

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, May 16, 2005

**Mountain Wagon and Conclusion of Cross Country Trip from May 9:** Tuesday, January 10, 1956, was cold, clear, and windy in Reading, Pennsylvania, when we arose to continue our March of Dimes itinerary. The planned schedule for that day was impossible, even for modern cars, let alone antiques. We were to proceed to Pottstown for a promotional stop, then the same at Norristown, before heading into center city Philadelphia for a major event during lunch hour. Next was Wilmington, and they had allowed one hour for this trip. In those days before I-95, it took about one hour and 10 minutes in a modern car if you were in a hurry. After Wilmington, the tour was to stop in Elkton, Havre de Grace, and Aberdeen before arriving in Baltimore for the night. I was prepared to try this on a short and cold January day!

An official of the March of Dimes, dressed in a business suit, insisted he wanted to ride with me from Reading to Philadelphia. I recommended against it but with no success. We carried the Pony Express pouch on the front seat between us. Not far out of Reading, I had to stop and drill out burner forks, and the others got far ahead. They had left Pottstown before we got there, but we caught up just before they left Norristown. I don't remember the route into Philadelphia, but we wound down the Schuylkill to the Philadelphia Art Museum and proceeded down Benjamin Franklin Parkway toward City Hall. A small crowd now lined the route, and they were cheering us on. About halfway down the parkway, however, disaster struck. A gust of wind tried to lift the Mountain Wagon and succeeded in ripping the top from its bows. I looked out and found the top dragging on the street on the left side of the car. What a sad sight it was when we parked with the others at the rendezvous point on the south side of City Hall. We were on schedule, but the cost was high.

Knowing I could not make Wilmington in an hour, I left 15 minutes early and arrived in Wilmington 15 minutes late but far ahead of the others, who were well over an hour late arriving at Rodney Square. With the top rolled in a ball in the back of the car, I decided I had had enough, so when the others pulled out for their Maryland stops (it was already 4:00 pm), I headed for Yorklyn. Earle Eckel continued to Baltimore in his Pierce Arrow, and they traveled two hours in darkness. He returned home the next day. I didn't know what my father would say, but in situations like this, he never said much, which sometimes hurt even more. As I recall a portion of the old top was saved and the ripped pieces replaced. Our comprehensive insurance covered the \$100 cost. In 1975, a new top was made for the "Wagon."