

Weekly News, May 2, 2011

Preparing for a Motor Trip to California: To the Marshall family of Auburn Heights, thinking of driving to the West Coast and back was a big deal, and my parents starting preparing as early as 1938. By the next summer, I think they had decided that 1941 would be the year, with the trip beginning right after I was supposed to be graduated from Wilmington Friends School. My father “ran the show,” in that he decided which Packard was best suited to make the trip and that we would stay in the best big-city hotels for the most part, as in many places the only alternatives were small roadside cabins without restaurants nearby. The name “motel” (for motor hotel) was just being coined.

Not enough highway tourists were active in 1941 to require advance reservations. The Kentucky ham salesman Duncan Hines had published his “Lodgings for a Night” and “Adventures in Good Eating” for a few years, and these were accepted as the most reliable of the available travel guides. We used them throughout the trip, with good results. My father loved his 1940 Packard 180 touring sedan with 138-inch wheelbase and figured that would make an ideal tour car, especially if he bought a “double-fold” trunk rack for the rear. I was disappointed that the “big car” (the 1937 Packard Twelve still in our collection) was not his first choice, and I coaxed him in that direction. He loved that car, too, but I think the reason he hesitated was that unusual replacement parts, 8.25 x 16 tires, and things like that might be hard to find in remote places. He finally relented, however, and the big car was prepared for the trip, with the 180’s only claim to fame being that it was converted to steam about a year later (this car is now owned by active FAHP member Bill Rule).

My mother and I had a little to do with planning the itinerary, but my dad and I also wanted to attend some western trapshooting tournaments, as shooters from many western locations had often come to Yorklyn. My mother invited her niece, Meta Shallcross, just out of teacher’s college, to accompany us, so the four of us left Auburn Heights on June 18, 1941. (See “Weekly News” of 10/23/06). The “big car” always carried Delaware License #76 in those days, so Meta dubbed it the “Spirit of ‘76.” This number is now registered to our 1913 Stanley Model 76.

We were gone for about 10 weeks and covered just under 12,000 miles. National Parks visited included Rocky Mountain, Bryce Canyon, Zion, Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Glacier and Yellowstone, in addition to the Canadian Rockies and the Black Hills. We saw the busts at Mount Rushmore the year this National Monument was dedicated. Large cities were Kansas City, Denver, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland (Oregon), Seattle, Calgary, Chicago, and Dayton (Ohio), and we toured the Lincoln sites around Springfield, Illinois. My father and I shot clay targets at Bradford, Pennsylvania; Cedar Point, Ohio; Ogden, Utah; Santa Monica, California; Portland, Oregon; Calgary, Alberta; and Vandalia, Ohio; and we visited several other gun clubs as well. On the eastbound trip, Meta dropped off to visit her uncle in Milwaukee, and my mother took the train home from Dayton.

“Burma Shave” signs were everywhere, and Meta and I especially enjoyed them. The big Packard averaged 9.75 miles per gallon, and the average price of Ethyl gasoline (the premium

grade) was about 25 cents per gallon. Three months after the completion of our trip, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and no pleasure touring was possible again until 1946. It turned out this was the only motor trip either of my parents made west of the Mississippi in their lifetimes. My mother and her sister, Mary Ferguson, went by train to Mexico City following a Women's Club Convention in San Antonio, and my father and his cousin, Henry Mitchell, had taken the train to the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair.

Work Nights: Last week at Auburn Heights, Steve Bryce repacked the auxiliary throttle of the Model CX and fabricated a collar to more firmly attach the valve handle to the throttle stem. Emil Christofano and Jeff Pollock started reassembling the rear suspension of the Rauch & Lang. Jay Williams completed painting the trestles for the upper level of the museum's train layout. Jerry Lucas and Jerry Novak realigned the pilot on the 735, improving its operation. Work continued on the Model 76 with Ted Kamen and Steve priming, sanding and filling the perch pole in preparation for a final coat of yellow paint; Butch Cannard began reinstalling the copper engine cover and packing the cavity surrounding the cylinder block with insulation, and Lou Mandich continued installing new brake shoes. On Saturday, Butch and John Hopkins started the engine installation on the 76, and it is still not pulled into gear, awaiting packing ring material to help seal the rear from oil leaks. On Thursday, Bill Schwoebel and Tom Marshall adjusted the lash between the crank gear and differential on the Model 87, and on Saturday, Bill tested the car on the road with a connecting rod borrowed from a spare engine (installed by Jim Personti Thursday night). Tom tested it again Sunday after making a minor adjustment; we are ready to put the engine case on and refill with oil for Old Dover Days on May 7.

During Kelly Williams's Wednesday night drivers class, the Model 725 was fired up and taken up to operating pressure, at which time a significant steam leak was observed exiting the top of a boiler tube. During Thursday's work session, Kelly, with help from Bob Stransky, Art Wallace and Tim Ward, confirmed the location of the leak, dropped the burner, drilled a small hole in the top of the smoke bonnet and drove plugs into the top and bottom of the tube. The boiler was pressurized to 375 psi, and a small leak was noticed around the bottom plug. On Saturday, John Hopkins checked on the 725 and put the pressure up to 450 or 500 psi. The drip was minimal, and the pressure fell off very slowly. With Butch's help, he put up the burner and then plastered it up. Tom expressed hope that the car is "good to go" for a while.