

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, March 20, 2006

Second Third of 1972 Steamer Trip, Yellowstone to San Diego: From June 13 to July 3, 1972, we had traveled from Yorklyn to Montreal, Minneapolis, Billings, and Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone National Park. After celebrating the 100th anniversary of Yellowstone on the Fourth of July, we headed through the beautiful Grand Tetons and then west into Idaho, with overnight stops at Idaho Falls and Sun Valley. Heading south from Sun Valley, there was a stretch of 120 miles between Twin Falls and Wells, Nevada, with no towns showing on the map. How would we get water for the steamer in this dry desert? Others on the tour offered to carry 5 or 10 gallons each and leave it alongside the road about halfway between. Before we left Twin Falls, however, we heard that a gambling place had sprung up at a place named Jackpot, just inside the Nevada border. Jackpot saved the day, as there were several buildings, a couple of which had running water. We took on enough to take us into Wells.

Again heading west across Nevada, we followed the old Overland Route of the "City of San Francisco," paralleled by that of the "California Zephyr," both crack trains still running in 1972. With a strong head wind all the way, we made it into Reno after overnight stops at Elko and Winnemucca and a brief visit to Harrah's Museum at Sparks on the edge of Reno. At one of our lunch stops at Lovelock, Nevada, a bouncer at a casino threw a couple of bags of rock salt into his water softener to accommodate our needs. At Reno, Weldin Stumpf, a former railroad boiler maker, decided he should open up the Stanley's boiler to see how badly it might be scaled from all the alkaline water we had been using. Surprisingly, he found it very clean; the precautions we had taken, plus the daily blow-downs, had been quite successful. So, we rented a car for the afternoon and went off to sightsee at Lake Tahoe and Virginia City.

The greatest challenge was still ahead. The tour route called for us to cross the Sierras at Tioga Pass, elevation 9,945 feet, the eastern gateway to Yosemite National Park. Leaving Reno at 5 A.M., we were in Lee Vining, California, nearly 150 miles to the south, at 11:20 and took on water. Not 100 yards later, the steep mountain road began, with a climb of nearly 6,000 feet in elevation in the next 12 miles. The Stanley, heavily loaded with all our tools, spare parts, four people and their luggage, and full tanks of water, never gave up. About 8 miles up, we stopped, jacked a wheel, pumped water for 10 minutes or so and then went on to the top, crossing the pass at 12:30. Dropping 6,000 feet again into Yosemite Valley, 60 miles ahead, took all afternoon, as before any brake modification on our 1912 car, we had only the two-wheel rear mechanical brakes and the compression of the engine (in reverse) to hold us back. Not many of the multitude of people in Yosemite Valley that night paid any attention to us, but it had been a great day and one of the most memorable accomplishments I have experienced in a Stanley.

The route from Yosemite to the end of the tour in San Diego was relatively uneventful. Spending two very hot days and nights in the Central Valley (at Fresno and Porterville), we stayed at the new Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, visited Disneyland, and on the final day went into Mexico and had lunch in Tijuana. The final banquet of the 4,100-mile tour from Montreal was held at the Sheraton Hotel on Harbor Island in San Diego, and all 21 cars that started had finished, almost half with perfect scores. The Stanley was *perfect!* The final chapter, in another edition, will bring us home.