

September 17, 2007

Hello, Steam Team:

**Funny Old Cars and Parades:** When I was first exposed to antique cars immediately after World War II, most observers considered them things of high mirth, along with their occupants, worthy of a good laugh. The early collectors did their best to oblige the public. My father and I had some ridiculous costumes, and wore them at many parades, especially at Halloween. He had a full Indian Chief's costume, complete with feathers down the back, which he wore in the V-J Day parade in West Chester in early September, 1945, driving his 1913 Stanley Model 76. Norris Woodward of Mendenhall was his passenger, also attired in one of his outlandish outfits.

It seemed like every small town in southern Chester County had an annual Halloween parade; I remember well attending several years in Kennett Square, Avondale, and Oxford. Using the gas lights on the early Stanleys, it was a chilly 40-mile round-trip in the dark to Oxford, in addition to the parade itself. I've been cold ever since, but we really enjoyed it or we wouldn't have participated. In 1947, right after the Mountain Wagon had been painted (for the first time under our ownership), we went in the Halloween parade in Kennett Square, with my father at the wheel. Starting with a manageable passenger list of about 12, including 3 Greggs from Yorklyn and Jake Noznesky from Kennett, we picked up passengers as we went along, and ended up with 19 on the "Wagon" including those on the running boards. My father guided his treasure skillfully up the South Union Street hill at parade speed. Most of our passengers were attired in Halloween costumes. Even my mother was aboard (she seldom went on "steamer" trips). For my Christmas card in 1947, I reproduced a photo of myself standing alongside my Model 607, attired in a cowboy outfit with pasted-on handle-bar moustache. Steam was coming out all over the place: from a blow-off, through the drip valve, etc. This was supposed to be funny, but it seems most inappropriate for a Christmas card.

Some larger places would pay the owners to bring their cars to a parade. Once my dad and I, accompanied by Norris Woodward, went to a July 4 parade on North Broad Street in Philadelphia (it was actually held on July 5, as the Fourth must have been on Sunday that year). I drove my father's 1917 Packard Twin Six Clover Leaf Roadster, a fine car for that period, and even though it was a hot day, we had no trouble with overheating. Owned earlier by Sam Baily and George Gerenbeck, my father later traded it to James Melton for the Cagney locomotive in the collection, a 9"-gauge train, and a miniature carousel.

A summer evening parade in Media offered to pay \$15 per car, and my dad and I took two Stanleys. Roy Benge may have gone also in his '15 Stanley. George Hughes, Sr., then living at 22 Ralston Avenue in Havertown, the present home of Bill Schwoebel, took six cars to Media, all on their own power but with no licenses. Mr. Hughes, one of the pioneers in AACA and president twice in the early years, was known to hold his cars together with bailing wire, but they got him there and back. He would put "any old" license tag on a car he wanted to take on the road, and he always got away with it. Despite these questionable practices, George, Sr., was a fine man, and died much too young in 1953 at the age of 42.

Last week, construction got underway on the bank stabilization project between the R.R. turntable and the museum, behind the paved parking lot. After the necessary excavating, a concrete pad was poured, four feet wide, one foot thick, and 90 feet long. On top of that and well secured to it by many rebars, a 5-foot-high wall was poured today, about half of which will be above ground level once the backfilling has been completed. Later this week, backfilling and compacting will be accomplished before the ballast stone is added to the top. Then our R.R. builders can go to work replacing the two rail lines that had been removed. We will have about 4 weeks to rebuild before our next R.R. operation on October 21. Art and Joyce Sybell took measurements of our “engine house” (the basement of the shop), so that we can design the three-track storage that will be needed for our 3 locomotives, once our new “Diesel” is delivered. This will be another FAHP volunteer construction project that we hope to accomplish in the next 6 weeks. With help from Jim Personti, Steve Bryce, Anne Cleary, Art Wallace, and Bill Rule a new oil-pump plunger was installed on our Model 76, only to have it break again last Saturday when Steve was testing the car for its proposed Sunday trip to Hagley. This time the break is in two places, but Steve has found what caused it, and it will be fixed. The 76 missed a visit to Hagley this year, but so did Ruth and I. Jim Personti finalized the leaking water tank repair on the Model H-5, and Jerry Lucas and Art Wallace have the car almost back together with the exception of the new wrist pins being made by Walter Higgins, and the installation of said water tank. Jim and Jeff Fallows also continued the slotting of the burner grate for the CX, which has some very hard spots in the new casting. Ron Turochy made a bracket for a new bell for “Little Toot”, which he prefers to call Locomotive #403.

On Saturday, Bob Reilly took the Mountain Wagon to Winterthur to contrast with a modern hydrogen bus developed at the University of Delaware. This was a part of Winterthur’s 3-day Autumn Fair. On Sunday, 4 of our cars, the Rauch & Lang driven by Art Sybell, the Mountain Wagon driven by Steve Bryce, the Model 71 driven by Butch Cannard, and the Model 78 driven by Richard Bernard, plus Bill Schwoebel’s 1907 Autocar, Jerry Novak’s ’25 Chevy, Emil Christofano’s ’56 Chevy, and Bob Wilhelm’s ’18 Stanley, attended Hagley’s 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Car Show. It was a clear, crisp day and nearly 600 cars were on display!

This Wednesday, September 19, about 12 to 15 women from the P.E.O. Sorority plan to visit Auburn Heights from 7:00 to 8:30 P.M. Bob Reilly will be in Colorado, but I plan to show them around and Art Sybell has said he can give them a ride in the Rauch & Lang. One or two more LOCAL volunteers might be helpful, if it suits any of you who live close by. On Friday, September 28, John McNamara and Bob Reilly plan to take our little “Lackawanna” locomotive to a church on Wilson Road, along with an air compressor, to give a demonstration to some Boy Scouts (or Cub Scouts) on how a steam locomotive works. On Thursday night, Sept. 27, at 7:30, the Events Committee plans to meet, probably in the museum. We have been asked to have our Steam Popcorn Machine at the Delaware Nature Society’s Harvest Festival on October 6-7 (or either day), but this will depend on whether anyone is willing to go and make popcorn on a busy occasion. The Search Committee to find a new Executive Director is also hard at work and is making progress toward advertising the job very soon. Kelly Williams successfully brought his new Stanley home from Maine, and Norman Schaut’s 1910 Model 61 is about ready for its return to Ocean City, NJ, thanks to Bill Rule. Tom

