

BIOGRAPHY OF
&
TRIBUTE TO

STEPHEN P. JAMES

AUTOMOTIVE SAFETY FOUNDATION
RETIREMENT DINNER
MARCH 28, 1958

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ASF

Staff Dinner

honoring

Mr. Stephen James



National Press Club
Washington, D. C.

March 28, 1958

Mrs. Stephen James

ATTENDEES

Anthony Antony
*Angela Barr
Agnes D. Beaton
*Marion Bristol
*J. P. Buckley
Howard Bussard
*Levin H. Campbell, Jr.
S. C. Coffman
Norman Damon
*Nancy Davis
E. Earle Duffy
Louise Feeny
*William S. Foulis
Carl E. Fritts
John W. Gibbons
*Sally Grandstaff
James O. Granum
Robert N. Grunow
Marian Hankerd
Geraldine Hensley
Mr. and Mrs. Stephen James
*Pyke Johnson
*Glenda Keeley
Sally Kerrick
Gregory Kostek
Norman Kuhne
James H. Lake
*Daniel Laws

* Unavoidably Absent

Peggy Lewis
John Magill
Mason Mahin
John L. Marks
J. O. Mattson
C. F. McCormack
*Janet Meyer
D. Grant Mickle
Louis R. Morony
Terry J. Owens
Albert Proctor
Evelyn Reiter
Carlton C. Robinson
Ira B. Rogers, Jr.
Robert C. Rollings
Bertha M. Rotbart
*David W. Schopper
*Frances Selvey
*Janet Struzzi
Walter C. Taylor, J.
*Barbara Treble
*Helen Tuttle
Mabel Veitch
Genevieve Vencill
Alan Voorhees
*Frances Warwick
*Grace Weller
*Reed H. Winslow

roads and safety

E.W. James
H. S. Fairbank
Gen. Campbell
Amoxs Neyhart
Herb Stack

education

Willard Givens
Wm. Carr
Frank Hubbard
Dean Trabue, Ky.
Henry Hill, Peabody
Gib Gilchrest, Texas A.&M.

agriculture

Herschel Newsome -Grange
Louis Taber, Farm Bureau

Mont. County

Civic Federation
Cong. Stella Werner

Others

General Hershey
(Sel. Service)
Jerry Hardy - former
employee (read)

Steve always said I was the reason he went into highway and safety work.

In a way I guess I was. You see we were raised in the same small Kentucky town and we had "gone out" together a few times when Steve finished school and went off to college and newspaper work. After the war--that's World War I--he was back on the Cincinnati Enquirer where he was making something of a name for himself as a young newspaper man and I had left Transylvania College in Lexington, Ky., to work in the accounting department of the Firestone Rubber Company at Akron. As often as his newspaper salary would allow, he would come up to Akron to see me on weekends.

As he tells it, he was planning to come to Akron one weekend when Firestone called him from Akron and asked if he would come up and talk to him about some writing that he wanted done. Steve never expected to be anything but a newspaper man but the chance to let somebody pay his way to Akron was more than he could resist.

At Akron somebody showed him the biggest tire he had ever seen and Mr. Harvey S. Firestone told him what was being planned. The Firestone company wanted to make pneumatic tires for trucks, and Mr. Firestone said he wanted Steve to sell truck transportation to the United States--to take the trucks off solid tires and put them on pneumatic tires so they could go further faster. They called it the "Ship by Truck" campaign and that called for good roads.

I guess he thought he could save a lot of money, not running back and forth from Cincinnati to Akron. Somehow we saved enough money to get married on--that was in 1920.

As I said Steve never expected to be anything but a newspaper man. When he left home his first work was on a weekly paper, the Georgetown News, which he left after a few months to work for the

Lexington, Ky., Herald while he worked his way through college. When he left the News, the owner offered to give him the paper outright if he could keep control of the editorial page and the editorial policy for five years. Steve wouldn't listen then, but he was headed for the big time in his own mind at least. I'm not so sure but that sometimes now....

Steve did everything there was to do on the Herald, but his favorite stories are about the Breckenridges, who owned the paper, and about the wife of the owner, a granddaughter of Henry Clay, who was an ardent suffragette.

It was during this period that Steve interviewed Elbert Hubbard when he came to Lexington to lecture on the Titanic disaster. Afterward on the way back to the station he gave Steve ~~an autographed~~ an autographed copy of his book, "Who Lifted the Lid Off of Hell?" The interview was his last. Leaving his train in New York, he boarded the ill-fated Lusitania--for its date with Hell.

After a few years there came a time when Steve had two telegrams in his hands offering him jobs. One was from the Savannah, Ga., News and the other was from the Enquirer in Cincinnati. He says he took Cincinnati because it was nearer Akron; I don't know. He did take the Enquirer job, though.

