

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, March 12, 2007

**1974 Trip to New England in the '32 Packard:** Having made many trips in Stanley cars over the years, including my first Trans-Con Tour from Montreal to Tijuana in our 1912 Stanley (total mileage 8,328), it seemed I should use my 32 yellow Packard for such a trip. I was not sure this modern Packard would make the trip challenging enough, but it turned out to be both challenging and very enjoyable. In late July 1974, a trip was planned with my good friends Pownall, Peggy, and Andy (age 13) Jones from here to northern New England, where we were to meet Frank and Eloise Gardner and their friends the Fishers, who planned to travel in Franks 1929 Packard seven-passenger touring car. When we got home, we had covered 1,280 miles.

The Packard was running well as we left home on a hot summer afternoon, but it started to miss and soon snorted to a stop near Boyertown with the fuel line vapor-locked. Although leaded gasoline was still in use, the regular octane of 87 proved too high for the Packard, originally designed to run on 76-octane fuel. Sunoco sold a lower grade rated at 86 octane, and we put in as much as the tank would hold after only 45 miles. We were able to putter along through the afternoon until a heavy thunderstorm occurred in the Rip Van Winkle country, and the cool, damp air made the Packard run 100% again. We spent the first night at Kingston, New York.

The next day we crossed the Hudson and made our way through the northwest corner of Massachusetts and into Vermont. We were expected at Woodstock, summer home of the Gardners, by dinnertime. In mid-afternoon, another hot day, we paused at Plymouth, Calvin Coolidges birthplace, to tour the three or four buildings open to the public. As we got into the Packard to leave, we were surrounded by many spectators, and as I tried to start the car, white fumes arose from the louvers in the hood; obviously the carburetor was flooded, and the fuel was running across the very hot manifold. We expected fire to break out in the middle of the crowd of tourists, as the motor wouldn't start to get away from them, but the car would drift, and it was downhill. Successfully we drifted 1/10 of a mile away from the throng, and I stopped and raised the hood.

That was what the raw fuel needed: a little air to light it off, and we had a *fire!* I asked Andy Jones to run up the street to a restaurant and get a fire extinguisher, and he was fast, so fast that he photographed the conflagration and then took off for the extinguisher. He got back quickly, but the fire was subsiding, and we decided not to douse it. The needle valve in the carburetor had apparently stuck open, and the bowl had filled and run over, with the electric fuel pump continuing to feed the fire. The paint on the top of the hood was badly blistered, but no other damage was done. I called Frank Gardner, told him of our plight, and asked if he would drive to Plymouth (about 15 miles from Woodstock) to follow us in, as I was not sure we would make it. This he did gladly, but we made it on our own power to his private garage in Woodstock village. That night he allowed me to use his lathe to reface the point on the needle valve, and we had no more serious trouble on our trip (we had vapor-lock one more time at the top of the Mohawk Trail on our return). Peggy Jones sewed a yellow banner that we tied across the top of the hood to hide the blisters, and we labeled it 1932 Packard.

After spending two nights in Woodstock, we drove with the Gardners and Fishers to the White Mountains of New Hampshire and stayed at the attractive Spalding Inn, just down the road from the Mountain View Grand near Whitefield where the 2004 Steam Car Tour was headquartered. In gorgeous weather, we left Whitefield after two nights, said goodbye to the Gardners and the Fishers, and drove to the Old Tavern at Grafton, Vermont, another very enjoyable spot. On our last night away, we splurged and stayed at the Lake Mohonk Mountain House in the Catskills. On August 4, my mothers 89<sup>th</sup> birthday, we arrived home in the evening after coming through rain and flooded roads on the final portion of the trip. It had been a wonderful week.