

## F.A.H.P. News, March 15, 2013

*Since it has been nearly 82 years from the beginning of this story (originally carried in the "News" of 12/10/07), I will not be driving FAHP vehicles any longer when carrying members of the general public. It has been a wonderful run since that day in the fall of 1931.*

**Learning to Drive:** Almost everyone will remember learning to drive, although many on the road never did. My experience was probably typical of a young man growing up in the 1930s whose father had a car. I loved to ride on the front seat with my father and watch his every movement as he used the clutch, foot brake, and accelerator pedal and shifted gears. If we had occasion to go to Rehoboth in the off-season, there would be practically no traffic on the road from Dover to the shore, and he would let me sit in the middle and steer with his oversight. Not much steering was required, as the road was straight.

One day in the fall of 1931, when I was seven, his big 1928 Packard Model 443 7-passenger sedan was setting outside the garage in our Rehoboth driveway. No one was around, so I decided I would put it in the small two-car garage, just long enough for the big Packard. I really couldn't sit on the seat and reach the pedals, but by stretching out straight and hanging on the steering wheel, my feet would just reach the brake and clutch. In that posture, I could only see the headliner of the sedan. Nevertheless, I got the motor started, put the car in low gear, and let out the clutch. Into the garage we headed, just where I wanted to go! But whoa, the far end of the garage was coming up fast, and there was little chance to stop. I closed my eyes, slid off the seat, and went down on both clutch and brake with all my might. The motor stalled and the car came to a stop, only a few inches from where it would have smashed into the end of the garage. Breathing a sigh of relief, I got out and feared the next step: what my father would say when he noticed his car had been moved. A few minutes later, he came out, said he thought he had left the Packard outside (he knew he had), and wondered how it got in the garage. I confessed ignorance. I didn't try to drive again for about a year.

For men who worked around Auburn Heights, my father always had a car or small truck that he never drove himself. My first recollection was "Bate" Dennis and a Model T Ford that ended up down the race bank when he left it running by the kitchen door. The next was a 1929 Model A Ford Station Wagon, a model that became a "Woodie" in the early '70s. We used this Model A as a light truck with the seats removed. On this car, I really learned to drive at the age of 8 or 9, whipping around the driveway after school and learning all the tight places that would accommodate this great little car. I even had one or two places I could drive under the rose arbor and out onto the lawn in dry weather. When I became a little more adventuresome, I went down the steep driveway behind the present museum, made a sharp turn at the bottom, and drove all over the meadow between the creek and the mill race. My father did not encourage these escapades, and occasionally he would put a stop to it, but I suppose he remembered how he wanted to operate anything mechanical when he was a boy. Anyway, he was always too easy on me; most of the disciplining came from my mother.

In 1937, Mary Leonard Chalfant and her daughter, Sara Bowers, both of Kennett Square, bought a new Packard 120 sedan and traded in a 1931 Packard Standard Eight sedan with very low mileage. Neither ever drove a car. My dad bought the old one, and it became the "school car" with License #154. When I was 14 or 15, I snuck out onto a public road, which was great fun. I remember traveling what is now Benge Road as far as the Pennsylvania line and back, a round-trip of about three miles. One time I met John C. Mitchell, owner of a 200-acre farm, who was out inspecting his field. I was sure he would tell

on me, but he didn't. Another favorite route was across a back field from the Yorklyn Gun Club to Sharpless Road and up and down that lightly-traveled road for a short distance. During all this illegal driving time I was lucky, but soon after getting my license in February 1940, my previous cockiness caught up with me, and I had three fender-benders before 1940 was over.

**Work Report:** On Tuesday, March 12, the following 15 volunteers were on hand: Steve Bryce (in charge), Bob Jordan, Jerry Novak, Dennis Dragon, Mark Russell, Ted Kamen, Emil Christofano, Robert Hopkins, Mac Taylor, Tim Ward, Jay Williams, Jim Personti, Jeff Pollock, Chuck Erikson, and our long-distance guest Dave Lumley.

The track was put back and hooked up on the Lionel electric train layout in preparation for the 100 kindergartners scheduled for 3/14 and 3/15. Additional Fiberfrax insulation was attached to the boiler of the Model 607, and more fasteners were examined and tightened on this car. A problem was discovered on the water by-pass valve, which will require minor repair around the packing nut. The condenser for the Model 735 was filled and tested for leaks. There still remains a leak either in one of the tubes or in a soldered joint. An Events Committee meeting took place during the work session.

Over the weekend just past (March 9-10), Jonathan Rickerman and Brent McDougall did some track work on the Auburn Valley, Brent on Saturday, and Jonathan both days. Jonathan and Tom removed the broken switch-throw lever from the turnout at the pond spillway, and Tom has since made a new one. Another track day is scheduled by Anne Cleary for Saturday, March 23.

On Thursday, March 14, the following 11 volunteers were on hand, viz: Ted Kamen, Steve Bryce, Jerry Novak, Eugene Maute, Gerhard Maute, Anne Cleary, Jerry Koss, Jim Personti, Bill Rule, Jay Williams (earlier in the day), and Tom Marshall (in charge). A repair was made to one of the partitions in the museum, Diplag was applied to the boiler and bonnet on the Model 607, and the "shelf" under the 735's condenser was painted. The new switch-throw lever was painted and is ready to install.

As a result of Jesse Gagnon's efforts, 100 kindergartners from Heritage Elementary School visited our museum on Thursday and Friday (60 Thursday, 40 Friday). Jay Williams assisted our staff in manning one of the four locations, where these little people were entertained and educated. One little girl exclaimed "This is the best day of my life!" Susan thinks she may say this everywhere she goes. This was a very successful start for our developing school tours.

### **Our Loss Is Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation's Gain**

Jenn Green, our fantastic Volunteer Coordinator, will be leaving us at month's end to assume her now full-time role as Director of Education at the Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation. We will miss her enthusiasm and energy but are happy that she has found a great new opportunity -- and will remain in the area so we can entice her to come back and visit -- and maybe even volunteer from time to time!