During his early days in Ohio he was assigned on a number of occasions to cover a "favorite son"--named William Howard Taft. Steve often ~~was~~ ^{rode} with him but it was always a tough task. You see, Taft's brother ran the Cincinnati Star and, of course, the opposition at the Enquirer kept a critical eye on their Taft coverage.

His work at the Enquirer was interrupted by the war. He enlisted in the Second Kentucky National Guard where he knew a lot of officers and men. He had covered the regiment for a year or two before it when it was commanded by Allen Gullion, a young Kentucky regular Army officer, ~~absolutely because~~

who later became Judge Advocate General of the Army and achieved a sort of notoriety in reverse by bringing charges against Billy Mitchell and making them stick then and now--but that is not Steve's story.

Steve always says he was the most awkward Color Sergeant in the Army. ~~xxxx~~ Maybe that's why he wasn't with the National Guard long before they sent him to officer's training camp where he qualified as a provisional second lieutenant in the regular Army--later made permanent with a promotion. He likes to say he had a company of grand roughnecks, but I don't know. One of his boys sent me Mother's Day cards for years afterwards and I never knew quite how to take it.

He thought something of making the Army a career, but he says he was afraid I wouldn't get along with the Colonel's wife. Maybe he was right. Steve was bitterly disappointed that he didn't get to go overseas, but after a while he was discharged. It was ~~xxxx~~ ^{about} this time that he was offered a place on the New York Times, but he couldn't take it. His Grandmother, who had raised him, was in her last illness and in the end Steve went back to the Enquirer. I don't know how often he could have commuted between New York and ~~xxxx~~ Akron.

And it wasn't long, as I have said before he moved on to Firestone, and I think he came greatly to enjoy his work there. He did a number of "first" things. He still has an Army trunk full of clippings about that time. He put out special "Ship by Truck" editions of such papers as the New York World, the Detroit Free Press, the Cincinnati Enquirer, the St. Louis Democrat, the Dallas News and fifty of the best papers in the United States.

He ~~wrote~~ wrote all the copy and solicited some of the advertising but he had other duties, too. He organized eighty caravans of trucks and automobiles to leave eighty cities for eighty other towns to see ~~if~~ if the equipment and the tires and the roads were good enough to make ~~xxxx~~

the trip. He established offices in Washington and got lots of government officials to support the movement.

Harding was President at that time, and Firestone had supported him, and Steve got along fine with the Administration. The caravan from Washington left the Mall where the Zero milestone now is. Steve helped old Samuel Johnson, then promoting the Lee Highway, to establish the milestone. It was to be, they said, the point for the measurement of distance of all the ~~xxxx~~ roads in the United States.

Now and then in these years Steve's work would be interrupted for other chores for Firestone. One of these was to accompany Firestone, Ford, Edison and Harding on a camping trip. Firestone, Ford, Edison and the old naturalist, Burroughs, had for years gone on annual camping trips together, to the accompaniment of vast publicity

Steve made this trip with them--Harding taking Burroughs' place after he died--more to protect them against visiting newspaper men than anything else. But he took one picture of the four men--Harding, Ford, Edison and Firestone--which had the greatest vogue of any picture published in the newspapers for many, many years. Steve still treasures his copy of that picture.

At one point in this period Steve was associated with Edison in his most magnificent ~~gaxkx~~ failure--his effort to grow rubber in the United States.

Steve always enjoyed the notion that he got the National Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the combined Protestants, and Cardinal Gibbens to endorse the "Ship by Truck" movement. He told them good roads would improve church attendance in the U.S.--rural America, I guess.

He put on the first national essay contest among high school pupils starting about 1920 or 1921. The subject was "Ship by Truck" and "Good Roads". The winner was a little girl from a sheep ranch in Idaho, and

Steve brought her to Washington for Firestone and presented her to President Harding with a lot of fanfare. This little girl went to finishing school in New York, then to college, and then she went back to Idaho and married a sheep rancher. But she had had as much publicity as any young girl had had until thenⁿ--at least until the ~~XXXXXX~~ advent of Miss Americas. That went on for ten years, Coolidge and Hoover also meeting these young prodigies at the White House.

The same pattern was followed with the winners from the safety contests for teachers and pupils conducted for the old National Automobile Chamber of Commerce. With the success of the "Good Roads" contest, Pyke Johnson, then the new secretary of the highways' committee of the National Automobile Chamber, came out to Akron to ask Steve to do the same thing in safety ~~xxxx~~ for the automobile makers that he had done for Firestone in the "Good Roads" program.

That was when we came to Washington--in 1921. Steve had been commuting back and forth between Akron and Washington so in the end we just came down here to live. Steve always said the job wouldn't be permanent, and now, I guess, he'll say he was right.

