

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, May 8, 2006

Last Third of 1972 Steamer Trip, San Diego to Yorklyn: Most of the 21 cars that finished in southern California were shipped to their owner's homes, but it had been our intention to drive the whole way, unaccompanied by anyone on the eastbound trip. So we had planned our overnight stops, as well as water and fuel stops, with the same precision as while we were on the tour. Having been away five weeks, however, I wanted to come home to see my mother and "check on things," so the steamer was left in the capable hands of the Stumpf family, and I flew home from LAX. Before I came east and while we were staying near Disneyland for a few days, Weldin Stumpf and I had replaced the inside burner pan; otherwise the car was approved by us for the 3,500-mile trip home.

The Stumpfs traveled in the Stanley from Disneyland to Fort Collins, CO, with planned overnight stops at Barstow, California, Las Vegas, North Rim of the Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Salt Lake City, Rock Springs and Cheyenne, Wyoming. I flew back to Denver, and early one morning they picked me up at a motel in Fort Collins, we drove the few miles to Loveland and picked up Leon Fedderson, then the owner of the Stanley Hotel, who had asked us to come to Estes Park to help promote the hotel. With Fedderson aboard, the five of us drove the 30 miles up Big Thompson Canyon to the Park in 65 minutes, climbing 2,500 feet on the trip. We sat in the lobby or the music room on a bright, clear morning, gazing out the picture window toward the Rockies while answering questions from the reporters who came to interview us. However, to our knowledge, the story of our trip was not worthy of media attention.

Leaving Estes Park the next day, the Stanley made 1,872 miles in nine days before reaching Yorklyn on August 9. The Stumpfs and I piloted the car to Omaha, then they flew home. Don Tulloch was my passenger from Omaha to Dayton, Ohio, and Bob Reilly from Columbus to Yorklyn. From Dayton to Columbus, about 70 miles, was the only stretch where I was alone on the 8,328-mile trip. The most memorable event on the trip from Colorado was in Iowa after we left Omaha. In writing to postmasters asking for help with soft water, a few communities saw promotional possibilities from our brief visits. One such place was Creston, Iowa. In advance, they had tried to pin me down as to what time I would be there, and several weeks before I had said 1:00 P.M. I forgot about it until 11:45 that morning, and we were still in Stanton, Iowa, about 50 miles to the west.

It was Don Tulloch's first morning in the Stanley, and I told him we would be hard pressed to make Creston on time, but we would try. We moved right along and at 1:00, we were about 1½ miles short of our destination when a sheriff's car pulled out of a side road in front of us. We noticed a radio tower in a field where he had come from. The signal had been given that the Stanley was passing that point, and the sheriff had been designated to escort us into town. He directed us to a stop at a filling station that had ordered in 100 gallons of soft water (probably rain water). There were close to 1,000 people who immediately surrounded the Stanley, including TV people from Des Moines. We talked for a half hour or more. Then we filled our tanks and took off again, stopping at Ottumwa, Iowa, that night.

Finally, on August 9, as we approached Yorklyn, Weldin Stumpf had told us to arrive at 5:00 P.M. as he had invited the press to be on hand to celebrate the completion of our trip (we were promoting the Magic Age of Steam in those days). At 3:45 Bob Reilly and I were at John Springer's on Route 41, and when I called Stumpf, again he said, "Don't arrive until 5:00." So we waited and pulled in the driveway at Auburn Heights about 4:55 P.M. A few of our friends were here, but no one else showed up. We were still not newsworthy, but it had been the longest trip ever made in a steam car and done throughout with no accompanying vehicle for tools, parts, supplies, and mechanical support.