

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, January 11, 2016

The Great New Jersey Steam and Air Race, ca. 1975: In our files we have a color-and-sound movie, supposed to be humorous but not very good, on the great New Jersey steam and air race between a giro-copter and our Model H-5 from the northern tip of New Jersey to Cape May. During the Magic Age of Steam years at Auburn Heights, Weldin Stumpf and I were coaxed by an amateur film company in Princeton to allow our Gentleman's Speedy Roadster (Model H-5) to be used for this fantasy.

The actual filming was to take three or four days, from early morning to late evening during the longest days of the year. Stumpf agreed to take the car, using a borrowed open trailer, and his brother Charles, then retired, went along to drive the rig when Weldin was running the steamer. A giro-copter is a hybrid between an auto-giro and a helicopter, and the plan was to photograph this nip-and-tuck race at several points, starting at the monument near Port Jervis that is both the northernmost and the highest point in New Jersey. I can remember the following filming locations: 1) a covered bridge near Belvidere, 2) the steam tourist railroad at Whippany, 3) Princeton, 4) Batsto in the Pine Barrens, and 5) the climax at Cape May, but there were several more.

Both Stumpf and the giro-copter pilot were dressed to look ridiculous. The pilot looked like a lunatic, and Stumpf wore a beard that didn't stay in place. The photographer would set up at his desired location, and he would photograph both racing machines in all kinds of humorous conditions there. Then the Stanley would go on the trailer, and all would move to a new place probably 30 miles away, and new escapades would take place. About three such "shoots" occurred each day, and both Stumpf and the Stanley were getting very tired.

About 7 o'clock one evening, the photographer wanted the Stanley fired up one more time for an evening photo session. Trying to oblige, Stumpf got the car on fire, and he seriously burned his hands and arms. He also scorched the boiler, so both he and the Stanley were out of business. Charles brought them home and took his brother to the Emergency Room at the hospital. Before they left the film crew, however, Stumpf told them they would be back to finish in a day or so!

Twenty-four hours later, Bob Parke (Weldin Stumpf's son-in-law) and I were changing the boiler in the Model H-5, and we worked most of the night. Bob did some patch-painting on the hood. The next morning, he and Charles were on their way back to the South Jersey beaches where the last filming was done before arrival at Cape May. According to the slap-stick script, the race ended in a tie, with both the giro-copter and the Stanley flying over the ocean as if they were Mary Poppins. At a future date, we may "release" the film to FAHP members.