

May 16, 2005

Hello, Steam Team:

The Mountain Wagon and the March of Dimes (Final Chapter):
Tuesday, January 10, 1956, was cold, clear, and windy in Reading, PA, when we arose to continue our March of Dimes itinerary. The planned schedule for that day was impossible, even for modern cars, let alone antiques. We were to proceed to Pottstown for a promotional stop, then the same at Norristown, before heading into center city Philadelphia for a major event during lunch hour. Next was Wilmington, and they had allowed one hour for this trip. In those days before I-95, it took about one hour and ten minutes in a modern car if you were in a hurry. After Wilmington, the tour was to stop in Elkton, Havre de Grace, and Aberdeen before arriving in Baltimore for the night. I was prepared to try this on a short and cold January day!

An official of the March of Dimes, dressed in a business suit, insisted he wanted to ride with me from Reading to Philadelphia. I recommended against it, but with no success. We carried the Pony Express pouch on the front seat between us. Not far out of Reading, I had to stop and drill out burner forks, and the others got far ahead. They had left Pottstown before we got there, but we caught up just before they left Norristown. I don't remember the route into Philadelphia but we wound down the Schuylkill to the Art Museum, and proceeded down Benjamin Franklin Parkway toward City Hall. A small crowd now lined the route and they were cheering us on. About half way down the Parkway, however, disaster struck. A gust of wind tried to lift the Mountain Wagon and succeeded in ripping the top from its bows. I looked out and found the top dragging on the street on the left side of the car. What a sad sight it was when we parked with the others at the rendezvous point on the south side of City Hall. We were on schedule but the cost was high.

Knowing I could not make Wilmington in an hour, I left 15 minutes early and arrived in Wilmington 15 minutes late, but far ahead of the others who were well over an hour late arriving at Rodney Square. With the top rolled in a ball in the back of the car, I decided I had had enough, so when the others pulled out for their Maryland stops (it was already 4:00 P.M.), I headed for Yorklyn. Earle Eckel continued to Baltimore in his Pierce Arrow and they traveled 2 hours in darkness. He returned home the next day. I didn't know what my father would say but in situations like this, he never said much, which sometimes hurt even more. As I recall a portion of the old top was saved, and the ripped pieces replaced. Our comprehensive insurance covered the \$100 cost. In 1975, a new top was made for the "Wagon".

Last Wednesday, 3 Pre-Schools and their inhabitants enjoyed

riding the Auburn Valley, witnessing the operation of the electric trains, and picnicking on the grounds. Car derailments were corrected after the first trip and all went very well thereafter. We handled 127 paying children and nearly 100 free adults. We had excellent help from our volunteers: Chuck Erikson, Bill Rule, Brian Crozier, Chris Sanger, Ed Hoffmeister, Jerry Novak, Alan Berry, Rose Ann Hoover, Ruth and myself. On Saturday, 5 non-condensing Stanleys and the Rauch & Lang electric, along with Rose Ann Hoover in her '40 Packard and Emil Christofano in his '55(?) Chevy, made the trip to the Wilmington & Western R.R. at Greenbank, then most ended with a visit to Mitchells' for ice cream. Bill Schwoebel, Anne Cleary, Butch Cannard, Steve Jensen, Jerry Lucas, Jerry Novak, Richard Bernard, and I participated. On Sunday, the '37 Packard occupied by Jerry Novak and Emil Christofano, and the Stanley Model 76 occupied by Anthony and Andy Zych and myself, made the trip to Linvilla Orchards for the Spring Meet of the Historical Car Club of Pennsylvania. The Stanley won the "Best of Brass" award donated by the Hespenheide family. Bill Schwoebel and Butch Cannard attended the Brass in Bucks County Swap meet near Doylestown.

Willard Robinson, with help from Brent McDougall, installed new lattice work around the base of our ticket office, Joe Mosteller and Dave Sedar polished lamps on the Mobile, Butch printed and cut more Events flyers (he also installed my new computer), Brian Crozier, Anne Cleary, and Steve Jensen cleaned up the locomotive after Wednesday's use, and others got the cars ready for their use last weekend. Now they need cleaning up again, but they are not bad. Ed Hoffmeister has some beautiful new signals almost ready for installation on the Auburn Valley.

In addition to the usual getting ready for next week's events (Board members and Advisors evening on May 27, and "Steamin' Sunday" with House Tour on May 29), I am expecting a visit from about 12 State Parks people on Wednesday, May 18 at 9:45, and from Bob Wilson and his Hodgson's Vo-Tech boys on Friday, May 20 about 10:45. If any of you would like to be here for these visits, you are welcome. For other projects upcoming, we need electricians to install lighting and outlets in the new ticket office, some slight repair to the foundation of West Yorklyn Station, and the painting of the gas pump and the stall partitions in the rest rooms.

We have clearance from NFL Films to make DVD copies of the Stanley "video". Alan will know best how to proceed. BE SURE TO PICK UP FLYERS and Complimentary Tickets where they can be used to good advantage. Word of Mouth is and will always be our best advertising. Butch is also working on letter-size broadsides that can be used on bulletin boards. Your help is needed! Many thanks.

Tom

