

Building a Modern Steam Car: People frequently seem surprised that I don't get excited about the prospect of having a modern steam car. While nothing is impossible, I think it highly improbable that such a vehicle will be available for purchase in the foreseeable future. My father and I were not always this negative, however. When a "modern car" was a 1940 Packard, he converted a Model 180 (top of the line), with the expectation that it might give him the smooth power of steam with the advantages of a comfortable ride, good headlights, and 4-wheel hydraulic brakes. While this conversion did run and was not a complete failure, it was a disappointment to my father, and he turned his attention to other projects. Bill Rule, an active FAHP volunteer, now owns the "Packard Steamer."

There has never been a time since the last Stanleys were turned out in 1924 (1926 if you count the Steam Vehicle Corporation of America production) that someone has not been experimenting with a modern steam car. The famous Dobles, built in California, were described in the *Weekly News* of January 22, 2007. Also, some of the steam car owners installing "new inventions" on their condensing Stanleys in the 1930s and 1940s were mentioned in the "News" of March 11, 2013.

The Stanley Company reestablished itself in Chicago in 1927, after the last "SVs" were built in Allentown, Pennsylvania, the previous year. Correspondence turned up between my father and the Chicago company that year, in which my father inquired as to whether they could furnish a 30-H.P. Stanley boiler. They replied that they could (I think the quoted price was \$160), but nothing further transpired; I have no idea why my father had an interest, as it was about nine years after he had been selling new Stanleys and 13 years before the collecting period began. The company held on in Chicago, and about 1935, it advertised a streamlined steam-powered bus, but it is very doubtful any were built. Robert L. Lyon, founder of the Steam Car Club of America, collected what he could find from the Chicago operation in the late 1950s.

Eugene Delling, a German-American from the Camden, New Jersey, area, built a few Delling Steam Cars in the 1926-28 period. The literature showed them to be attractive sedans with styling of the period, but none have turned up in recent times. Delling attended a small steam car meet we had at Auburn Heights in 1949.

Harry W. McGee of Milwaukee installed his modern boiler and burner design in a Stanley chassis before World War II. Charles Keen of Madison, Wisconsin, built two steam car conversions before and after that war. The first was placed in a Plymouth coupe of about 1938, and it was not simply the old Stanley system. Although the car may have had a Stanley engine, the boiler and burner were completely different. Keen's second car was a sleek speedster of European design known as the Keen Steamliner. Keen, too, attended a steam car meet at Yorklyn (without his car), and the Steamliner was owned for many years after the owner's death by Robert C. Barrett of Angola, New York.

Thomas S. Derr, mentioned briefly in the March, 2013 "News," offered Derr Steam Cars in the late 1930s and early '40s. Usually employing a Stanley engine, he recommended a water-tube boiler (much harder to "scorch" than a Stanley) and his own atomizing burner. Although my father and I rode with Mr. Derr in a converted 1932 Chrysler roadster that seemed satisfactory, some of his conversions were completely impractical. Harold Marcotte used an atomizing burner and his own boiler design in a 1920 Model 735 Stanley touring car, which had very low ground clearance. Forrest R. Dietrich of Ohio, not a relative of the builder of Dietrich bodies, intended to go into production with a Dietrich steamer in 1956-57. He brought his prototype to a steam car meet at Kent, Ohio, and although it ran, it was not a

success. Harry Peterson of the Detroit area, later of Mississippi, put his power plant in Barney Pollard's 1919 Stanley about 1953 and later built a rather good Peterson steamer that would easily run 55 m.p.h. and hold steam pressure.

Twin brothers Calvin and Charles Williams of Huntingdon Valley near Philadelphia set their sights on building a modern steam car in the late 1940s. Their efforts probably came closer to success than any others since the 1920s. Essentially they had a flash boiler and an atomizing burner powering a high-speed steam engine built from a Ford V-8. First this plant was in a '49 Ford sedan, in which the brothers traveled from their home to Kent, Ohio, and return at a good rate of speed with no trouble (so they said). Their second venture was a two-passenger sport car with fiberglass body and an improved version of the earlier power plant. Finally, the Williams' took orders for their steam car and attempted to collect substantial deposits from at least 10 prospects. That was about 1964, and my father was one of five or six who put up a deposit. Unfortunately, the venture did not succeed, and the greater Williams family, nearly bankrupt by this time, gave up trying to market a modern steam car.

The U.S. Government appropriated some money in the 1970s for the development of city buses powered by steam (supposedly to fight air pollution), and the appropriation was spread between three companies that said they could do it. The best known of the three was Bill Lear of Reno, who had successfully manufactured small jet airplanes and who had already spent several million dollars in an attempt to build a modern steam car. While all three projects got a bus running and a few were tested in San Francisco, nothing came of this effort. The government operation at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, also spent taxpayer money and put a steam plant in a VW Beetle. I saw it tested in 1980 in North Carolina. Steam flew everywhere, but the Beetle hardly moved.

Work Report: On Tuesday, July 30, 14 volunteers were on hand, as follows: Dave Leon (in charge), Art Wallace, Bob Jordan, Mark Russell, Ted Kamen, Jerry Lucas, Tim Nolan, Gary Green, Jeff Pollock, Richard Bernard, Steve Bryce, Lou Mandich, Ken Ricketts, and Tom Marshall.

The Lionel layout was prepared for the two upcoming days of operation, and the track was further insulated for sound. Positive work continued on the Stanley Model 607, with final installation of the gauge glass for the water tank, attachment of running boards and moldings, and fabrication of a new backing plate for one of the door handles. Burner and pilot work was done on the Model 740. A load of shingles along with a good supply of coal (delivered by Lou Mandich) were moved into the "engine house" for the upcoming A.V.R.R. operation, and both locomotives were oiled and greased. A hot water line in the shop was repaired.

On Thursday, August 1, 12 volunteers were on hand, as follows: Tim Ward (in charge), Eugene Maute, Gerhard Maute, Richard Bernard, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Geoff Fallows, Jim Personti, Dave Leon, Gary Green, Emil Christofano, and Tom Marshall. Final cleaning of the museum and its cars was done in preparation for the three consecutive days of visitation expected on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The Mountain Wagon, the Model 735, the Rauch & Lang electric, the two Auburn Valley locomotives, and the popcorn machine were made ready for use. The headlamps were properly fit and installed on the Model 607, as were the brackets for the Prest-O-Lite tank and the spare tire. A new 30-H.P. burner pan, being prepared for use on our new three-venturi burner for our Model K, was examined to decide how it can be cut down to properly fit the grate and the inside pan. Filing work was completed in the library, and the railroad flangeways were cleaned for the weekend operations.