

April 4, 2005

Hello, Steam Team:

Eliza Peterson of Hockessin, age 99, died on Friday. Who was Eliza Peterson? She was a black lady who died in her home on Mill Creek Road. She never had much, but she WAS a LADY and her modest house WAS a HOME. When she was a little girl, she lived with her parents and siblings in a tenant house owned by the Marshall Brothers paper mill on Auburn Mill Road between the mill and the Christofanos.

The house is long gone, but the foundation can still be seen. Her father, Dorsey Peterson, drove a 2-wheel mill cart (later he graduated and drove the mill truck for many years), and her mother Martha worked for my grandmother, Lizzie Marshall, at Auburn Heights.

Martha had no one with whom to leave the children, so they would come to work with her when Eliza (the eldest), was about 8 years old.

My grandmother insisted the children drink their milk, apparently much more than suited their taste. When my dad would come home from the mill for lunch in his Stanley steamer, the kids would wait at the front gate with the hope that he'd pick them up for a ride up the driveway in an automobile! They were seldom disappointed. Her parents moved to the Mitchell tenant house on Valley Road between Limestone Road and the Ice Cream Parlor, and when Eliza was a teen-ager, she was "farmed out" to Mrs. Bissett as a house servant. Mr. Bissett was superintendent of the Snuff Mill in Yorklyn. She was nearly 40 when Mr. Bissett died, and she sought other employment. She was a life-long member of Chippey A.U.M.P. Church in Hockessin, and active in the Hockessin Community Center. One of the last to call me "Tommy" has passed away. She deserves all that Heaven can offer.

While on the subject of health, Herman Feissner has had a rough time for several weeks, and we miss him and wish him a speedy recovery now that spring has arrived. Walt Hopkins, father of Mark and John, is recovering from depression and should be returning to his home about now, having been with Mark and Mary for the past 10 days or so. We hope he will be 100% by the time of the Steam Car Tour in July, which he hopes to attend with us. I learned of the very close call Jerry Novak's daughter Ann has had during the past few weeks. She had a rare infection which caused her lungs to fill with fluid in a matter of hours. The medical team at the hospital caught it just in time, but she was in a precarious condition for many days. We are happy that she's back home and recuperating nicely.

Eight volunteers worked on track last Sunday in less-than-ideal weather. They did a lot of leveling and spread about 2 tons of crushed stone. Joining the veterans were two new members, Ed Baldwin and Rick Pennell. Thanks to all for a good start! Bill Schwoebel, Butch Cannard, and Bill Rule taught session #2 of our

Stanley course last Tuesday, and had about 8 "students". Tomorrow night, April 5, at 7:00, session #3 takes place and I will try to describe and demonstrate how to fire up a Stanley car. It will be the final session to digest before the driving lessons begin on April 16. I'm getting near the end on putting the Model K back together, after Jerry Lucas and Ed Hoffmeister tested the boiler fittings for leaks. The water tank is back in the Model CX after Bill Schwoebel and I painted the inside seams with Jim Personti's magic leak-proof formula. It can now be piped up and the exhaust flue installed, and then the deck can be screwed on. Another car should be ready for the season (and for this one, its 100th birthday).

Anne Cleary, Jim Personti, and Jerry Novak gave the locomotives an uplift by repainting some of the trim. The differential for the Model 76 is expected any day.

Anne Cleary and others are making plans for our mini-gift shop to open unofficially on May 1. We also know that the State Park folks would like our Mountain Wagon in Dover on Saturday, May 7. We are not sure we can do that, but we'll try to work out plans. In any event, we'll try to get one or more Stanley cars there for Old Dover Days. We expect to sign the NFL contract for use of the DVD on Stanley Steamers, thanks to Alan Berry, in a very few days. The Division of Parks, through Lee Jennings, plans to foot the bill. Many thanks PARKS for helping FAHP financially.

Butch is on a cruise, so good night- Spring is on the way!

Tom