

## **MAY 31, 2010 F.A.H.P. NEWS**

**Marvin W. Klair (1913-2007):** The word “unique” is over-used, but Marvin fit the definition perfectly: “one of a kind”. There will never be another like him. I first knew Marvin and his late wife Olive about the time the Brandywine Region (BRAACA) was founded in the late 1950’s. They had just lost their old home and part of their farm to the new Milltown Road, and Marvin had given up his dairy operation. They built two ranch-type homes next to the old barn, and they fell in love with old cars and those who owned them.

Marvin and Olive participated in BRAACA activities from the beginning, and about 1964 he bought a 1918 Stanley steamer from my father (now owned by Bob Wilhelm) to add to his growing antique car collection. Marvin’s approach to the Stanley was unorthodox as it was to most things. He devised a method of securing the burner to the boiler with the liberal use of chicken wire, a procedure which required about 4 days to attach the burner, as opposed to the usual 2 hours. He found or fabricated a bull’s head to screw on the condenser’s filler cap (a radiator cap on a conventional car), so that when the car moved the chuffs from the exhaust caused the bull to snort steam from its nostrils. Once on a tour in Canada with his steamer, he bought fuel from an Indian, only to find it was bunker “C” instead of kerosene. Another time he siphoned stagnant water from Lake Como in Smyrna, sucking scum, not water, into the water tank. Marvin enjoyed things like this much more than having his car run well.

When Marvin was president of BRAACA (1964-1966), to many members he WAS the Brandywine Region. He reached out to eastern Pennsylvania, to south Jersey, and to neighboring Maryland for new members and built up BRAACA’s membership to nearly 300. Through his friendly and amusing personality, and through “Squeaks from the First State Region” which he edited and published, this flood of new members loved BRAACA because it was Marvin’s region. The humorous editor became “Squeaky Witherspoon”, and he established regular columns written by Kitty Highwheeler and the Farmer’s Daughter. Marvin’s cartoons were also unique: they usually featured two farmers exchanging yarns in peculiar situations, one of whom was cross-eyed with dark-rim glasses and a pipe in his mouth. Marvin liked to run old car tours, but he insisted that no tour was worth an entry fee of more than one dollar.

Marvin was a kind and generous man. If he became interested in an organization, whether it was a 4-H group, his church, or something of historic significance, he would volunteer long hours and hard work. When the Wilmington & Western Railroad was in its infancy, he came every day for weeks with his gasoline-powered tractor to lift the timbers for its pole barn engine house and car shed. When the historic Yorklyn Station was re-erected at Greenbank, he dug the trenches and helped me pour the footers at its new location. When we were preparing to open the Magic Age of Steam in Yorklyn (the present Auburn Heights property), he and his tractor moved all the dirt to build the pond and the railroad tunnel, and to build additional paved driveways. Despite the magnitude of this work, every day he was at Auburn Heights he was interested in a dove’s nest nearby and was fearful of disturbing its occupant sitting on her eggs. When my father died in 1969, Marvin wrote a beautiful obituary for the “Squeaks”. I wrote this one for the “Squeaks” after Marvin’s death in 2007.

Last Thursday, Arlie Lane's hand-carved carousel was brought to Auburn Heights to be on loan as a Museum exhibit. This is a beautiful piece of work, 5 feet in diameter, with 34 carved figures (most of them horses), 20 of which go up and down as the carousel rotates, complete with appropriate music. It was painted by Mary Lou Lawlor. Many will remember Arlie's full-sized carousel horse, on display at Auburn Heights several times during its carving and finally in its completed state. The miniature carousel will make a fine addition in the next months.

A volunteers' orientation meeting was held last Thursday evening to bring our volunteers and docents up to date on 2010 plans for our Steamin' Days, the first of which is Sunday, June 6. The meeting was well-attended. Three of our Stanleys and their occupants, plus the two Steve Jensens in their 1911 Model 62, took part in the Kennett Square Memorial Day parade today. Jerry Lucas drove the '13 Model 76, Dan Citron the '18 Model 735, and Richard Bernard the '22 Model 740. None had trouble despite the heat, and all returned safely.

The museum changes include significant improvements in the way exhibits are presented. An excellent start has been made toward making these exhibits more professional. A major push will be made this week to have as much as possible completed for the June 6 opening.

Volunteer help is needed during the week, and Richard and Art Sybell may still have a few openings to fill for next Sunday. Please let Susan know if you can help during the week or on Sunday, and have not yet signed up. Jonathan Rickerman and his committee are doing a great job in promoting our June event.

We are grateful to Ann Bryce and her friend Lynn D'Amour for planting all the containers around the grounds. Also, an artist-neighbor of the Bryces, Jaclyn Beam, has been painting several things at Auburn Heights, and will make her beautiful work available to us for display, note paper, etc. Ruth Marshall has been working in the flower beds, and our arbor roses should put on quite a display on June 6. Thank you, everyone!

The spring edition of the *Auburn Heights Herald* has gone to press and should be ready for distribution by mid-week. Thanks go to Rob Robison, editor, Susan Randolph, and all who contributed to it. Special thanks are due Jack Harrison, a local historian, for writing the lead article.

The Events and Scheduling Committee will meet on Tuesday, June 8, at 7:00 in the F.A.H.P. office. Our first Ice Cream Run to Woodside Farm is scheduled for Thursday, June 10, leaving Auburn Heights by 6:30 P.M. Please let us know if you'd like to drive or ride; it's usually a fun evening, returning to A.H. before dark.

Our Volunteers' Picnic is scheduled for Sunday, August 15. Rose Ann Hoover has asked that you think of items for the fun auction that will be sold for the benefit of F.A.H.P. Thank you!

Tom