In those days they evacuated Detroit and New York for the presentations at the White House and Steve has some musty group pictures around the house somewhere showing the great of the ~~xxxxxx~~ automobile and rubber industry of those years. The presentations were not always without incident, either.

One year the essay contest winner came from a Colorado town. Her husband was a member of the local Chamber of Commerce, and these worthies thought that the opportunity to visit Washington with all expenses paid ought ~~be~~ not to be minimized. So Mr. Smith asked Steve if it would be all right if he presented President Coolidge with a sack of Colorado beet sugar at the ceremony.

Coolidge would have taken it, too, but Steve thought it would detract from his dignified ceremony and sought some way to satisfy Colorado's beet sugar interests and at the same time maintain the decorum of his program.

On the day of the presentation Mr. Smith came up the walk to the White House carrying a fifty pound sack of sugar in his arms. Steve told him that, of course, the President never received such things personally but always accepted them through his military aide. His aide that year was a spit-and-polish colonel and with Steve's help Smith corralled him on the steps of the ~~main~~ portico at the White House.

Colonel Chengy, backed up against the White House wall as far as he could go with Smith making his Chamber of Commerce speech all the while until in the end he dumped the sack of sugar into the colonel's arms. The colonel never spoke to Steve after that--but Coolidge got his sugar... and Steve's program went off as planned.

It was no time after we came to Washington that those in charge-- Firestone, Roy D. Chapin, H.H. Rice, Thomas H. MacDonald and Pyke Johnson--got together to make an informal organization for these and other purposes. They took the resounding name of the Highway and Highway Transport Education Committee with United States Commissioner of Education P. P. Claxton as chairman. Steve took his work to the Office of Education which housed his activities for several years.

Claxton was succeeded by John J. Tigert of Kentucky, an old friend of Steve's, who was chairman for eight or nine years. Steve had known Tigert back in Lexington when Tigert was coaching the University of Kentucky football team and Steve was covering sports for the Herald. Last year the National Education Association gave Tigert and Steve, a certificate for being pioneers in safety education in America.

Steve's ~~own~~ citation reads, "For his resourceful leadership in ~~support of safety education and for~~

support of safety education and for his devoted interest in the establishment and continuing program of the National Commission on Safety Education.

Those early days in the Office of Education were busy and full of pioneering endeavor. The Highway and Highway, etc., group became the Highway Education Board and was better financed than the industry had intended in the first place.

Thomas H. MacDonald became chairman in 1928 and the Highway Education Board moved its offices to N Street and then later to the Pan American Union.

During these years from 1921 to 1943 Steve edited a profusion of booklets and brochures. The ~~first~~ first ~~safety~~ booklet of safety lessons for use in the schools of the United States was his and it pointed out that there had been a 17 to 25 percent increase in traffic fatalities among children after the withdrawal of the school essay contests.

He started courses in the use of internal combustion engines in universities and colleges. Numerous conferences were organized, promoted and their findings distributed--enough to fill two large volumes of findings, not too different from those being discovered today.

The Highway Education Board was also the vehicle for the promotion of a number of international conferences, including the Sixth International Road Conference, and Steve was the secretary of the American Committee for many years. They were followed or preceded by tours, showing the foreign delegates the progress in road building in the United States.

Certainly the most famous of ~~these~~ these was the tour of the Pan American Highway delegates in 1924. With a lot of publicity thirty-nine Latin American engineers were invited by the Board to the United States in 1924 in preparation for the first Pan American Highway Congress in

Buenos Aires. The tour lasted a month and included, North Carolina, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin and, of course, the automobile factories in Detroit.

Returning ~~to~~^{to} Washington by bus through Pennsylvania and other States, Steve and a group of Latin engineers got to talking about the roads in Latin America as they naturally would. At that time, except for Argentina, there was no highway that ran more than thirty miles beyond the capital of any Latin American Republic.

Steve remembered that James G. Blaine and Henry Clay, in their time, had proposed a Pan American railway. He thought he would modify that to be a Pan American Highway. He asked the delegates how they would like to see one longitudinal road connecting the capitals of all the Latin Republics. And they became enthusiastic about the idea.

The next day at the Pan American Union he sat down and wrote the ~~constitution~~ constitution of the Pan American Confederation for Highway Education, which was approved by MacDonald and Johnson and then by the delegates themselves. Thus the Pan American Highway was born and the effect upon the people of the United States and of all of Latin America was electric. Steve devoted the next twenty years to its promotion.

Federations for highway education were organized in each of the Latin countries and many booklets were published in support of the program. A glossary of highway and bridge terms followed in Spanish, Portuguese, French and English, ten years in preparation. And here, too, began the ~~first~~ first exchange of professional personnel between the United States and ~~the~~ the Latin countries. In the Forties it would have been Point Four.

