

F.A.H.P. News, July 4, 2011

July 18, 1943: Major Campbell was a soft touch. A roly-poly man of about 50 years of age, he was commander of our Pre-Meteorology School at Brown University. Twice this buck private asked him for a favor, and twice he obliged. One of these times I gave him a story of how I had won the Delaware State Trapshooting championship in 1941, and if he would give me a weekend pass I could compete in 1943 when the abbreviated wartime championship events (singles, doubles, and handicap) were to be held in one day, Sunday, July 18. He let me take the train home Saturday afternoon and return to Providence early Monday.

The “shoot” was held at the Wilmington Trapshooting Association on Basin Road northwest of New Castle. Leo Shaab, who took care of the traps at Yorklyn for the Western Cartridge Company (written about in the “News” of 8/3/09) was invited to spend Saturday night at Auburn Heights, and I arrived home about 8 P.M. to enjoy my mother’s delicious dinner in the sun porch. My father said we would go to the shoot the next day in his Stanley Model 740 to save heavily rationed gasoline, which we did. As we were driving down Basin Road beyond Newport, we passed Leonard Lynam on his bicycle with his shotgun strapped on the rear. He was an ardent trapshooter who ran a garage along Newport-Gap Pike in Newport.

The singles championship was at 100 targets (in normal times it was at 200, and toward the end of the war, it was at 50), and I tied with two others for high gun, as they called it, with 97. One was a barber from Wilmington, J. William Moffett, and the other was a new shooter from Woodside, whom I didn’t know, Nolan E. Wilcutts. Wilcutts beat us both in the shoot-off, breaking 25 straight. I was disappointed, of course, but I hadn’t had any practice at all, and in the years following the war, Delaware trapshooters fell in love with Nolan Wilcutts. Following his win in 1943, he went into military service and had his right shoulder blown off in combat. He loved to shoot so much that he learned to shoot from the left side, but being unable to raise his right arm to hold the gun, he held it with a vertical stick connecting the gun’s forearm to his right hand below the waist. His accuracy improved, and about 1949, he won a major handicap championship at Yorklyn. He was killed in an auto accident in the 1950s.

In 1943, clay targets and ammunition were in short supply, and in the middle of the afternoon, the gun club ran out of targets. A. R. “Hoppy” Hopkins, a popular Wilmington sporting figure, worked for Charles E. Huber, owner of Huber’s Sporting Goods, whose retail store was in the old Citizen’s Bank Building on the corner of 10th and Shipley streets. Hoppy said there were some targets in the basement there that the club could have to finish the day’s shooting, if someone could go get them. My dad volunteered to use the Stanley, so we made the 10-mile round-trip and saved the day. At that time, I had never driven a steamer (my first opportunity was two months later). The 740 seemed to run perfectly that July day, but then Stanleys always did when my father was in charge.

My additional scores were 46 in the 50-target handicap event and 42 in the 25 pairs of doubles, for a total of 185 out of 200 in the “All-Round.” My good friend Neil Oechsler of Wyoming,

Delaware, won with 188. Before 8:00 Monday morning, I was on the train back to Providence, grateful to Major Campbell for making this interlude possible for me.

Work Nights: Among the work activities at Auburn Heights last week, Dave Leon and Tom Marshall repaired the wiring leading to one of the Mountain Wagon's headlamps in preparation for night driving at Saturday's ice cream social. On the AVRR, Jonathan Rickerman and Jeff Pollock rodded out the locomotives for running over the weekend; Butch Cannard and Tim Ward finished installing jumpers between the insulated sections of track; and Butch and Bob Wilhelm continued adjusting the programming of the signal lights. Steve Bryce completed adjustments to the engine of the Model 76, attached the engine cover and with help from Anne Cleary and Dave Leon cleaned up the car for running in the 4th of July parade. Emil Christofano and Jeff Pollock completed attaching the front axle and steering linkage on the Rauch & Lang. Dave Leon and Mark Russell removed the steam pipe from the Model 71 to repair a leak, "Bucky" and Tom got the union apart to remove the broken end, and Jim Personti welded on a new coupling. Driver training continued last week with Richard Bernard, Ted Kamen, and Dennis Dragon taking out the Model 740 and Kelly Williams in the 725 with Bob Stransky, Dan Citron, Art Wallace, and Tim Ward. The 725 steamed poorly on its last two drives so Kelly and his group removed the cable from the vaporizer and began cleaning the partially blocked tube. Butch and Tom continued to clean out the vaporizer and have installed a new 3/16-inch diameter, 5-ft.-long cable into its cold end. The 725 should be fine for the parade Monday.

This Weekend's Events: We were pleased to welcome 221 visitors to our second Ice Cream Social on Saturday evening. It was a perfect summer night, and 78 people enjoyed museum tours in addition to the Woodside Farm ice cream, rides and museum attractions. As always, our volunteers made it very special for all -- and for that we thank them, one and all.

The very next day, volunteers turned out once again to host a special "Steamin' Day" especially for two very worthy groups: Downs Syndrome Association of Delaware and the Newark Lightning Team of Special Olympics. The kids took rides (in the train and one the Mountain Wagon), enjoyed the steam-popped popcorn and even chased frogs in the Lakeside Park pond! We hope they greatly enjoyed the day and made special memories at Auburn Heights. The event was made possible thanks to a grant from the Christmas Shop Foundation.

Ice Cream Run, July 7: The second Ice Cream Run of the season will take place this Thursday, with available cars leaving Auburn Heights about 6:15. If you wish to possibly join in, please e-mail Susan in the FAHP office asap (srandolph@auburnheights.org). Due to summer vacations, we are short on drivers, so space is more limited than usual, and we cannot guarantee that all can be accommodated, but we will do our best.

Upcoming Events: We expect a larger than usual crowd for the July 17 Steamin' Day, thanks to the success of our recent Groupon promotion. If you can help, please contact the FAHP office (srandolph@auburnheights.org).