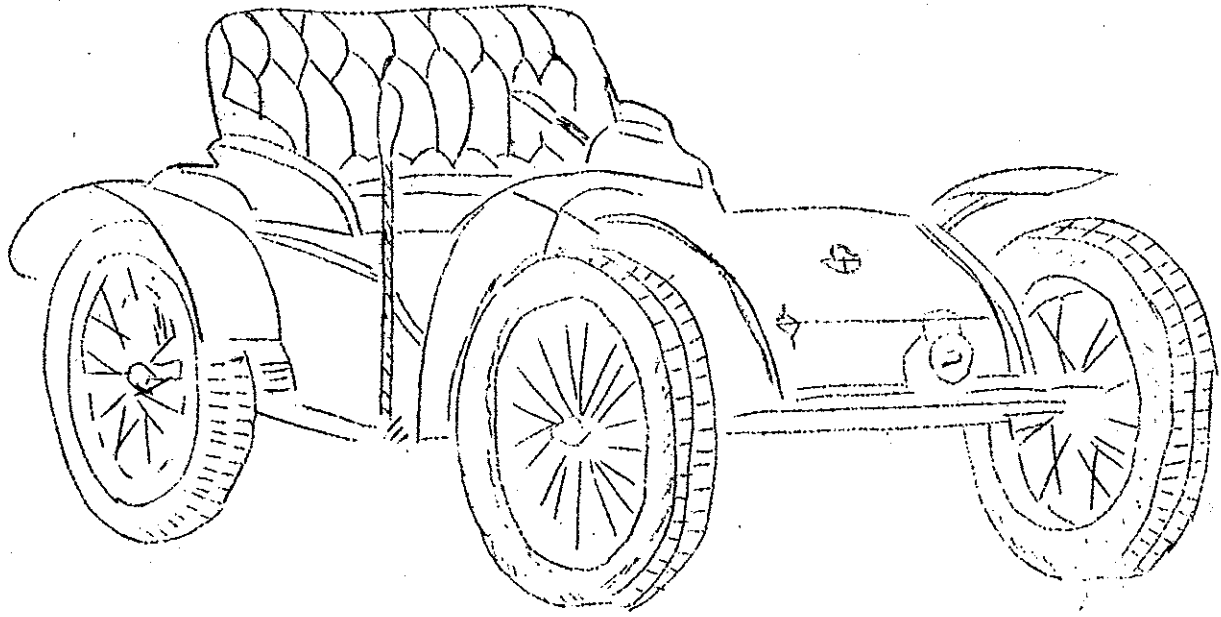


1963 Vol 1 No. 2

# CAR TOMBS



Antique Auto

Mushers

of Alaska

## CAR TOPICS

Published by the Antique Auto Musers of Alaska

Dedicated to the Preserving of early Alaskan Motoring History, Old  
Automobiles, their literature, emblems, etc.

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1. The Pioneer Automobilist in Alaska
2. July Meeting Notes
3. The Railroading Musers
4. Mt Marathon Tour
5. The Musers Abandon the Railroad
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8. September Meeting Notes
9. Roster of Active, Associate and Honorary Members

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EDITOR  
LEO W. KNUF

ASSISTANT EDITOR  
NANETTE KNUF

EDITORIAL STAFF  
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1. THE PIONEER AUTOMOBILIST IN ALASKA  
BY LEO W. KNUF

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In Alaska, during the early days of the automobile, roads were non-existent, since the prime modes of travel were by boat, dog sled, pack horse or on foot. Roads suitable for auto travel were slow in developing due to the cost of bridging rivers and streams, clearing timber, crossing mountain ranges, circumventing glaciers and laying corduroy to conquer the muskeg beds. This lack of established roads didn't stop the pioneer Alaskan motorist from venturing out with his motor vehicle. Vehicles were shipped into the remote Alaskan settlements via river boats and then hauled over the frozen lakes and streams by sled to their destinations for use in their respective areas. Once a vehicle was delivered to a settlement, it was used till worn out and then discarded as junk. Worn-out vehicles were stripped of usable parts and left to decay by the elements of nature.