MacDonald and Johnson were the captains of these activities, but Steve was the active lieutenant. They attended the first and second Pan American Highway Congresses, and Steve went to the third at Santiago,

Chile, and the fourth at Mexico City, as secretary general of the Pan American Highway Confederation and as United States representative,

Today, except for road blocks in Costa Rica, Panama, ^{and} a brief span in Ecuador, the Pan American Highway is open from Laredo, Texas, down the West Coast to Rio de Janeiro.

During the war--that's World War II--Steve urged the Defense Department to further completion of the Pan American Highway as a means of defense. The Army asked if he had maps showing the relation of the road to ports and landing fields. He had. The Army borrowed his map and eventually returned it to him--but when he asked for copies, please, the Army said, "Certainly not, that information is confidential." Later on the Army sent to ask for his (non-existent) maps of roads, ~~maps~~ landing fields and harbors of Africa. Steve never dreamed he had a truly confidential information until ~~the~~ Eisenhower landed at Casablanca.

In the early twenties we moved our young family to Montgomery County where Steve almost at once entered into the civic affairs of the county. He always said he used the county as a laboratory for his work with the Highway Education Board and the Foundation.

He was the third president of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, and he helped organize the Inter-Federation Conference consisting of all the civic organizations of Montgomery and Prince Georges & counties, Washington, Arlington and Fairfax counties, and later was chairman of that. He helped organize the Montgomery County Charter Committee and the Montgomery County Safety Board. He is the only man in the county to have been president of the three principal civic organizations.

For ~~thirteen~~ fifteen years he has been chairman of the Draft Board in Silver Spring. He organized the first service club in the United States for returning service men.

When the second World War started, Steve gave up his hobby of

growing dahlias and roses but he still treasures the ~~drawers~~ drawers full of blue, red and white ribbons and other trophies he won at the Washington flower shows. He organized the National Capital Ball Society more than twenty years ago.

For years he had another hobby, too--he raised honey bees. One year a hive of his bees swarmed and took refuge high up in one of our maple trees. As luck would have ^{it} Steve was home that day with an acute sinus attack. But he got out of bed, tracked down ~~in~~ some long tree shears in the neighborhood and scrambled up the tree. He got a jar over the swarming bees--and then he slipped ^{dropping} shears, jar and bees--the last by then rather angry bees who went looking for another place to settle. They found one--right on Steve's derriere. That night when I asked the doctor if the more than sixteen stings I found would hurt his sinus condition, the doctor exclaimed, "My God, that'll either kill or cure him." Next day the sinus condition had disappeared.

Steve joined the Farm Hands in 1931 and is now a co-chairman. He is a past master of Potomac Grange #1 and a consultant to the National Grange on their highway program since 1924. He has always been invited to appear before the national sessions on transportation to help establish their national policies. In 1924 with the National Grange he started the oldest continuous safety program in America--the plan that took highway discussions into the forums of 8,000 subordinate Granges.

During the second World War he organized the Inter-American forum for a program on the Americas in the war effort and was secretary general of it.

Steve helped organize in 1944 the American Public Relations Association in an effort to give public relations professional standing, and in 1952 and 1953 he was their president.

His awards, citations and certificates have been many. In

trying to ~~refresh~~ refresh my memory I delved through the papers on the desk in his den. In about the fifth layer down I found a battered manila envelope containing among other things--the French medal of Louis XV, the great builder, awarded for Steve's work with the permanent International Association of Road Congresses, ^{clubs} (and medals from) (and the)

There, too, were citations ~~for~~ Rotary, Civitan, American Legions as well as certificates of service ~~and~~ from Presidents Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower for his Selective Service ^{work} ~~record~~. There was an Inter-Federation Council certificate of merit, a National Grange Youth certificate of merit, a record of the Evening Star trophy awarded for outstanding ^f civic work and a National Education Association certificate of membership for life--to mention just a few.

In 1943 the Highway Education Board was discontinued, and Steve became the rural and education division of the Foundation. You all know of his activities since then.

BETWEEN COURSE QUIZ

Who put the railroads in the red with his "Ship by Truck" movement in the 'twenties?

Who drafted John Gibbons into the Army?

Who kept the liquor joints out of Montgomery County?

Who won 250 ribbons for his prize dahlias?

Who fathered Madison Avenue's American Public Relations Association?

Who gave President Coolidge's military aide a sack of sugar?

Who turned down membership on the Montgomery County Council?

Who hopes to overcome the crop surplus through better highway transportation?

Who is known as a "resource person"? A modern Johnny Appleseed?
A "seed corn" expert?

Who swatted mosquitoes for Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Harvey Firestone and President Harding?

Who, in all his life, never voted for a Republican?

Who has been the perennial co-chairman of Farm Hands for 27 years?

Who "chaplained" a platoon of near misfits and neurotics in WW-I?

Who once found a personal message in a Gideon Bible at the end of the 23rd Psalm?

