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AIRSHIPS

A person who grew up in the twenties and the thirties was fortunate to see the development of the automobile in that period, but can still see those vehicles of his childhood at our meets and tours. However, there was another phenomenon of those days that will never be seen again—the giant airships that sailed the skies from the period of the First World War to the tragic end of the *Hindenburg* in 1937.

My first sight of one of these gigantic ships in the sky was in 1923 when America's first dirigible, the *Shenandoah*, flew over my hometown of Pittsburgh. I remember my uncle calling me to come outside and see what was approaching the house about two thousand feet up in the sky. What a thrill I had seeing that gigantic silver cylinder moving above me and hearing the drone of its engines sounding like a dozen bombing planes. I remember the *Shenandoah* was the main topic of table conversation for several days.

Several years later, one of the girls in my fourth grade class showed us a piece of silver fabric, about a foot square, that her aunt had sent her family from Ohio---a macabre remnant of the covering of the *Shenandoah* which had crashed in a windstorm over Ohio with a loss of many of her crew.

In 1924 we were treated to the sight of the Z-R3, a German built Zeppelin given to the United States as a war reparation payment. This ship was renamed the *Los Angeles* and was emptied of its explosive hydrogen gas and refilled with the helium from the *Shenandoah* which, of course, had to be grounded. Later the government appropriated enough money so that the U.S. Navy, which operated our airship program, could buy enough helium to keep both ships in the air at the same time.

The *Los Angeles*, incidentally, was our only airship that never had an accident and it was mothballed at either Akron or Lakehurst until after World War II.

In 1931 or 1932, the giant new *Akron* passed over Pittsburgh which thrilled everyone who saw it. It was a sad day in April 1933 that the papers carried the story of the crash into the stormy Atlantic Ocean off the coast of New Jersey which killed 70 of the crew and the survival of only three. It had been America's largest airship.

There was excitement again when the passenger-carrying *Graf Zeppelin* arrived in the Pittsburgh area for a visit. It later circled the globe and carried airmail. I have one of these letters in my possession which features an 80 cent and a 40 cent stamp with pictures of the *Graf Zeppelin* on each stamp.

In 1934, the *Macon*, the navy's newest and second largest airship, passed overhead. The loud droning of the eight engines and 560 HP each, was a sound I have never forgotten. Like the *Akron*, inside the belly of this giant of the skies was an inside hanger for five fighter planes and quarters for a crew of ninety. Sadly, in February of 1935 a wind squall off the California coast ripped off the upper tail fin which punctured some of

the gas cells and sent the huge airship crashing into the ocean. Miraculously, only two crewmen were lost.

In 1936 and again in 1937, the *Hindenburg* passed over Pittsburgh and I remember how shocked and angry people were to see the Nazi swastikas painted on the tail fins and rudders. Everyone knows the end of this story. It was also the end of an era. After thirty years, the Zeppelin was gone from the skies forever.

ELECTRIC TROLLEYS

I believe that next to automobiles and steam locomotives, I have loved electric trolley cars all my life and feel a bit sorry for young people today who have never ridden in a trolley or, most likely, have never even seen one. It seems incredible that the chief means of urban transportation for over 60 years disappeared from the scene about 35 years ago and is now seen on a limited scale in only a few cities, such as Pittsburgh and New Orleans as tourist attractions.

I am sure that some of our older members can remember the trolley cars in cities in Virginia before World War II and the huge street car system that served Richmond until about 1950. Richmond, incidentally, was the site of the first city-wide street car system which was laid out before the turn of the century. And, there was Washington, DC, with its bright green cars with their trolleys making contact for power by means of cable in a slit between the tracks on the street which eliminated the need for overhead wires.

I suppose that as I grew up in the borough of Edgewood in the shadow of the skyscrapers of Pittsburgh, I just took the vast street car system for granted. When my family wanted to go to downtown Pittsburgh for shopping or for a visit with relatives, we took the trolley car. Later, when I was in high school, my friends and I walked to the trolley line and then took our dates to a movie or play. The fare at that time was three tokens for a quarter. The movie was 50 cents each and later an ice cream soda was 15 cents. The total cost of a date was about \$1.65. What spend thrifts we were in those days! But then, it took me two or three weeks to scrape together two or three dollars to spend on such luxuries as wine, women, and song.

