

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, November 20, 2017

**Special Years in a Lifetime:** Perhaps I should say 1985 was my most important year, as that is when Ruth and I were married on perhaps the hottest day of the year. In addition to that, however, 1941 and 1972 stand out.

In 1941, I was 17. I was graduated from Wilmington Friends School, I won my first Delaware State Trapshooting Championship, and we made a 12,000-mile trip all over the West in our '37 Packard Twelve (still in the collection). I also won the "Brandywine" at Yorklyn, breaking 200 straight for the only time in my life. It was the last year of peace before World War II began for the United States on December 7. Postwar years were never quite like 1941.

In 1972, a long-held dream came into fruition. For 25 years, I had wanted to drive a Stanley Steam Car on a trip to the West Coast and back. By the late 1960s, other antique car owners (none of them with steam cars) had the same idea but only one-way; they would ship their cars in the reverse direction. News of the Veteran Motor Car Club's second "Trans-Con," directed by Millard Newman, reached me in early April 1972. The tour was to begin in Montreal on June 18 and end at San Diego on July 16, after a brief visit to Tijuana, Mexico.

What we didn't know then was that 1972 had a lot going for it. Serious inflation had not set in. Kerosene averaged 25 to 30 cents per gallon (gasoline was about 32 cents), and the average room rate at nice motels was about \$16 daily for two. I bought new five-gallon cans to ship pilot fuel for \$2.50 each. The year 1973 saw the first fuel shortage, and 1979 was the second. One large negative was that the Magic Age of Steam (at Auburn Heights) was only in its second year of operation, and it was poor business judgment for Weldin Stumpf and me to both be away. We had a 20-year-old college student named Bob Reilly working for us that summer, and we knew he could run the place for nearly three weeks when we would be together in the West. In mid-April, I decided that if the Tour Committee would allow a steamer, I wanted to go. Hurriedly the 1912 Model 87 was made ready, overnight reservations were made for 57 consecutive nights, water stops were arranged, and pilot fuel and cylinder oil were shipped to points along the route. A full description of this tour was covered in the 2006 Weekly News editions of January 2, March 20, and May 8, as well as in one of the early editions of the "Auburn Heights Herald." The story of the FIRST DAY is told here.

**Tuesday, June 13, 1972:** This was the day we left Auburn Heights for our three-day trip to Montreal to begin the Trans-Con Tour. Weldin Stumpf had planned to accompany me to the starting point and then fly home. Jules Reiver (mentioned in the "News" of 10/30/17) was to be my passenger from Montreal to Minneapolis. Jules decided that he'd like to start from Yorklyn, so his wife Iona brought him to Auburn Heights to start the trip. We had planned to leave right after lunch. The Model 87 was in the garage next to the shop, ready to be fired up. About 9:30 in the morning, I had not finished packing, but I went to Kennett Square for a haircut. The barber shop was full, and it took much longer than anticipated. When I returned, a steady rain had set in, and the garage was filled with people. Unknown to me, Peggy Jones and her 15-year-old daughter Ellen had arranged a surprise luncheon and had invited about 20 friends to see us off. My mother, who seldom left the big house in those days, was also in the garage. It was a wonderful surprise, but how was I to get ready to leave?

Bob and Kay Way were there, and since Bob owned a Stanley, he helped Weldin Stumpf fire up. With the top up, the three of us (Stumpf, Reiver, and myself) pulled out into the rain and kept going. We didn't know it, but Amos and Lois Bassett, who were at the lunch party, followed us to West Chester, where they lived.

The Stanley was running well (steam cars, like early gas cars, always run better on rainy days), and we proceeded north on Route 100 for our first water stop at Pottstown. The weather improved as we made our way northward through the Allentown-Bethlehem area, Wind Gap, and into Stroudsburg, where we stayed the first night at the Holiday Inn (East Stroudsburg). If the next 57 days were as good as this one, we knew we would make it.

(The second night was spent at Latham (NY), north of Albany, and the third at Plattsburgh, before we arrived at Canadian Pacific's new Chateau Champlain hotel in Montreal Friday at noon, in good shape to begin the long westward tour starting on Sunday morning. In addition to the passengers mentioned, I had Jim Johnson from Minneapolis to Yellowstone, Weldin, Dorothy, and Joan Stumpf from Yellowstone to the end of the tour and back to Disneyland, and from Estes Park to Omaha returning. Don Tulloch was my passenger from Omaha to Vandalia, Ohio, and Bob Reilly from Columbus to Yorklyn. Weldin Stumpf, with his family, drove the car from Disneyland to Estes Park while I spent nine days at home. I was alone for only 70 miles of the 8,328-mile trip, from Vandalia to Columbus, Ohio. The journey ended in front of the Steam Car Museum at Auburn Heights on August 9, 1972.)