Answer: As if you didn't know, it is our guest of honor, Stephen James.

BETWEEN COVER STORIES

Who put the evidence in the red with his "black" movement?
The "black" movement?

Who drafted your diploma into the Army?

Who kept the liquor license out of Montgomery County?

Who won 500 dollars for his prize ballad?

Who drafted Madison Avenue's American Radio Religion Association?

Who gave the last year's college's military and a rank of sergeant?

Who entered the membership in the Montgomery County Council?

Who wrote an obscene hit song which brought down highway traffic?
Constitution?

Who is known as a "reformer person"? A modern young politician?
A "red skin" singer?

Who drafted the legislation, Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Harvey Firestone,
and National League?

Who, in all his life, never voted for a Republican?

Who has been the principal co-ordinator of farm lands for 27 years?

Who "characterized" a situation of near civil war and negroes in WW-II?

Who once found a personal message in a Gibson Bill at the end of
the 23rd Psalm?

Recent students should be aware of it as a "black" movement.

The Saga of Steve James

A tribute to Steve on the occasion of his
retirement from the Automotive Safety Foundation;
National Press Club, Washington, D.C.
March 28, 1958

* * * * *

We are gathered this evening in the spirit of good fellowship to honor our associate and colleague, Stephen James.

Steve, as most of us know, has been many things -- a farmer who never ploughed a field; an educator who never taught a class; a highway builder, but not an engineer; a statesman who never held public office; a dreamer of dreams; a philosopher; a man of letters; but above all a person whose spoken words and writings cover a broad spectrum and reveal a depth of human warmth and understanding of us and the world about us.

Typical perhaps of the wide horizons probed by Steve's active mind is his philosophy about peace and diplomacy. On retiring as President of the American Public Relations Association in 1954, Steve remarked, "How a thing is said is often quite as important as what is said, and may determine whether we rush into each other's arms or into arms against each other."

Steve has been called many things -- most of them complimentary. He is known in some quarters as a "resource person." In others as a modern Johnny Appleseed. In still others as a planter of seed corn who watches his ideas grow and bear good fruit.

In reality, he is like a Pied Piper who has converted many to the cause of traffic safety and to the blessings of highway transportation. His disciples are legion, and by the nature of their teacher many do not even know they are disciples.

How to compress the lifetime of a man like Steve, who lives so many lives, into a few moments of retrospect would defy the talents of the most ruthless historian.

Let's start at the beginning.

I guess the most important event in Steve's life was his birth on June 9, 1893, in Hazel Green, Kentucky, which is 60 miles from Louisville -- but in which direction no serious map maker has seen fit to divulge.

For those who believe in astrology, it might be noted that Steve was born under the sign of Gemini. Apparently this made slight difference in the little town of Hazel Green or to the young boy who, it might be noted, quickly exhibited the twin virtues of facility of thought and speech and the ability to work with people.

Tragedy struck early in Steve's life. He lost his mother when he was two and his father by the time he reached the age of nine. His grandmother filled this void during his adolescent years.

Steve graduated from Hazel Green Academy on a June day in 1911. Here he is with his fellow graduates and again with a dramatics group. In front is the young lady who later became Mae James. If you can see it, that's a medal for her dramatic work she's wearing. Steve didn't get a medal. He got Mae.

Steve left home shortly and one of his first jobs was with the Lexington, Kentucky Herald as a fledgling newspaper man, where he worked while he earned his way through college.

After a few years, Steve received offers of two jobs -- one with the Savannah News in Georgia, the other from the Enquirer in Cincinnati. There was little question that his choice would be Cincinnati because Steve had been courting the same young lady of his Academy days who was now employed by the Firestone Rubber Company in Akron. After all the shorter distance between two points would save a lot of bus fare - and less travel would keep the shine off the seat of his pants.

Steve's work on the Cincinnati Enquirer was interrupted by the war. He enlisted in the Second Kentucky National Guard. By his own admission, the Guard took a dim view of his military genius and found that the only way to get rid of him was to send him off to an officer's training camp. He came out of that experience as a provisional second Lieutenant in the regular Army, later made permanent with a promotion -- some say to Captain. This, of course, was a considerable achievement since it was before we learned to mass produce officers and gentlemen.

Politically speaking, we don't know what party line Steve followed when he entered the service but rumor has it that he did come out a staunch Democrat whose allegiance has never wavered. It has been said that the emotional impact of that famous slogan -- Save The World For Democracy -- may have

been the influencing factor. It is pure speculation, of course, to wonder what the turn of events might have been if we had been saving the world for Republicanism.

Let Mae James tell the story of Steve's post-war rehabilitation:

Steve always said I was the reason he went into highway and safety work.

