

FEBRUARY 8, 2010 F.A.H.P. NEWS

Thomas T. Ackerman, (1940-2010): Tom Ackerman of Waretown, NJ, died on February 3rd in the Deborah Heart & Lung Hospital in Pemberton, NJ, with complications from pneumonia. An extremely generous bachelor, he was a “charter member” of the Steam Team from its inception in 1997. Many of our members will remember his Stanley Model 740 brougham, a maroon 4-door car with enclosed body. With this car and some of his young friends, to whom he taught the magic of steam power, he attended many of the Eastern Steam Car Tours. Since he had such an attachment to young people, and they to him, he was often on the committee that selected the recipient of the “Young Driver Award” at each of these tours.

Barely a teen-ager himself, he was attracted to the Stanleys owned and operated by the late Robert Wallach, who lived but a few miles away. Tom would stand and observe until he was old enough to be invited to ride in one of Mr. Wallach’s cars. Some years later, he was able to acquire his beloved Stanley brougham.

In 1970 shortly after the death of my father, I entered our newly-restored 1912 Model 88 Stanley Mountain Wagon in the Brass and Gas Tour held at Laurance Rockefeller’s new Woodstock Inn in the Vermont town of the same name (we paid \$22 daily for our room; I requested a rate this past December and found that it is now \$319 off-season). I wanted to drive to and from, and I invited Tom Ackerman to be my passenger. We had some trouble and we both learned a lot. He was invaluable help in keeping us on the road. The “News” of May 22, 2006, describes this trip in some detail. To review briefly some highlights: Enroute to Woodstock, at Matamoras, PA, we spent nearly 24 hours hunting steel balls and placing them in the crossheads of the engine (the old ones fell out and got lost), and immediately after arrival at Woodstock a day later, we spent the next 30 hours removing the balls altogether and, with the help of Harland Whitcomb and a Ski-Tow manufacturer in Woodstock, replacing them with bronze slides. After enjoying the last three days of the tour, we started for home in a drenching rain, and when the skies cleared as we reached the Hudson River, wind gusts up to 50 m.p.h. crossing the new bridge at Kingston caused us the next problem. Remembering that January day in 1956 when wind ripped off the top of our other Mountain Wagon on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia, I yelled to Tom to climb over the seats and unfasten the hooks where the back curtain fastens to the last seat, all while we were traveling across the bridge (we could not stop) in high wind. He scrambled over seats, luggage, and tools, and performed his task successfully and the top was spared.

Tom loved traction engines and anything old that was run by steam, and he was one of the most active volunteers at the Rough & Tumble Engineers Historical Society at Kinzers, PA. He owned at least one such engine and kept it there. Although he never took credit, it was he who arranged to have their big boiler fired up and engines running when our Steam Car Tour visited Rough & Tumble on June 21, 2007. For the week of the annual Threshermen’s Reunion each August, Tom would camp on the grounds (as do many) and help wherever he was needed. Even though steam was his love, one year he worked in the kitchen all week, as they were short-handed there. He always helped others with their problems, ignoring his own.

A highway maintenance supervisor for Ocean County (NJ), Tom worked hard all his life. We understand he was cremated and had requested that his ashes be thrown into the firebox of his beloved traction engine during the Spring Steam-Up at Kinzers on May 8, 2010.

Our work sessions were productive last week, despite the snow forecast for Tuesday night (about 10 showed up), and the Auburn Valley Railroad meeting Thursday night. Great progress was made in further sorting, listing and numbering the 607 parts to be nickel-plated, then photographing them. The boiler installation on the Model K is nearing completion. Mountain Wagon seat cushions have been removed for recovering. We are actively seeking a “Diesel” (gasoline-powered) locomotive for the Auburn Valley. The R.R. committee also set priorities on getting some of our automatic signals working this spring, and resurfacing of the rear grade crossing. Further study is being made regarding the double-tracked R.R. trestle.

The Collections Committee of the Board is planning to meet on Tuesday, February 9, at 6 P.M., and the Events and Scheduling Committee will meet **Thursday, February 11, at 7 P.M.** (please note the date change). The quarterly Board meeting itself is scheduled for Thursday, February 18, at 7:00 in the FAHP office, at which time officers will be elected for the coming year.

Remember our Annual Meeting is to be held on **Tuesday, February 16, at 7:30 P.M.** at the **Kennett Township Building, Rosedale, PA**, about 4-1/2 miles from Auburn Heights. Directions will be given in next week’s “News”. This meeting will include our president’s report from Steve Bryce, report on our financial condition by our treasurer, Bob Reilly, some committee reports, an Auburn Heights Preserve report by Dan Citron, and an illustrated program. The election of candidates for the Board of Directors will also be held. Please plan to attend. There will be no work session on Feb. 16.

If you can, enjoy our 2 feet of snow, some of which will be around for a while. Tom