The early traveler who attempted to venture out from his local area carried a block and tackle to help him through swamps, muskeg, for impassable streams and surmount mountain passes. A compass was a necessity since road maps and signs were nonexistent. Extra fuel was carried since fuel, if at all available, could be found only at the roadhouse in the next settlement. Numerous spare tires and tire repair kits were an absolute necessity if one was to complete even the shortest journey. Oil, grease, a good tool kit and miscellaneous spare parts were also part of the traveler's inventory. A supply of food was carried and, to supplement the on-hand supply, hunting and fishing equipment was put to use to take advantage of the fish and wild life resources. Salmon, trout, and many other game fish were in abundance. Rabbits, wild sheep, caribou, bears, moose, and numerous other wild animals and game birds were available for

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for the sport of taking. Speed laws were unknown but the natural rocky terrain eliminated any need for such laws. Venturing from the local settlement during the winter months was unheard of since, usually, the snow depths stopped vehicle movements, but if it wasn't snow that stopped the movements, it was the extreme cold winter temperatures that turned the transmission grease and the engine oil to solids; thus rendering the vehicles immobile.

Alaska's first road commission was established in 1905 when Congress set up a board of Road Commissioners to operate under the direction of the War Department. Yet, thirty-two (32) years later, there were approximately only 2000 miles suitable for travel by truck or automobile. Travel by auto in the lower 48 was hampered by disbelievers of the motor carriage, who passed irritating laws to discourage its use. Also, road hazards were purposely installed to disable the venturesome driver's vehicle. Pioneer automobilists in Alaska had Mother Nature's natural hazards to contend with -- human hazards weren't necessary -- to discourage the early pioneer drivers. The spirit of these early adventurers helped encourage the construction of better roads. The extent of the present net work of Alaskan roads bears this out.

Needless to say, touring by auto in Alaska, although trying at times, is here to stay.

LEO W. KNUF

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## 2. JULY MEETING NOTES

The regular monthly business meeting was held on Tuesday 2 July 1963 in the Community room of the 1st Federal Savings and Loan Building. Primary business concerned reviewing the plans for the Mt Marathon tour to Seward, Alaska on 4 July 1963. Various other topics were discussed, including the progress on the Mushers first publication being readied to go to press.

### 3. THE RAILROADING MUSHERS

Wednesday, 3 July 1963 found several club members of the Antique Auto Musers of Alaska in the Alaskan Railroad yards of Anchorage busily loading six cars for the annual 4th of July parade and Mt Marathon celebration at Seward, Alaska. The loading was accomplished by president Leo Knuf, vice-president Pierre Strong, Treasurer Mike Spezialy, and members Alan Terreault and Len Grau.

The task of performing a loading operation as efficiently as a seasoned railroad master might have done will not be discussed. One thing can be said for the effects of the methods used by the mushers though, and that is; that no degree of railroad car humping would have jarred the old cars from their moorings.

The six cars loaded on three forty-foot railroad flat cars were: Leo Knuf's 1929 Studebaker six wire-wheel sports sedan; Pierre Strong's 1926 Model T Ford Flat Bed Truck; Mike Spezialy's 1930 Model A Sport Coupe; Minor Roop's 1926 Model T Ford Dump Truck; Ted Richard's 1930 Model A Ford Town sedan, and Len Grau's 1923 Model T Ford Speedster.

#### 4. MT MARATHON TOUR

Early Thursday morning on the 4th of July, the Antique Auto Musers were seen down at the Seward freight yards, busily unloading and preparing their cars for the Seward Parade.

At 11:15 a.m., the parade got off to a fine start with music from the marching bands and the sound of ruffling paper from the crepe-paper decorated floats and backfiring, spitting and coughing from the old cars subjected to the Inlet's salty breezes. The parade went through the downtown area and up past the local hospital, for the benefit of the hospital staff on duty and the confined patients. The old cars were highly appreciated by all viewers of the parade and a big hand was given the Antique Auto Musers as they passed the dignitaries' stand.

After the parade, the cars were put on display and the Antique Auto Musers had a fine meal served to them at the Army Recreation Center. After everyone was sufficiently nourished, they returned to the Railroad and Port loading docks with their old cars for loading and shipment back to Anchorage. After all the cars were tied down and secured, the Antique Auto Musers watched the Mt Marathon Race, took pictures, and did sight seeing in the picturesque town of Seward. A very successful tour was accomplished through the combined efforts of the Seward Chamber of Commerce, the Alaskan Railroad, and the Antique Auto Musers of Alaska.