In a way I guess I was. You see we were raised in the same small Kentucky town and we had "gone out" together a few times when Steve finished school and went off to college and newspaper work. After the war -- that's World War I -- he was back on the Cincinnati Enquirer where he was making something of a name for himself as a young newspaper man. As you know, I had left Transylvania College in Lexington, Kentucky to work in the accounting department of the Firestone Rubber Company at Akron. As often as his newspaper salary would allow, he would come up to Akron to see me on weekends.

As he tells it, he was planning to come to Akron one weekend when Firestone called him from Akron and asked if he would come up and talk to him about some writing that he wanted done. Steve never expected to be anything but a newspaper man but the chance to let somebody pay his way to Akron was more than he could resist.

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to the United States -- to take the trucks off solid tires and put them on pneumatic tires so they could go further faster. They called it the "Ship by Truck" campaign and that called for good roads.

I guess he thought he could save a lot of money by not running back and forth from Cincinnati to Akron so he took the job. Somehow we saved enough money to get married on -- that was in 1920.

To understand the Steve of this period -- or any period, for that matter -- we have to look at him through the eyes of a man who knew him then. Bill Hines, an associate of Steve's at Firestone, provides a personal glimpse of him and here are a few of his comments:

"Steve had a most ~~descriptive~~^{deceptive} manner for a publicity man of those days. No loud suits, brash ways or fast talk. In a meeting he would let the ambitious boys loudmouth themselves into a corner. Then he would come up with an idea or explain his support in a calm, yet convincing manner. He was a great and easygoing companion when he was with the right company. He took his job very seriously when he was on it but he had a sense of humor about it when relaxing. He often said, 'Well, we don't get much money but we can laugh out loud.'

"One of Steve's great personal assets was his ability to get a job done no matter how temperamental or exasperating were the characters he worked with. He had

many bosses in those early days and some of them had very definite ideas. He had to gain the cooperation of two government agencies in addition to showing results on a small budget that would amaze the big-money PR boys these days. One man who observed Steve's work said, 'The guy who said money isn't everything must have been thinking of Steve James' accomplishments.'

Now and then Steve's work would be interrupted for special assignments. One of these was to accompany Mr. Firestone, the older Henry Ford, Thomas Edison and President Warren G. Harding on one of their periodic camping trips -- more or less in the role of a present day Hagerty -- to protect them from inquisitive newspaper men. One of Steve's treasured mementos is a picture he took of the group, which, over the years since has been used by the press many times.

At one point during this period Steve was associated with Mr. Edison in his most magnificent failure -- his effort to grow rubber in the United States.

It was in this period, too, that Steve put on the first national essay contest for high school students on "Ship by Truck" and "Good Roads," a beguiling technique that he's still using with considerable success. If there is any student in this country who hasn't entered one of Steve's essay contests, it's only because he didn't wait to finish school.

The success of the essay programs resulted in a request to Steve to take on the safety contests for teachers and pupils being conducted by the old National Automobile Chamber

of Commerce -- to do the same thing in safety for the automobile industry that he had done for Mr. Firestone in the "good roads" movement.

As in the earlier programs, the contest winners were received by the President of the United States who, before an assembled group of the great and near-great, presented them with certificates of award at the White House steps. Certainly no higher recognition can be given to an activity than one in which an American President himself participates. But sometimes these affairs were not without embarrassing incident.

One year the essay contest winner was a teacher from a town in Colorado. Her husband was a member of the local chamber of commerce and here was an opportunity for him to sell the virtues of Colorado beet sugar. So he asked Steve if it would be alright to present President Coolidge with a fifty pound sack of it at the ceremony.

Now there was no question in Steve's mind about President Coolidge's receptiveness to the idea, but he thought it would detract from the dignity of the ceremony and sought some way to satisfy the Colorado beet sugar interests and at the same time maintain the decorum of his program.

On the day of the presentation, the gentlemen from Colorado came up the walk to the White House carrying his heavy gift. Steve told him that, naturally, the President never received such things personally but accepted them through

his military aide. You might say that this was strictly a Steve James improvisation of government procedure and protocol.

The President's aide, a spit-and-polish Colonel in the finest tradition of the military, was coralled on the steps of the portico of the White House. The gentleman from Colorado, with no little aid from Steve, backed the Colonel against the White House wall as far as he could retreat, giving his chamber of commerce speech all the while and then dumped the 50-lb. sack of sugar in the arms of a very irate Colonel. At that point Steve and the Colonel severed relations for all time. But Steve did manage to salvage the dignity of his program and at the same time made President Coolidge very happy, which was no mean feat.

Out of this program, and other developments was born the Highway Education Board, supported by government and the automotive and allied industries. Steve became its Director in 1921 when it was still in swaddling clothes and remained director until the Board was discontinued in 1943 and he joined the Foundation. This was the first time a national group had been organized to direct attention and effort to educational problems arising out of our fast adoleseing highway transportation system.

