

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, January 16, 2012

Misfortunes in Running Stanleys: Bill Schwoebel has always maintained that I have very little trouble and that I am extremely lucky. I don't like to talk about trouble and will agree that I have had exceptional luck. It has occurred to me, however, that I should describe a few of the incidents that were not so fortunate but eventually turned out well. The first two (of many) are mentioned here.

Prior to my separation from the Service in August 1946, I had driven a Stanley only once (in 1943) with my dad sitting alongside in his Model 740. The car operated perfectly as we drove north from Odessa over the new St. Georges Bridge, which had opened the year before as a replacement for the old drawbridge knocked out by a boat in 1939. The 740 rolled along at 35 to 40 m.p.h. with no one trying to pass as the wartime speed limit was 35, and traffic was light. My first real adventure, however, was in late September 1946, when my dad decided we could take three Stanleys to the AACA's fall meet at the Devon Horse Show grounds, 30 miles away. There were to be three drivers and no extra passengers. I thought I knew all the answers and could keep up with my father and Leroy Benge, the third driver. As we left Auburn Heights, my father went first in his 1912 Model 63 (now owned by Bob Parke), I went second in his 1910 Model 71, newly restored by Hyde Ballard and Dick French in Hyde's Bala-Cynwyd (Pennsylvania) shop, and Roy Benge brought up the rear in our 1913 Model 76. As we rounded the first curve and headed up Route 82 toward Marshalls Bridge, I noticed Roy had stopped some distance behind. I had heard my father say a Stanley would run as fast backward as it would forward, so I decided to find out as I reversed to find out why Benge and the 76 had stopped. At something above 15 M.P.H. in reverse, the steering wheel began going from one full cut to the other, back and forth with such power that I lost complete control as the car shot off the road and into the brush between Route 82 and the creek. There were a number of trees in that area, but the 71 missed all of them before it came to a stop. Although my father was out of sight, he soon returned as the Model 63 was having pilot trouble, and he decided he didn't want to "fight it" all day and would take the car home. The reason for Roy's stop was also because the pilot on the 76 had gone out, but that was quickly remedied. The new driver of the Model 71 had nothing to say for himself, and there was no hole in which to crawl. Benge and my dad looked at the front end of the 71 and noticed the tie rod had a serious bend. Roy lay on the ground and pushed it back with his foot until it was reasonably straight again. After depositing the 63 safely back at Auburn Heights, the three of us proceeded with two cars to Devon, where we had a great day.

When I bought my 1914 Model 607 from Donald Randall about November 1, 1946, it came without a burner, as a badly cracked burner had put this car out of service some months before. Since the car has a 20"-diameter boiler and we had no burner grates this size, my dad built up a burner using a 23-inch grate and drawing in the sides of the pan to fit under the smaller boiler. The first week of December, we went to Randolph, Massachusetts, installed the burner, and I drove the car home. This burner, with some modifications, worked well until about 2000, when a correct burner with a 20-inch grate was installed. The car steamed very well, and with invited passengers C. Tremain Jackson, Sr. and Jr. (both trapshooters), I entered it on the 1948 Glidden Tour through eastern Pennsylvania. The burner had a tendency to backfire, but this seemed manageable. The last day of the tour we were in Reading and had an event up Duryea Drive to the top of Mount Penn. The driver of each car was required to tape over the speedometer and to estimate how long it would take him or her to reach the finish line, something over a mile ahead. About a quarter the distance into the climb, the burner backfired, and I had to shut it off while climbing. Without stopping, I got it lit again, and we kept going. Unfortunately, this happened at least two or three times more before the top was reached with less than 200# pressure and very slow speed. I was disgusted, as I always liked to win. I had jacked up a wheel and was pumping water into the boiler when someone came running up shouting, "You won!" It seemed impossible, but I had estimated a time much longer than it should have taken, and with my slow progress, I hit the time on the head and won the race.