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Spring Mini-Meet Announcement May 6-7, 2017

8:30 to 6:30 daily

This letter is being sent to all Steam Automobile Club of America members within this area: Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and Ontario. The early summer/late spring mini-meet has a long tradition here in the Midwest. For years Bill Ryan, from up in Waukegan, which is north of Chicago, hosted a one day meet at his home and shop. There was no formal program; everyone brought things to show and tell. John Wetz used to bring his barrel burner and steam generator that burned solid fuel and was about the only monotube steam generator that with good steam temperature control. Bill Ryan usually had a go-kart that went like the wind and scared everybody. Some old guys would bring a trailer load of rusty iron that used to be small steam engines. Bill furnished donuts and coffee in Styrofoam cups. Whoever showed up, showed up.

A few years ago Bill had a stroke, from which he is recuperating and now doing more steam work, but it slowed him down and so he is not hosting the mini-meet. Therefore, I decided to revive the tradition, holding a mini-meet for the first time here in Berrien Springs a year ago. That was a little involved because the Australian steamboat engine builder from Australia was passing through town, probably for the last time. The meet was scheduled around his travels and then his itinerary changed and so we ended up with a drawn out three day event. It worked pretty good. We invited a lot of steamboat people who showed up, but then we got all formal with power point presentations and formal lectures, so that it more resembled the regular September meet. The good point was that some people attended who could not make the September meet in other years.

This year we are reverting to the older tradition except that it is two days; as long as people are driving this far. What makes any steam meet a valuable occasion is the crowd that shows up. We usually get a lot of people who have experience and know what they are doing. Sometimes we get people who have opinions. So far we have all survived those with opinions and the police have not, heretofore, been called. Those who should show up are the new steam people with a burning desire to make something. The problem is that they are like I was years ago—inventors who thought they knew it all. The difference is that I attended every meet that I could and after a while discovered that everyone else knew more than I did, thus starting the learning process. If I had the time I would write personal letters of invitation to all of the newly interested people.

Usually Bob Edwards, of Mobil Steam Society fame out of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, is here running the famous MSS shop boiler providing steam to anyone who has anything to run, usually with steam far too hot for the older or homemade engines. I am without my long-time steam mechanic, Terry Stout, and so we may not have many of my things running. When the entertainment flags we go around and look at all of the new steam acquisitions here in the shop.

Usually, what we do is sit around and visit. There are few enough steam people, or people with steam experience, and so that—the sitting around—is worth the trip. If

anyone can plan and prepare a presentation, we will accommodate. It would be nice to have a few hours of talks and then spend the rest of the time milling around.

Years and years ago, there was always an April 15 two day steam meet at Oak Ridge that was very similar to the two day Danville, Illinois September meet, even to the extent of having a full-blown SACA board meeting. And then the MSS people got old and that was the end of the spring meetings.

As always, we have many acres of grass lawn area for camping. In the steam shop/library building, where we hold the meetings, there are two bathrooms and a shower. We do not plan on providing meals, but there will always be coffee and donuts in the morning, maybe bagels if we get organized some more. Because there are no expenses involved in putting on the meet there will be no fee. A registration form will be used, mostly so people can sign off on liability suits. We encourage everyone to invite anyone they know who might be interested as this is a casual meet and SACA club membership is not a requisite. This is more of a recruiting opportunity. Meals can be found in town. There are several opportunities.

I will report on a recent visit to the Petersen Automobile Museum out in Los Angeles. This is where Leno's California Clean Car SPS/Dutcher Industries car is located. Along with the car the museum got a bundle of blueprints. I was able to photograph the prints. They are interesting because the SPS people made a number of designs, from single to double acting, and from simple to compound, and there was even a bash valve design. This is a rare opportunity to see what a bunch of well-funded engineers could draw up. As an aside, the engine that is in that car is identical to the engine that Scott Haines purchased last year from a fellow in Chicago. This is the engine that I had, for several years, mis-identified as a Detrick Engine when it was really a Dutcher engine. The tag on the engine was smudged, hence the name confusion.

We are not certain of who will show up. There will probably not be many vehicles as this is not so much a drive around opportunity than it is a sit around opportunity. If anyone brings a vehicle then they will be spending all of their time giving rides as there will be little competition from others.

I will also report on a steam vehicle project that will be shown in a few months on the History Channel. This was a very strange experience. It was much more entertainment than it was steam engineering. In this modern day and age we have to take what we can get. I furnished the engine and boiler for this project and was, more or less, the technical advisor. There are stories to tell.

This may be a good opportunity to take some more of my engines apart to see how they work. We still need to disassemble that mystery engine. I am eager to see how the valves work. They appear to be internal.

And to repeat, if you can think of anyone to invite specifically, either send the address to me or let me know and I will send to you several copies of this invite letter and the maps on how to get here for you to pass on.

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