

**First Cars I Remember at Auburn Heights (1930s):** The first cars I remember riding in were a 1924 Straight Eight Packard and a 1926(?) Model T Ford, at opposite ends of the American motor car market. Both cars were touring cars, which means they had front and back seats with three or four doors, a folding top, and side curtains for inclement or cold weather. The Packard had two "jump seats" as well and was called a seven-passenger with a new straight eight engine and four-wheel mechanical brakes. The Model T could carry five and was a basic 4-cylinder car that probably didn't have an electric self-starter. The Packard cost close to \$3,000 and the Model T considerably less than \$500.

Since my father was in partnership with Frank W. Diver in the Packard Motor Company of Wilmington, this was the first of many Packards I remember at Auburn Heights. There were always three here at once and sometimes four, always one each for my father and my mother, usually a "big car" for trips and later a "school car," usually driven by Clifford Murray. The school car would never be a new one. One of the memorable rides in the '24 Packard was from Maryland Avenue in Rehoboth to Beebe Hospital in Lewes in the summer of 1927, just after I had fallen down the steps and knocked out my six lower front baby teeth. About 1928, I sat between "Bate" and Ella Dennis on the front seat of the Model T for a ride along the long-closed Meeting House Road from Marshalls' Bridge toward Hockessin.

By 1929, my father had a maroon Big Eight Coupe, with 140-inch wheelbase, rumble seat, and golf bag door. My mother had a '29 Standard Eight five-passenger sedan, the first year the small car had eight cylinders. At the Packard agency in Wilmington was kept a car for my grandmother, Elizabeth C. Marshall, who lived in the Rodney Court Apartments in that city. When she wanted to go somewhere, someone from the agency would go to Rodney Court, pick her up, and satisfy her travel needs. When she died in 1930, this car, a 1928 Packard Six five-passenger sedan with cowl lamps and side mounts, came to us as the "school car." It was like new and served us well until 1935. The '29 sedan that my mother had was a "hard luck" car. On the future Route 82 along the lake under the present Hoopes Reservoir, my father was forced off the road on a foggy morning and to prevent going into the lake took a hard hit on the left front. I can still see him picking up the hub cap and throwing it into the lake. A few months later, this car was upset on the ice on Miller's Hill near Kennett Square with Clifford Murray at the wheel. "Cliffey" was not hurt, but I don't know what happened to the car.

By 1930, my father had a new Standard Eight Club Sedan and my mother a new Standard Eight five-passenger sedan, both cars with a rear-mounted spare. Although she never became proficient in shifting gears, my mother drove her car with no trouble until 1935. However, in August 1931, my father bought a '32 Standard Eight Club Sedan, one of his favorite cars, that he gave up reluctantly in 1936. During this period the "big cars" were the '28 Straight Eight seven-passenger sedan, the '32 Super Eight seven-passenger sedan, and the '34 Twelve seven-passenger limousine, quite an array of Packards. My father's car always carried Delaware License #8, the big car #76 (which FAHP now has), my mother's car #155, and the school car #154.

For utility vehicles, a '29 Model A Ford station wagon (since the early 1970s called a "woodie") and a '26 Graham Brothers truck (with a 4-cylinder, 12-volt Dodge chassis) were at Auburn Heights as well. I learned to drive on the Model A, and I recall that the Graham truck steered very hard, too much for a little kid. I practiced sitting behind the wheel of all these cars, attempting to duplicate the sounds of cars accelerating, including the whine of the gears. I was warned not to blow the horn as it was to be used only in an emergency (the "cry wolf" story was driven home). Six cars were kept in the present garage, with my father working around them until his shop was built in 1937.