

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, February 28, 2011

Driving a Stanley with Very Poor Planning: In June 1980, our annual Eastern Invitational Steam Car Tour was hosted by the Bourdons in Woodstock, Vermont, with headquarters at the Shire Motel. Weldin Stumpf decided he and Dorothy would drive in his 1913 Stanley Model 77, and I did the same in our Model 87. We entered late, so our accommodations were across the street in the antiquated New England Inn, which had reasonably good food. On our day of departure, we planned to leave Yorklyn after lunch and drive to the Holiday Inn at Port Jervis, New York, about 150 miles, that afternoon, continuing the next day the remaining 250 miles to Woodstock.

Those of you who know me realize I'm not very smart sometimes, and the day of departure was no exception. From Yorklyn, we had planned our route to go up Route 82 to Unionville, then 842 to Hayman's Orchard, thence to Northbrook, Marshallton, and onto Route 322 southeast to Downingtown, wherefrom we traveled Route 113 to Lionville and Route 100 north, a favorite short-cut. I left first, knowing that Weldin and Dorothy would not be far behind. The trouble was, I completely forgot the route we intended to follow and instead went up McFarland Road to its intersection with Route 1 at the Kennett Medical Center. Waiting there for perhaps 15 minutes, I was puzzled because the Stumpfs did not come up behind. My mistake dawned on me! In the days before cell phones, how were we to find each other?

Weldin and Dorothy were equally surprised, for after moving along at a good clip for 15 minutes or so, they saw nothing of me and the big Stanley. They retraced their steps to Auburn Heights, but I was not to be found or heard from. In the meantime, I proceeded west on Route 1 and then north on 82 toward Unionville, hoping for a rendezvous. I continued on the original planned route but stopped at Northbrook and waited for some time, since no trace of the other Stanley had appeared. I called home, but no one there had seen the Stumpfs. After a considerable time, I decided to move on, thinking that they must be ahead of me. Alone, I went all the way to Port Jervis and never did see them. After finishing my dinner an hour later, they pulled in just before dark. The next day we kept together and made out much better, arriving at Woodstock in good time.

It was a good tour. Bob Barrett, manufacturer of hydraulic brake kits for Stanley cars, was there with his newly invented portable side-by-side tandem bicycle and the Keen Steamliner he had bought from the estate of Charles Keen of Wisconsin. The bicycle worked better than the Keen car, and I rode side-by-side with Bob's wife, Jill. A couple of months before, Weldin and I had worked on Hyde Ballard's two Stanleys, his 1908 Model K now in our collection and his 1924 Model 750. Hyde had recently moved to New London, New Hampshire, following the death of his wife, Mary, and had moved his cars to a new garage behind his home in New Hampshire. He brought both steamers to Woodstock, driving the 750 over the road and trucking the Model K. The first day of the tour, he scorched the boiler on the 750, and Weldin lay underneath the car trying to tighten the tubes, as we felt some obligation since the water-level automatic must have failed him. Hyde wanted me to fire up and drive the K, but I was reluctant, as I knew the condition of the car was questionable at best, and I told him I didn't like to drive others' cars. I did fire it up one afternoon, drove it around town giving rides, and had my photo taken with Rhoda Marriott Green (daughter of racing car driver Fred Marriott) and Mike May in the Model K. Six years later, I bought the K from Hyde Ballard.

Our return trip was less eventful. Weldin Stumpf had suggested that 14-year-old Mark Herman might like to ride back with me, and his parents would come to Delaware to take him home. All worked out as planned, and a week that started poorly ended very well.