Steve -- as has always been the case -- had a powerful executive group behind him. The Board's membership included such distinguished people as Roy Chapin and H. H. Rice of the automobile industry, Harvey Firestone, Wilbur Carr, Assistant Secretary of State, J. Walter Drake, Assistant Secretary of

Commerce, and L. S. Rowe, Director-General of the Pan American Union, among others -- and of course those two stalwarts, Chief MacDonald and Pyke Johnson who are a part of every chapter of Steve's professional life.

The Board's accomplishments under Steve's direction and guidance were many but perhaps most significant was the foundation that was laid -- through Pan American Road Congresses and tours by engineers and other Latin Americans -- for the later development of cordial and fruitful relations on road matters throughout the Free World.

Mae James tells the story best: Certainly the most famous of these was the tour of the Pan American Highway delegates in 1924. With a lot of publicity thirty-nine Latin American engineers were invited by the Board to the United States in 1924 in preparation for the first Pan American Highway Congress in Buenos Aires. The tour lasted a month and included North Carolina, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin and, of course, the automobile factories in Detroit.

Returning to Washington by bus through Pennsylvania and other States, Steve and a group of Latin engineers got to talking about the roads in Latin America as they naturally would. At that time, except for Argentina, there was no highway that ran more than thirty miles beyond the capital of any Latin American Republic.

Steve remembered that James G. Blaine and Henry Clay, in their time, had proposed a Pan American Railway. He thought he would modify that to be a Pan American Highway. He asked

the delegates how they would like to see one longitudinal road connecting the capitals of all the Latin Republics. And they became enthusiastic about the idea.

Steve James, ever the man of immediate action, sat down the very next day at the Pan American Union and wrote the constitution of the Pan American Confederation for Highway Education, which was approved by MacDonald and Johnson and then by the delegates themselves. Thus the Pan American Highway was born and the effect upon the people of the United States and of all of Latin America was electric. Steve devoted the next twenty years to its promotion.

Federations for highway education were organized in each of the Latin countries and many booklets were published in support of the program. A glossary of highway and bridge terms followed in Spanish, Portuguese, French and English -- ten years in preparation. And here, too, began the first exchange of professional personnel between the United States and the Latin countries. In the Forties it would have been Point Four.

And today, except for road blocks in Costa Rica, Panama, and a brief span in Ecuador, the Pan American Highway is open -- from Laredo, Texas, down the West Coast to Rio de Janeiro.

During the war -- that's World War II -- Steve urged the Defense Department to further completion of the Pan American Highway as a means of defense. The Army asked if he had maps showing the relation of the road to ports and landing fields. He had. The Army borrowed his map and eventually

returned it to him -- but when he asked for copies, please, the Army said, "Certainly not, that information is confidential."

In the early twenties the young James family moved to Montgomery County where Steve almost at once entered into the civic affairs of the county. He always said he used the county as a laboratory for his work with the Highway Education Board and the Foundation.

In 1943, the Highway Education Board was discontinued and Steve became associated with the Automotive Safety Foundation. Steve's work with the Foundation is almost too recent and too well known to need retelling. The roll call of organizations with which he worked is long and impressive. The National Grange, The National Congress of Parents and Teachers, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the Future Farmers of America, the 4-H Clubs and the Rural Youth of the USA, the National Association of Student Councils and the Boy Scouts.

The National Commission on Safety Education was fashioned by his hands, and he did much of the spadework that led to the establishment of a Center for Safety Education at Michigan State University.

A masterpiece of verbal leger-demain is some of his work with the Grange. How did he contrive, for example, on the one hand to convince the members of the subordinate granges that the most important highway in the world is the road that runs just past their door, and on the other, to stimulate and

get their active support for much larger highway goals in their own self-interest. But the record will show that the National Grange was indeed the mediating influence that helped resolve conflicting views threatening to delay or even sabotage the huge highway program authorized finally under the 1956 federal aid act.

But this is, as you all know, only a small part of the story of Steve and ASF.

Let's turn for a moment to Steve as a citizen of his community.

Steve was the third president of the Montgomery County Civic Federation. He helped organize and later chairmanned the Inter-Federation Conference consisting of all the civic organizations of Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties, and Washington, Arlington and Fairfax Counties. He is one of the founders of the Montgomery County Charter Committee and the Montgomery County Safety Board. He is the only man in the county who has been president of its three principal civic organizations.

Soon after the Charter Committee in Montgomery County was elected, a vacancy occurred on the County Council and Steve was asked to fill it. But because of the pressure of his many other duties he was unable to do so -- a decision that was a definite loss to all the citizens of the area.

For 15 years Steve has been chairman of the Draft Board in Silver Spring; he also helped to organize the first service club for returned veterans in the United States.

