

July 15, 2005

Hello, Steam Team:

Since we will be away next week, the "News" is 3 days early this time.

Eleven of us, including family members, plan to attend the Eastern Steam Car Tour at Lakeville, CT, next week. My records indicate this will be the 6th Steam Car Tour with headquarters at Lakeville. I was on the Committee of 5 who planned the first one, June 3-4-5, 1955. It was a grand gathering of 25 cars, most driven there on their own power, but the weather did not cooperate and it rained going to and during the tour. While there had been 3 Steam Car Tours before 1955, after the '51 tour the idea lapsed, and it was revived again by several of us who participated in the New England Glidden Tour of September, 1954. Four of the five Lakeville committee members were on that tour, Frank Gardner in his newly-restored 1912 Stanley Model 74, Dr. John P. Miller in his huge Model G White of 1907, and Norbert Behrendt and I in my father's 1913 Stanley Model 76. Henry Shepard, uncle of the first astronaut Alan Shepard, was the fifth committee member.

After searching for a somewhat central location, the OLD Interlaken Inn at Lakeville (which burned down in the early '60's), was selected, and an outstanding effort was undertaken to find anyone we knew of who owned or had owned a steam car, so an invitation could be extended. I think about 150 announcements went out, and probably 50 acceptances were received, half of whom brought steam cars. Other than New England cars, Ed Pamphilon, Norbert Behrendt, and C. E. Simmons, all from the Washington area, started the trip, although Simmons made it only as far as Yorklyn. We took 2 cars, my father's 1924 Doble steamer and his Stanley Model 87, which is going again this time, 50 years later. J. Donald Gibson took his home-made roadster over the road from Media, PA, Jim Beun from Quakertown trailered his 1902 Grout steamer, and Bob Lyon from Chicago brought his '99 Locomobile on a trailer. Bob Bohaty of Long Island also had a Locomobile that unfortunately caught fire and was nearly destroyed. Earle Eckel had two cars there, his faithful 1914 Stanley 20-H.P. roadster, and his 1903 tiller-steered Model C. The opera singer and movie star James Melton had his Model 70 Stanley sent up for the event, but when he attempted to put the top up to drive in Saturday's rain, there was no top there, only the bows!

We had a set of "official" photo prints from the 1955 event. Through the efforts of Gene Maute who flattened and preserved these prints in a notebook, and Butch Cannard who enlarged and copied them, we are taking a pictorial account of that first Lakeville tour to the present one, this time with headquarters at the "new" Interlaken Inn, built at the same location as the old probably in the late 1960's.

On Tuesday night this past week, Bill Schwoebel called a publicity committee meeting at which time Jean Toman explained what she had been doing to promote our special events. It seems Jean has "covered all the bases" for which we thank her very much. A number of good suggestions were discussed, and all felt it was a productive meeting. On Thursday, Paul Nicholson, manager of Bellevue and Brandywine Creek State Parks, hosted a meeting here with about 12 of his staff people to zero in on Auburn Heights Preserve. Richard Bernard, Emil Christofano, Ruth and I represented the "Friends". Every possible activity and improvement that was suggested was placed "on the table" for consideration. Lee Jennings offered some specific proposals to help us market our events to the public. About August 1, we would like a general membership meeting to explain progress and answer questions our members may have.

Our shop looks great! What an improvement one evening can make. Chuck Erikson, with the help of Dale and Teddy Simpkins and Willard Robinson, cleaned up, re-arranged many things, and brought some order to what I had termed a "disaster". Steve Jensen had a good track crew working on the tie-and rail replacement program (Gisela Vazquez, Dan Nichols, Anne Cleary, Steven Jensen the younger). Those going to Connecticut finalized preparation of the Models 76 and 87. Jerry Lucas installed the burner on the Model EX, and Jerry Novak worked on the '37 Packard, cleaning and improving wiring to the tail lights. We are moving along with the railroad signals project; so far, Ed Hoffmeister has done most of the physical work, and Bob Wilhelm and Butch Cannard the circuitry.

On July 19 and 21, there will be work sessions as usual. The final touches can be done to the Model EX, track work and signal work can continue, the shop organization can continue, and Jim Personti has a new project, working on Jim Sank's dandy 4-4-0 American type locomotive of the same gauge as the Auburn Valley. We hope there are projects to spark your interest. And don't forget to think about a LOGO, and distribute FAHP flyers for our upcoming events. It will be 10 days before you are interrupted by the next News Letter.

Tom