

APRIL 14, 2008 WEEKLY NEWS

Toothpaste and Shaving Cream: Each year at this time, it occurs to me what a momentous week this has been in American history. I was at Will Rogers Field near Oklahoma City on April 12, 1945, when word came over the radio that President Roosevelt had died at Warm Springs, GA. Even though he was very ill, we young people thought he would last forever, as he was in his fourth term and we could hardly remember an earlier president. The last thing he said was "I have a terrible headache". On April 9, 1865, the Civil War ended with General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House, but joy in the north was short-lived as Abraham Lincoln was assassinated on April 14 at Ford's Theater in Washington. He was the first American president to be assassinated. On April 18-19, 1775, the "shots heard 'round the world" started the American Revolution at Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts. And in 1968 there was a County-wide curfew here for several days and the National Guard patrolled the streets of Wilmington during the riots following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Let's concentrate on pleasanter things: In the 1930's the best known tooth paste brands were Pepsodent, Colgate, Ipana, and possibly others. There were lesser-known ones such as Kolynos (which was "fluffy") and Delaware's own Mer. Have you not heard of Mer? The L. D. Caulk Company of Milford manufactured a popular mouthwash called Mercitan, light red in color with a very pleasant taste used by many dentists of the period. It was superceded by Sodium Perborate. Present day yellow Cepacol has a similar flavor to the old Mercitan. The company made a skin cream called Mercirex, and the never-popular toothpaste Mer. 15-minute radio shows in early evening's prime time had only one sponsor each. The renowned news commentator Lowell Thomas came on at 6:45, and Amos 'n' Andy at 7:00. One was sponsored by Sunoco, the other by Pepsodent (I'm not clear on which was which). As a youngster, I tried all toothpaste brands, but Pepsodent was a favorite. When it was no longer available, I switched to Ipana and stuck with it until it was made no more.

When my father started to shave about 1900, his parents gave him a shaving stand that is still at Auburn Heights. I'm sure everyone learned to shave with a straight razor in those days, and even the most experienced would frequently nick their faces. I think it was King C. Gillette who invented the safety razor, but its popularity was not immediate. Eventually, however, most men of my father's generation shaved with a safety razor, of which there were many kinds and a wide selection of blades, double-edge, single-edge, etc. Gillette always seemed to have the upper hand in the shaving market, but there was a lot of competition, particularly from Schick. Radio broadcasts of World Series baseball games were sponsored by Gillette for many years "with the sharpest edges ever honed". First there were the Blue Blades, then Thin Blades, then Super Blue Blades, Super Stainless, and Platinum Plus (whatever that was). Each time the new offering seemed sharper and better than the old, or else the company purposely made the older blades worse. Schick, Pal, Star, and several others competed for the shaver's business, even though a lot of men were still shaved daily by their friendly barber for about 25 cents. When I closed out a PX on Guam in January, 1946, an inventory of razor blades, among other things, was taken. Gillette Blue Blades and Thin Blades each sold for 15 cents for a pack of 5, whereas the inferior Star blades were 10 cents for the same number. I first shaved with a Rolls Razor,

given to me by my father. Encased in a small shiny metal box, it was supposed to last forever with a strop on one lid of the box and a hone on the other. I shaved with this for several years before I realized how dull it really was. I tried a double-edge Gillette razor and couldn't believe how easy shaving could be. For me, this method of shaving, using improved blades along the way, lasted for nearly 60 years. Then double-edge blades were discontinued altogether.

Lather shaving cream is also a thing of the past. I first used my father's favorite, Velvo, a product that contained Bay Rum sold through the Sears catalog. To do well with lather shaving cream, it was necessary to have a nice shaving brush, and a good one would last about 25 years. I had to go to a barber supply house to buy my most recent one. Velvo went out with World War II, and I switched to Colgate. I like the aroma better than the company's companion Palmolive. After the mid '70's, however, Colgate was no longer made, so Palmolive it was. Bill Schwoebel could find Palmolive Lather long after it was made, but no longer. Brushless shaving cream had come on strong with the famous Burma Shave being one of the first popular brands. Barbasol was another, and it may still be around. Despite this, and the very good but expensive razors now on sale in the pharmacies, I get the impression that most males use electric razors or simply don't bother to shave. I've had a few electrics, but I never liked them. This week's "News" is not one of my better creations; next week I promise something better.

Five of our Stanleys and the '32 Packard have been run in the past 10 days in preparation for a busy late April and May, including Power Up Gambia at Hagley on April 20, and Point-to-Point at Winterthur on May 4. There are 5 or 6 more Stanleys to be tested before the Point-to-Point event. Those drivers who have committed to go are urged to spend some time with their designated cars well in advance of May 4. The locomotives are back in their engine house (below the shop), with modifications having been made to the tracks therein to accommodate our "Diesel" locomotive if and when it arrives. The first railroad run will be on Sunday, April 27, for the Wilmington Friends School group. Last Saturday, John, Ellen, and Robert Hopkins successfully took our Model 735 Stanley to Newark, where our local State Senator and FAHP member, Liane Sorenson, rode in the parade with them.

Progress on the Strategic Plan is moving along. Today, the Program Sub-Committee, chaired by Steve Bryce, met, and will meet again on Wednesday. Richard Bernard is trying to get the Governance Sub-Committee together on Friday, April 18. Next week on Monday, April 21, the B & G Sub-Committee, chaired by Jerry Novak, will meet at 4:00. On Tuesday, the 22nd, Larry Thurrell's Development Sub-Committee plans to meet, also at 4:00. On Monday, April 28, the entire Steering Committee will come together again and wrap up strategy for the presentation of a first draft to the Board on May 15. Tom