

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, August 1, 2011

Stanley Steam Car Operators: This writer will attempt to list some 100-year-plus records made with Stanley cars. Both miles driven over a lifetime and miles in one day will be addressed. Brent Campbell, now 66 and still piling up miles, leads both categories by large margins. Neither record has been written about, as were the speed records made by the Stanleys and their drivers in the first decade of the 20th century.

Brent's record for the most total miles was made from the mid-1960s to the present, and my guess is that he may be approaching 500,000 (he will probably have a more accurate estimate). This was made with several cars, the most prominent of which were his 1913 Model 76, his 1911 four-passenger 30-horsepower touring that he called a Model 80, and his 1911 Model 85, named "Big Green." He used the 76 on his first Trans-Continental Reliability Tour in 1979 from Key West to Halifax and the Models 80 and the 85 on many other "Trans-Cons" and Red Rock Tours, including the tour around the British Isles in 1987. Not only has he made the most "long tours," but he has driven Stanleys on an almost-daily basis for 45 years during the warm-weather months. No one living or dead will likely come close.

Before Brent passed me in the 1980s, I might have held the record for a few years, but I believe the late Earle Eckel (1891–1978) of Washington, New Jersey, who drove *one car*, his 1914 Model 712 roadster, in excess of 150,000 miles, was very close. When Eckel gave me a copy of the log he kept on a round-trip to Minneapolis in 1949, I knew I had to do some long-distance touring in a Stanley. Other than progressive Glidden Tours and similar adventures, the first big chance for a "Trans-Con" came for me in 1972. Don Bourdon and Mike May, both in their sixties, have a very slim chance to catch Brent's total mileage, but I believe they are already approaching my estimated 200,000 miles. What about the pioneers who drove these cars every day, and the Stanley twins themselves? In my opinion, they don't even come close. Most car owners when Stanleys were made drove a total of 1,000 to 2,000 miles per year, and only a few stayed with their Stanleys when the cars became more than five years old. F. E. Stanley drove a lot for eight months a year for 15 years, but it's unlikely his total was more than 100,000 miles. F. O. Stanley probably drove Stanley cars less than 50,000 miles total, and the same might apply to racing car driver Fred Marriott. My father, who drove Stanleys from 1908 to 1918 and from 1940 to 1955 would come in somewhere below 100,000 miles.

The Marshalls often drove over 200 miles in a day, as did many others in the period 1935–55. Deneale Hunter drove his condensing car all night from his home in Claremont, New Hampshire, to Yorklyn, Delaware, to attend a steam car meet here in 1949. Earle Eckel made the round-trip from Washington, New Jersey, to Philadelphia several times in the 1930s to attend the early antique auto derbies. Paul Bourdon (1913-2001), along with three passengers, drove from his home in Woodstock, Vermont, to the New York World's Fair in 1939 in his 1911 Model 63. Leroy Benge drove his 1915 Model 720 from Elmira, New York, to Yorklyn, Delaware, via York, Pennsylvania, 291 miles, in 1950. In 1972, I drove our Model 87 from Aberdeen, South Dakota, to Baker, Montana, 314 miles, the longest day of my 8,328-mile "Trans-Con." Don Bourdon drove his 1912 Mountain Wagon round-trip from Woodstock, Vermont, to Linville, North Carolina, in 1986, and I'm sure he made more than 300 miles in at least one day. Over 200 miles were also commonplace for those few steamers that were driven on "Trans-Cons."

Again, Brent Campbell's marathon driving came to the fore. In 1982, he drove his Model 80 341 miles from Dodge City, Kansas, to Tulsa, Oklahoma, as he was making his way from Pebble Beach, California, to Jekyll Island, Georgia. In 1988, he and his wife, Martha, drove "Big Green" from Hamburg, New York, to their home in Northboro, Massachusetts, in one day—470 miles!