

FAHP News, March 6, 2017

The Great New England Blackout, 1965: In July 1965, I took delivery of a new '65 Chrysler 300 four-door sedan. It cost \$3,600. That October, I was anxious to take a trip in it. Holiday Inns of America, of which our Wilmington-area operations were a part, was undergoing massive expansion at that time, opening a new Inn every 2½ days. When our first Holiday Inn opened in August 1961, there were less than 200 Inns in the system; by the end of the decade there were about 1,700. In 1965, a lot of new Holiday Inns dotted New England. Although my trip was not an official inspection requested by the parent company, it was to our interest to learn what we could about the inns in New England, as so much of our transient business near Wilmington was over the new Interstate Highway System up and down the East Coast.

Traveling alone, I visited every Holiday Inn but one then in New England. I missed only Burlington, Vermont. I stayed overnight at several, of which I remember the following: the first night was at Milford, Connecticut, between Bridgeport and New Haven. The second was at one of the two called Providence, Rhode Island, although the one where I stayed was actually in Massachusetts just over the state line from Pawtucket. I believe the third night was near Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Then I went into Maine, visiting Lewiston and Augusta, before returning to Portland where Holiday Inns had an excellent operation. After a good dinner, I inquired where I could go to the movies and was told that just across the road was a new building with twin theatres. On one side was showing "The Sound of Music" and on the other was "Mary Poppins." I enjoyed the former for the first of many times.

Planning to pass near Boston and stay at a new Holiday Inn on Route 128 west of the city, I wanted to call my friends the Gardners and see if a brief visit would be convenient. About 5 P.M. I stopped at a filling station with a phone booth on the northeast side of Boston and placed my call to their home in West Newton. Just about the time the connection was made, all the lights went out, and darkness was fast approaching. I thought it was local and temporary, and Eloise "Weezie" Gardner suggested I come for a late supper after I got settled. As I moved down Route 128, however, all was dark everywhere except for motorists' lights.

I found the Holiday Inn and made my way to the front desk. The clerk was operating with a candle and without a cash register. It seemed very few overnight guests had arrived. He said he could check me in and lend me a candle but that there was no heat, and they would soon be out of hot water. I took advantage of the candle and then drove through the darkness the 3 or 4 miles to the Gardner home. Rod Blood, a famous Packard collector then in the last year of his life, was living with the Gardners, and they were heating one room from the fireplace therein. Weezie had no stove or kitchen conveniences, but she got together a cold supper for all of us. I can still see Rod Blood standing in front of the fireplace. About 10 P.M., I returned to the Holiday Inn, where they gave me extra blankets to keep warm. The power outage was everywhere, covering the six New England states and into southeastern New York, including New York City.

The sun came out the next morning, but there was still no power. I headed west to visit Holiday Inns at Worcester and Pittsfield and planned to end my trip with a late arrival that night at Auburn Heights. Seldom missing a chance to go to the movies, I drove down one of the parkways into Manhattan, parked and took in a show (possibly at the Radio City Music Hall) and then drove home. Obviously, New York City had power by that time, and southwest of there toward home the power was never off. However, some New England areas were without power for five or six days. A lot was learned from the Great Blackout, and steps were taken so it has not happened again.

Work Report: On Tuesday, February 28, 13 volunteers answered the call: Mark Russell (in charge), Jerry Lucas, Ted Kamen, Bob Jordan, Dennis Dragon, Mark Bodenstag, Larry Tennity, Paul Kratunis, Matt Richard, Anne Cleary, Mac Taylor, Jay Williams, and John Schubel.

The two steam radiators in the shop were scraped, sanded, and cleaned. Padding was carefully taped around the front axle and tie rod on the Model 78 in preparation for dropping the burner. Running board coverings and moldings on the Models 87 and 607 were worked on; the right running board on the 87 is finished. The pilot tank from the 87 was cleaned and polished.

One of the “O” gauge locomotives was repaired and tested on the circular railway with its new helix control. Work continued on the translucent walls protecting the standard gauge high line from the public and the concrete floor below.

Also on Tuesday, Steve Bryce and Jerry Novak visited Lewistown, PA, and returned with a new steel-tube boiler, welded in the bottom head, built for us by Bill Barnes.

On Wednesday, March 1, three volunteers were on hand: Richard Bernard (in charge), Larry Tennity, and Tom Marshall.

Sanding, filling, and priming on the dash of the Model 87 continued. Also on this car, the pilot tank was installed, and the speedometer head was polished. The two shop radiators were painted gray with high-temperature engine enamel.

On Thursday, March 2, five volunteers attended: Tom Marshall (in charge), Jim Personti, Steve Bryce, Jared Schoenly, and Kelly Williams.

All five worked on the exhaust/flue/odor problem on the Model 87. Knowing that the odor was coming from hot oil in the flue rather than from burner fumes, the entire flue and feed-water-heater system was removed from the car and examined. This was not a standard Stanley flue, as it had been redesigned when the steel frame was fabricated in 1976. Since the intent was not to attach the down pipe from the boiler bonnet, the heater had been heavily wrapped with sheet insulation covered by a stove pipe, and a loose engine exhaust fitting had caused this insulation to become thoroughly oil-soaked. In addition, a lot of exhaust oil had built up on the bottom of the flue. The feed water heater appears to be good, so a new flue will be built similar in shape to the original Stanley, and the down pipe from the bonnet will discharge into it. Kelly brought good photos of the dash before it was disassembled, which will be helpful in putting everything back together after the dash has been painted.

On Saturday and Sunday, Mark Bodenstab continued his work in improving the shop and helped Susan move cabinets and furniture in preparation for the arrival of our new Education Director in a few weeks.