When World War II started, Steve gave up his hobby of raising dahlias and roses, but he still treasures the many, many blue, red and white ribbons and other trophies he won at the Washington Flower shows. It is more than 20 years since he organized the National Capital Dahlia Society.

Steve also raised honey bees for a while -- until a swarm of them stung his posterior one day when he was home sick with a sinus infection. The incident involved an uncooperative step ladder, or was it an uncoordinated Steve; in any event, Steve's flying arms and legs frightened the winged beasts to anger. Steve was too angry to be grateful for the fact that the bees cured his sinus condition. He had a quick recovery -- from the respiratory ailment.

Steve joined the Farm Hands in 1931 and is now, and has been for many years, its co-chairman. He is Past Master of Potomac Grange #1 and has been a consultant to the National Grange since 1924.

He helped organize the American Public Relations Association in 1944 in an effort to give public relations professional standing, and was its President in 1952 and 1953. During the second World War he organized the Inter-American Forum for a program of the American~~s~~ in the war effort, and was Secretary-General of the group.

His awards and citations have been numerous: the French medal of Louis XV, the great builder, awarded for Steve's work with the permanent International Association of Road Congresses;

citations from Rotary, Civitan, the American Legion; certificates of service from Presidents Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower for his Selective Service work; certificates of merit from the Inter-Federation Council and the National Grange Youth; an Evening Star trophy for outstanding civic work, and a lifetime membership to the National Education Association; and that's not the end of it.

Mae James once said: Before we came to Washington in 1921, Steve had been commuting back and forth between Akron and Washington, so in the end we just came down here to live. Steve always said the job wouldn't be permanent, and now, I guess, he'll say he was right.

Steve is approaching retirement, yes, but he will be wrong if he tells Mrs. James he was right. For Steve doesn't belong to Kentucky, to Cincinnati, to Akron, to Lansing, to Washington or to any place in particular. He belongs where he is, to the places where his greatest contributions have been made - for youth, for his fellow man, for his community and for his country.

Those of us who are privileged to be his associates feel a high sense of pride in that association. To him we would also say: no man can ask for more than to see his plans and dreams reach fulfillment.

Steve has seen his dreams come true, and if we know Steve, he'll keep on dreaming - and doing - in the years ahead.

Script by Anthony Antony, with assists from Mrs. Alice

James Meyer and Mrs. William D. Hines. Narration by Robert C. Rollings, Marian Hankerd and John L. Marks, with assists from Ira B. Rogers, Jr., and James H. Lake.

Stephen James
9411 Monroe Street
Silver Spring, Maryland.

CHRONOLOGY OF EXPERIENCE

- 1914-17: Reporter, editor, ~~The~~ Herald, Lexington, Ky. The Enquirer, Cincinnati, O.
- 1917-19: Sgt. 2nd Lieut, 1st Lieut. Regular Army, first world war.
- 1919-21: Firestone Ship-by-Truck Bureau in charge of program. Introducing pneumatic tires for trucks--school buses--and beginning good roads campaigns. Until then, solid tires only. Sent eighty caravans to eighty cities; fifty-one special Ship-by-Truck editions such papers Free Press, Detroit, Globe Democrat, St. Louis. Involved for first time religion, education, in type of promotion never tried before. Invited automotive industry to join in good roads program, and safety, established Highway Education Board with Commissioner of Education as chairman. In meantime PR man for Firestone, Ford, Edison, Harding on their famous vacations.
- 1921-43: Director, Highway Education Board. Numerous national conferences on safety, engineering, highway transportation. First safety lessons for national audience; State and city school superintendents, public and parochial schools, participated National safety campaigns that continued over the years; 1940 Yearbook American Association of School Administrators financed, leading to establishment of National Commission on Safety Education, to school bus conferences; national conferences on youth, rural affairs, highway safety. Screened delegates to First Pan American Highway Congress, also Latin delegates to U. S. for tour of engineers; proposed Pan American Highway in 1924, wrote constitution, by-laws Pan American Highway Confederation, promoted local boards in Latin countries; executive secretary, American section, Permanent International Association of Road Congresses, public relations director, Sixth International Road Congress, Washington 1930; twice delegate for U/ S. Latin American road congresses. Financial trustee for many years after founding American Association Motor Vehicle Administrators. Continued road and safety programs to 1943.
- 1924-43: Concurrently, director general Pan American Highway Confederation, financed by Highway Education Board which was financed by auto. mfgs. Many conferences, numerous booklets in Spanish, Portuguese, glossaries,
- 1941-43: Director general, Inter-American Forum, for Nelson Rockefeller and Institute of Inter-American Affairs.
- 1943-58: Director, rural and education division, Automotive Safety Foundation, continuing work of Highway Education Board. Supervised all grants rural affairs, education, including National Commission Safety Education, including programs supported by those grants. Originated programs National Grange, Farm Bureau, Boy Scouts, youth groups...Retired, 1958.