In many cities throughout our country, the trolley companies developed amusement parks on the outer extremities of their rail lines. In Pittsburgh it was Kennywood Park—a one hour ride from where I live with its roller coaster, "dodge-em" cars, and the "tunnel of love." It took me years to figure out what was so attractive about the "tunnel" and when I found out, it was too late---I had enrolled in college.

One of the most unusual services of the trolley companies was the funeral service. They had special cars with space in the front for the casket of the deceased and seats at the back for the relatives of the deceased. Most of the trolley lines ran past the cemetery entrances for the convenience of the funeral party.

I must mention at this point, the role played by the inter-urban street cars. These giant vehicles transported millions of passengers between the major cities of our country. A person could board one of these huge cars and travel through the countryside from, let us say, Baltimore to Washington , and then connect with an inter-urban that would take them on to New York City and then on connecting lines to Boston and then to other cities on the way to other towns all the way to Chicago. What a way to travel! If you had the time to walk between trolley lines, you could go half way across the continent for less than thirty dollars.

A person who has never ridden in a trolley cannot know about the sound of the throbbing of the electric motor and the sight of the motorman going outside to pull down the trolley shaft from the overhead wires and then loosening the shaft at the rear end of the car so that the car could go in the opposite direction. Then there was the sharp aroma of ozone gas that occurred as a giant blue spark when the trolley rod made contact with the overhead wires.

Other features of the trolley cars were the woven cane seat covers and backs which were cool in summer and not clammy in the cold months. Also, I must mention all the ads that were placed in a row above the seats. Unless you were talking to a friend or reading, you couldn't miss the messages. Of course, there were the familiar hanging straps for those standing up and when someone wanted to get off at a corner which was not a regular stop, he would reach over and pull a chord located right below the ads and a buzzer would sound beside the motorman's seat. When the buses replaced the trolleys, they usually kept the same route numbers and also, the row of advertisements and the familiar buzzer...but, they could not match the trolley's non-pollution record.

Electric street cars came in many styles and sizes from early Birney design cars with their clerestory windows on the roof to the giant inter-urbans which were the size of railroad passenger coaches. These fast moving vehicles often had luxury quarters at the rear for important persons or for the president of the line. Then, of course, there were cars with wrecking cranes, work cars, or trolleys with rotating brushes in front to clear snow-covered tracks in the cities. There were also a few double-deckers and the marvelous "breezers" with open sides which were popular on hot summer days.

If a person has a desire to see many of these vehicles of the past and a yearning to take a ride, he can journey to East Haven, Connecticut or Kennebunkport, Maine. I have been to both of these trolley museums and recommend them highly.

At present, the few cities that still keep trolleys running have the front door entrance with the motorman operating the car and collecting the fares as the passengers enter. Years ago, the larger city cars had folding door entrances in the middle with a conductor to collect fares and issue transfers to other lines. This situation gave rise to an old joke we used to tell to unsuspecting friends. "Do you know why a streetcar motorman would never be electrocuted if lightning struck a streetcar...because he is a NON-CONDUCTOR....."

HORSES AND WAGONS

All the articles which I have written previously have dealt with my memories of automobiles during my childhood days. This time, however, I would like to honor the predecessor of the horse-less carriage----the horse itself. Although I lived in a large city for the first two decades of my life, I was aware that the automobile or, more specifically, the truck, was still not a very reliable vehicle for certain types of customer services and it was because of this, that horses were a familiar sight to me on Maple Avenue in Edgewood where I grew up.

I remember the Haller's bread wagon, the Polar Ice wagon with its side panels picturing a ship locked in polar ice and a group of Eskimos shooting a polar bear. Then there was the magnificent team of matched black Morgans which pulled the chocolate colored delivery van of the Lightning Express which functioned in a way much like our modern UPS. The zig-zag lightning motif was also seen as brass lightning bolts on the leather collars of the team.

On various occasions I was permitted to climb up beside the drivers of these vehicles and ride with them on to their next destination. At the age of eight or nine, these men were my heroes and I used to dream about driving a team pulling the milk wagon, the bread wagon, the ice wagon or the express.

