More cars were built and sold than any year since 1929. Most auto manufacturers were rapidly improving their products and styling was changing, too. The large and heavy American cars were being phased out. It was the last year for Pierce Arrow and Cord, and Locomobile, Franklin, Duesenberg, and Marmon were already gone. It was the last year for the big Model K Lincolns, and the Cadillac V-12's were a thing of the past. Although Packard built more Twelves in '37 than in any other year of the 1930's, they, too, along with 16-cylinder Cadillacs, were soon to be gone forever. Production was 'way up among the more economical cars. Chevrolet had an excellent year (and built a fine product for \$700), and competition was keen from Ford and Plymouth in the same price range (the Studebaker Champion was not introduced until '39). For under \$1,000 you could own a new Pontiac, Dodge, Nash Lafayette, Studebaker Commander, Oldsmobile, or Packard Six. These were all 6-cylinder cars except the Fords, which were all V-8's. In the \$1,200 range were many more choices: Buicks, Oldsmobile Eights, Packard 120's, DeSotos, Lincoln Zephyrs (V-12's), Chrysler Royals, and much of the Nash line.

My father had taught this writer to shoot clay targets in 1934 at the age of 10, but 1937 was the first year I could handle a real 12-gauge trap gun. I won some Class D trophies at Wilmington and at Maplewood, NH, that year. There were some very poor scores in between, and for the year I averaged about 75%. At Yorklyn that year, Phil Miller of French Lick, IN, won the 500-target "Marathon" with a score of 498. Not knowing my father was a Packard dealer, the next day he bought a new Cadillac from Delaware Motor Sales. Charlie Jenkins of Wilmington won the Delaware State Trapshooting Championship in 1937 with a score of 195 out of 200 on the new grounds (in 1934) of the Wilmington Trapshooting Association on Basin Road near New Castle. I watched him shoot the last 100, where he broke 99. We shared the same birthday, but he was born in 1893. Unfortunately, he never shot that well again. I loved trapshooting and it was easy for me to remember dates and scores.

My father had his shop built on the end of the Carriage House in 1937, and 1-1/2 new bathrooms were added to Auburn Heights. For the first time, I had my own bathroom complete with a shower! The old Wilmington Friends School which had started in 1748 at Fourth and West Streets in Wilmington closed in June in favor of a new campus in Alapocas. Having just completed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I had mixed feelings about the old and the new, but looking back after 70 years, we had more fun at the old school. My father and his siblings, along with their Mitchell and Marshall cousins, had ridden the train from Mill Creek (Hockessin) and Yorklyn to attend the old Wilmington Friends School in the days just before and after 1900.

This week and next will be BUSY in preparation for the Steam Car Tour that officially starts on June 17<sup>th</sup>. Bob Reilly is working tirelessly to get the Tour Book finished and to the printer's by Thursday of this week. I would hope that this week we can complete all mechanical work on the cars to be used on the Tour, and that Thursday, 6/7, those not attending the Events Committee meeting can begin placing the cars in their proper museum locations. Our Ice Cream Run tomorrow night, 6/5, will be a good test for those cars to be used the week of the Tour. Next week will be our final preparations for getting Auburn Heights ready to receive our guests on June 18. On Tuesday, 6/12, the cars and other museum items can be cleaned and polished and probably on Thursday, 6/14, Bob can use help in assembling the 70 or so Tour Kits which must be put together before June 17. If everything is not on hand by Thursday evening, some of you may be asked to come on Friday or Saturday to help with this detailed assembling.

Bill Schwoebel is "on top" of lining up the needed volunteers for Monday, June 18, at Winterthur (coffee stop) and Auburn Heights (somewhat more than a coffee stop). Please don't just show up to work that day; we need to know whether you plan to help in advance so we can order the necessary box lunches. If you intend to come and have not yet let Bill know, please advise him immediately. He has enough help, but we don't want to exclude anyone who had planned on it.

John Hopkins can use a few helpers to park trailers near the hotels on Saturday afternoon and especially Sunday afternoon (6/16 and 6/17). Please let John (or the FAHP office) know if you can help either day. Bob Reilly can use two or three volunteers to help give out the tour kits in the lobby of the Marriott Courtyard, one of the "tour hotels". This is mostly on Sunday afternoon, 6/17. In addition, we may need a few volunteers to keep the oil-dry and kitty litter available to the steam car owners and to keep the water hoses operable. We may need one or two volunteers each day who are willing to stay at a central point (probably Auburn Heights) with our trailer rig to retrieve any steamers that have broken down on their tour routes. We will need about 6 (2 shifts of 3 each) volunteers at Granogue on Wednesday, 6/20, to park the cars on the grounds, and possibly a few more to help the duPonts entertain our tour. Possibly one or two may be needed at Hagley on Wednesday as well.

Bob Reilly wants me to emphasize that he needs to know, almost immediately, the meals you want to reserve during the tour. This includes the opening banquet Sunday night, the closing banquet Friday night, and the catered lunch at Granogue on Wednesday (this is a \$40 package including the Hagley Museum admission). You should have a form to provide this information. Please get it in if you will need tickets to these events. The lunch on Monday is free for all volunteers who will be helping that day.

Finally, as mentioned above, Anne Cleary is calling a meeting of the Events Committee for Thursday evening, June 7, at 7:30 P.M. in the Reception Room of the Museum. There should be plenty of seats available for any who wish to ride along on the Ice Cream Run tomorrow night, June 5. Cars should leave Auburn Heights by 6:45 at the latest, and plan to leave Mitchells' not later than 8:15 on the return. For those getting off early enough, our circuitous 10-mile outbound run is desirable, but others can go direct. If it is raining or threatening, call (302) 239-6379 to ascertain whether the Run is on or off. There has been a problem with accessing the "members only" section of our website. The correct password is modelex. Tom