

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, November 10, 2008

Norbert L. Behrendt (1917–1980): Norbert was a native of Washington, D.C. His father was a German immigrant and his mother a member of one of Maryland's early Catholic families. They raised two sons, Norbert, who was never married, and Waldimer ("Wally"), who had four children. Theirs was a very talented family. The father, Dr. Leo Behrendt, was head of the music department at Catholic University in Washington, and Norbert inherited his father's musical talents. Both Norbert and Wally, both big men, were excellent athletes. Everyone in the family had a good sense of humor, but Norbert topped them all.

About 1950, Norbert became interested in Stanley cars and soon learned of other collectors in the Nation's Capital, who steered him toward my father. In the next 15 years, he owned three Stanleys, one at a time: a 1923 Model 740, a 1911 Model 62, and a 1909 Model R. Accompanied by Charles R. Smith of Boonsboro, Maryland, he drove the 740 from Washington to Lakeville, Connecticut, and return to attend the 1955 Steam Car Tour.

Norbert and I enjoyed several Stanley trips together, the longest of which was the Glidden Tour through New England in 1954 in our Model 76. He loved to belittle those driving gas cars, insisting that "steam was the stuff." Toward the end of the tour, when everyone expected us to receive the award for the most popular car made in New England and we didn't get it, Norbert ridiculed the owner of the Stevens-Duryea that beat us out. Broken down along the side of the road the last day (the awards had been announced the night before), the Stevens-Duryea's owner heard Norbert shout "most popular car made in New England," as we glided silently by in the Stanley.

In the spring of 1956, Norbert and I took the night sleeper from Washington to Roanoke, Virginia, to ride the next day in the cab of a streamlined Norfolk & Western (N&W) 4-8-2 steam locomotive pulling the crack day train from Norfolk to Cincinnati, the *Powhatan Arrow*. Arriving in Roanoke in early morning, we toured the shops and offices of the N&W, the last major carrier in the East to abandon steam power. The company assigned Mr. Cabiness, a road foreman of engines, to ride with us in the cab from Roanoke to Bluefield, West Virginia, 100 miles to the west, and return, with a two-hour layover between the westbound and eastbound *Arrows* at Bluefield. What a great day it was! These were the last rides I ever had in the cab of a mainline steam locomotive. We had a delicious dinner at the N&W's Hotel Roanoke, before boarding the return sleeper to Washington.

In June 1957, Norbert and his father planned to come to Auburn Heights Friday afternoon, stay with us overnight, and together with my father and me, attend the AACA Spring Meet at Pottstown on Saturday. My father and Dr. Behrendt retired early, but Norbert and I worked over the Model H-5, preparing to drive it to Pottstown the next morning, and it was about 1:00 A.M. when we went to bed. The Behrendts were occupying one of the third-floor bedrooms. About 6:45 in the morning, while I was in the shower, the bathroom door opened, and Norbert stuck his head in and said calmly, "father is gone." Dr. Behrendt had expired in his sleep, apparently without distress and without waking his son. I took Norbert home, and we missed the Spring Meet that year.

Very soon thereafter, Norbert and his mother moved out of the District of Columbia and bought a small but nice home in the horse country around Ashton, Maryland. Mrs. Behrendt died in 1966, and Norbert sold that place and bought several acres of farmland with a modern house near Highland, Maryland. Living alone, he changed his primary hobby from Stanley cars to Shire horses, and he raised several of them on his new farm. I visited several times, and he came to Yorklyn occasionally. Without his mother's cooking and never wanting to see a doctor, he passed away too soon, in 1980 at the age of 62.