I could not end this narrative without mention of the teams of sturdy Percherons used by the Keller Brothers Coal Company to deliver their five ton loads to various customers on my street and other streets nearby. The huge wagons opened at the bottom and left huge piles on the side of the street for the man of the house or two boys to shovel into wheelbarrows and dump down the coal chute to the basement bin. If the job was not completed by dark the only requirement was the placement of a red lantern on the top of the coal pile.

The company owned four teams of Percherons and housed them in a barn located across the hollow from my home. I frequently ran over to the barn when the teams came in from work and climbed up the ladder to the feed bin so that I could shovel some oats into the chute for the huge horses so that they could have their dinner on time.

One last incident stands out in my memory. That was the fatal day when Big Red, the Haller's bread wagon horse, slipped and broke his front leg. Our only town policeman, old John Mumford, had to shoot Big Red and we children on our way to school saw our old friend lying in the street with glazed eyes and his blood running down the curbside gutter until it disappeared in to the storm sewer on the street corner. Whenever my high school class has its reunion every five years (this year it will be our 45th) someone always brings up the story of Big Red and how we all felt that our policeman was a villain for killing a big friendly horse we all claimed as a pet. (March 1979)

REMEMBERING THE ARMY JEEP

Everyone know the feeling he has when he looks in the obituary column and sees the name of an old friend....That's the way many auto enthusiasts felt when the paper noted that the Army is getting rid of the 'jeep' and replacing it with a larger, more powerful, vehicle nicknamed the "hum-vee" which is officially listed as the HMMWV with a 150hp V-8 engine. The \$51,000 new vehicles are costing the taxpayers \$25,000 for each of them. I was amused to learn that they also have automatic transmissions because we have a generation of young men who have seldom if ever used a standard gearshift. I don't know whether they are air-conditioned but they have anti-pollution devices and can carry five times as much as the beloved little vehicle that General Eisenhower called on the critical ingredients in the Allied victory in World War II.

The little prototype developed by the very small Bantam Car Company in Butler, Pa. was taken over by Willys and Ford who produced over 500,000 of them from 1940-1945. They turned up everywhere in the world where fighting took place and became the best known vehicle ever produced for the armed forces. Now there are less than 12,000 left and, here's the sad part—they are being cut up for scrap! I believe that a lot of people would love to buy one of these famous little vehicles but that would be too simple a solution for the men in the Pentagon. Perhaps many of us remember Bill Maulden's famous cartoon of the soldier turning his head away as he fires his Colt automatic at the hood of the damaged and "dying" Jeep somewhere on the Italian front. That's what the cavalry did to an injured horse—they didn't cut him up for the glue factory.

I had the pleasure of owning a used post-war Jeep and it was a rough riding little car, but I used it to pull a spring toothed harrow around my fields and also a huge rubber-tired tractor loaded with hay bales and later sections of pre-fabricated house a friend of mine was building. I can still picture my two youngest children strapped to the seats with some of my old belts as their mother drove to the store or to school when weather permitted. It was almost a family pet that replaced the 1929 Model A Phaeton which I foolishly sold to a young man who I taught at Fishburne Military School in 1947. Yes, I thought I was making a good deal since I had bought the A for \$60 and sold it nine years later for \$175!! I know that several of my sons have never really forgiven me for that!

Many of us have already seen some of the olive drab painted veterans of World War II at antique car meets. These are the model M-38-A1 with places on the side for guns and shovels and the hard horsehair or canvas seats and the canvas tops. They are becoming a real collector's item and I predict that they will eventually have a following similar to those who love and collect Model A Fords.

Of course, Jeep is being produced by the American Motors Division of Chrysler Corporation but it doesn't resemble its military ancestor very much anymore. The cartoonist Seeger who started out with a cartoon strip called, "Thimble Theatre" featured Castor Oyle and his sister Olive Oyle and later introduced his most famous

character, Popeye, the sailor man. Later, he introduced a cute little animal which was yellow with large polka dots. I don't remember what it did besides making the little baby "Sweet Pea" happy, but it was the animal that gave Jeep its name. When soldiers (motorized cavalry, I believe) first saw it they fell in love with the little vehicle and they remembered the little spotted critter in the comics and in spite of protests from the military brass, the name stuck and soon everybody knew what a Jeep was. The GI's in Europe wanted one when the war was over and one ingenious soldier at a motor pool secretly took an entire Jeep apart and mailed the parts to his address back home. He had sent most of it back to the states when he was caught. I don't know what the military did to him, but it is true and, I think, a humorous story from a generally humorless world conflict.

