

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, June 4, 2007

**70 Years Ago:** In 1937, the Depression had been around for seven years (some think it started in '29, but the stock market crash was at the end of October '29, so 1930 was really the first year). Some feared it would last forever. Government support and welfare as we know it today was non-existent. I was with my father one day when he stopped in at the Packard agency in Wilmington, and salesmen like Warren Collins and Byron Rawson had long faces. Apparently there was very unfavorable economic news, but this 13-year-old did not understand the full meaning. It was hard to sell Packards or even Studebakers in that environment.

Everything was not bad in '37, however, and there was hope on the horizon. More cars were built and sold than any year since 1929. Most auto manufacturers were rapidly improving their products, and styling was changing, too. The large and heavy American cars were being phased out. It was the last year for Pierce Arrow and Cord, and Locomobile, Franklin, Duesenberg, and Marmon were already gone. It was the last year for the big Model K Lincolns, and the Cadillac V-12's were a thing of the past. Although Packard built more Twelves in '37 than in any other year of the 1930s, they, too, along with 16-cylinder Cadillacs, were soon to be gone forever. Production was way up among the more economical cars. Chevrolet had an excellent year (and built a fine product for \$700), and competition was keen from Ford and Plymouth in the same price range (the Studebaker Champion was not introduced until '39). For under \$1,000, you could own a new Pontiac, Dodge, Nash Lafayette, Studebaker Commander, Oldsmobile, or Packard Six. These were all six-cylinder cars except the Fords, which were all V-8's. In the \$1,200 range were many more choices: Buicks, Oldsmobile Eights, Packard 120s, DeSotos, Lincoln Zephyrs (V-12's), Chrysler Royals, and much of the Nash line.

My father had taught this writer to shoot clay targets in 1934 at the age of 10, but 1937 was the first year I could handle a real 12-gauge trap gun. I won some Class D trophies at Wilmington and at Maplewood, New Hampshire, that year. There were some very poor scores in between, and for the year I averaged about 75 percent. At Yorklyn that year, Phil Miller of French Lick, Indiana, won the 500-target "Marathon" with a score of 498. Not knowing my father was a Packard dealer, the next day he bought a new Cadillac from Delaware Motor Sales. Charlie Jenkins of Wilmington won the Delaware State Trapshooting Championship in 1937 with a score of 195 out of 200 on the new grounds (in 1934) of the Wilmington Trapshooting Association on Basin Road near New Castle. I watched him shoot the last 100, where he broke 99. We shared the same birthday, but he was born in 1893. Unfortunately, he never shot that well again. I loved trapshooting and it was easy for me to remember dates and scores.

My father had his shop built on the end of the Carriage House in 1937, and 1½ new bathrooms were added to Auburn Heights. For the first time, I had my own bathroom complete with a shower! The old Wilmington Friends School, which had started in 1748 at Fourth and West Streets in Wilmington, closed in June in favor of a new campus in Alapocas. Having just completed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I had mixed feelings about the old and the new, but looking back after 70 years, we had more fun at the old school. My father and his siblings, along with their Mitchell and Marshall cousins, had ridden the train from Mill Creek (Hockessin) and Yorklyn to attend the old Wilmington Friends School in the days just before and after 1900.