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My Introduction to Stanley Cars: When I was young, my father would talk about Stanley steamers, but I really didn't know what they were or how they were different from the Packards of the 1930s, of which we had a liberal supply. Twice, in 1934 and 1937, when he bought a new Packard Twelve, he remarked that it was "nearly as smooth as steam."

We went through New Paltz, New York, en route to Lake Mohonk, in 1934 or 1935, and they were having a local parade. My father spotted a tiller-steered Stanley in the parade, but I didn't get a good look and was not impressed. In June 1936, he spotted another tiller-steered Stanley, which we believe was a 1903 Model C, alongside an antique shop in Farmington, Maine. He took my picture seated in the car, and there appeared to be a similar car in worse condition behind it. It turned out that Raymond W. Stanley, the only son of F. E. Stanley, spotted the same car or cars at the same shop in the same summer and took a picture of his children, Francis and Joan, seated behind the tiller. Francis was the father of Sarah W. Stanley, one of the advisors to FAHP. Since I didn't see any of these tillers really run, I was not excited about my earliest introductions.

My father had purchased the John Becker car, our 1913 Model 76, and I first saw it when it arrived at Auburn Heights late in 1940. Since the 25-year-old tires were no good, he immediately changed the wheels to a size for which he could purchase new tires, which turned out to be Studebaker 23-inch demountables, for which he purchased five Sears Allstate 32 x 4½ tires. With help from a welder from Strickersville, Pennsylvania, about 15 miles away, they built a Derr-type water tube boiler and configured the burner pan to fit this rectangular design. The steering gear had to be lowered, and holes were cut in the sides of the hood to let out some of the heat. By early spring of 1941, it was ready to run, and I eagerly anticipated my first ride. As we prepared to go to the Delaware Motor Vehicle Department in Wilmington on a Saturday morning to get the car licensed, my dad realized he did not have a title or a bill-of-sale from John Becker, and he sent me to the old man's home to get one. In a pigeon hole in his antiquated desk, Becker produced what we needed, and before long we were on our way to Wilmington in the Stanley. A third person was along, but I'm not sure who it was. It may have been Leroy Bengé Sr., who later owned a 1915 Model 720, as his father had done a generation before. We had a successful trip—no trouble at all—which was a trademark of my father's many drives in a Stanley. Rather than admiring an old car in those days, many people thought it highly amusing, and we put on stunts with ridiculous costumes and went to Halloween parades to please those who witnessed a 28-year-old steamer running.

The next winter, my father was busy converting his 1940 Packard 180 to a steamer, but possibly fearing it would not be 100% practical, he bought Robert B. Chase's 1922 Model 740 as World War II gasoline rationing was fast approaching. Brooks A. Jones of Glens Falls, New York, delivered the 740 to my father by driving it the 270 miles from Earlville, New York, to Yorklyn on June 29, 1942, pulling up the driveway just before dark. The next day, I registered for the draft in the Odd Fellows Hall at Centreville, which was the beginning of four years away from home. My hopes to learn the operation of a Stanley were put on hold until my final return in August 1946. By that time, my father had several Stanleys on which to practice.