The war introduced many new words such as blitzkrieg, ration books, blackouts, kamikazes, Flying Fortress, and foxholes. The Jeep is one of the few words the younger generation knows today. Why doesn't the Pentagon put the remaining Jeeps up for sale? Who knows? But I shudder to think of the welder's torches and compactors doing away with those last 12,000 wonderful little vehicles. Jeep lovers unite and write to your congressmen before it is too late! If they can put 30,000 lumbermen out of a job to save a few hundred spotted owls, how about a sanctuary for aging Jeeps? We don't have much time left and the Jeeps need our help now! Next year will be too late.

TRUCKS

I am going to jot down some thoughts on a subject I really don't know much about. I hope that those who read this column each month will bear with me because my subject is trucks and trucking as I remember it. You will not read any "stats" about horsepower, speed, or tonnage because I do not have a catalog of trucks to which I can refer, but I have been aware of these giants of the road for over sixty years.

It is always a great thrill for me when I see more and more trucks at car meets because I remember it was only a few years ago that the AACA frowned on the idea of admitting trucks to the official classifications. However, there is now Class 22 with classes A through F which shows how this part of the antique automobile hobby has grown. We all should take our hats off to this special group within our hobby because an antique truck restoration is beset with many problems. Consider the difficulty of finding tires, engine parts, parts for dump trucks, moving vans and the like. Then, if your truck had solid rubber tires, you have only a very few places in the entire country that can supply your needs. Harold Via can tell you much more about this than I, and then when Harold doesn't have a part he needs, he makes the part. I don't know what other restorers do, but we all have seen Harold's trucks and can appreciate the excellence of his craft.

Now I must regress to the past. When I was a small boy, the trucks were still battling with the horse drawn wagons in the large cities. Most of the services in the early twenties were still performed by teams of large draft horses. Most of the coal, ice, bread, and department store deliveries were horse drawn. When we moved to our new home in 1923, the moving van was pulled by four beautiful horses. Trucks were still vehicles used in the cities. Their open cabs and solid rubber tires were not suited to the unpaved highways and country roads that crisscrossed our nation in the years following the "Great War" of 1914-1918.

I believe that the First World War gave great impetus to truck manufacturing since the US Army bought thousands of trucks from many different companies such as Packard, Mack, Ford, Nash, Jeffery, Service, Kelly-Springfield, and General Motors. One of the most interesting and indeed one of the most versatile was the Jeffery (later the Nash) Quad, which used the F.W.D. patents to make a four wheel- drive vehicle which, when using chains on all four wheels, could conquer steep grades and the mud of France better than any tank of that period. And then there was the familiar A.C. Mack with its sloping hood and radiator next to the fire wall which soon began to be called the "bulldog" by our men overseas. The Mack Company must have liked this name since it has been their trademark and hood emblem for decades.

Many of us have seen old war photographs showing long lines of trucks with the familiar Packard radiator design and tops which looked like those of the early covered wagons. Or, perhaps, we might remember pictures of the frail-looking Model T's with the bold red crosses on their sides declaring their use as field ambulances. There were some Dodges used as trucks, but they were really just stock sedans with short truck bodies. I should mention that as the war dragged on into 1918, a universal truck design was

developed and manufactured by a number of truck companies and was called The U.S.A.

A number of these venerable old vehicles were shipped back to the United States and were used by private industry, some cities and counties as water trucks, garbage trucks, and the hauling of earth and gravel during the highway boom of the early 1920's . I can remember some of these old trucks which sometimes retained their olive drab paint, but, mostly, I recall the big AC Macks with their open cabs, solid tires, and the sound of the double chain drives as they passed by. The drivers seemed to a child to be sitting on a seat ten feet above the ground. Those drivers were real "he-men" since they had to drive in open cabs, usually without windshield, and they had to turn the long cranks quite a few times to start those big engines in cold weather. Yes, these are a vanished race of men, and, except for a few hundred trucks that have been preserved, these quaint, old, giants with their solid tires, snorting engines and whining drive chains, have roared off down the dusty roads to be seen no more.