## 5. THE MUSHERS ABANDON THE RAILROAD

Sunday the 7th of July, 1963 the Antique Auto Musers of Alaska members found time, between attending the church services of their choice, to unload the old cars from the flatbed rail cars in the Alaskan Freight Yards in Anchorage. The old cars arrived back from Seward Sunday morning and were spotted by 3:00 p.m. at the unloading docks.

Wire cutters, sledge and crow bars were among the array of delicate tools required to unseat the precious cargo before it could be moved. This being the second year of transporting the old cars to Seward by rail, the Musers displayed some level of experience in this line of endeavor.

By 4:45 p.m. the old cars were unloaded, cranked up and on their way to their respective garages for a rest. Members taking part in the unloading exercise were: President Leo Knuf, Alan Terreault and son, Pierre Strong's father and one of Mike Spezialy's representatives.

6. August MEETING NOTES

The regular monthly business meeting was held Tuesday 6 August 1963 in the Community Room of the 1st Federal Savings and Loan Building. Highlights of the meeting included the various committee reports on the successful Mt Marathon Tour, the plans underway for the annual State Fair Tour, and the election of Delbert Pikaart as the new publicity chairman.

## 7. ANNUAL PALMER ALASKA STATE FAIR MEET

Fair time is here again and the Antique Auto Musers can now end the scramble to get their old cars, sometimes known as "Demons of the Road", in the day of the horse and buggy, polished and ready and partake in the grind through the foothills of the Chugach Mountains and onto Palmer, Alaska for the annual State Fair parade.

The third annual AAM of A, Palmer, Alaska State Fair Tour began with the assembling of tour participants at Yeager's Service Station on the East end of Anchorage. Members began arriving at 0830 hours on the morning of 31 Aug 63. Participants paired off in twos and departed at 5 minute intervals. The slower cars were the first to leave. The five minute interval was decided upon to assure the normal flow of heavy holiday traffic a minimum of congestion. The trip through the scenic mountains and prairies to Palmer were uneventful with but one short delay at the Knik River Bridge. Four Canadian built pre-fab school rooms for Anchorage Schools were being transported across the bridge, tying up all traffic for approximately 30 minutes.

Upon arrival in Palmer, the old cars were lined up in parade formation and parked. While drivers busied themselves with minor adjustments and polished their cars, the wives set out a picnic lunch on the lawn of a local church. The weather was beautiful with a cloudless sky and shade was the order of the day for the picnic lunch. Since the Musers arrived one and one-half hours prior to parade time, a leisurely lunch period was permitted. The picnic lunch was quite a colorful affair since the Auto Musers were attired in appropriate dress comparable to the era of their cars. After expelling the exhaust fumes from their lungs, all sat down to a well-stocked and planned picnic lunch. Fried chicken, various

types of salads, both tossed and potato; salad dressings, pickles, olives, celery, lettuce, radishes; various types of breads, cakes, cookies, soft drinks, and coffee were on deck. Portable radios furnished the music which was, on numerous occasions, drowned out by one of the array of bands tuning up instruments. To say the lunch wasn't enjoyed would be blasphemous. To say the lunch was quietly enjoyed would be entirely erroneous. Nevertheless, a well-fed, happy and enthusiastic group of Auto Musers mounted their balking steeds and jockeyed into position for the parade.

The parade began at 1330 hours with the downbeat of the drummer in the leading band. The Auto Musers zig-zagged from curb to curb to allow for the walking pace established for the drill teams, bands and horsemen. Buzzing of movie cameras, flashing of light bulbs and clicking of shutters were heard all along the parade route. Needless to say, the old automobiles were a tremendous welcome and attraction to all parade viewers.

Terminus of the parade for the Auto Musers was in the fair grounds in front of the grandstand. Here the old cars were put through their paces in the various contests with the blind foldback seat driver contest capturing the greatest response from the grandstand clientele. The twisting, winding, narrow black top track sent all drivers into the brush at one time or another. The winning couple well deserved the trophy they won for their excellent display of cooperation and understanding of interpreting the gees and haws that guided them to victory. The grandstand activities ended with the lining up of the old automobiles for inspection and viewing by the public, while the auto musers and their families took in the innumerable fair attractions.

Late afternoon found the old cars with their occupants moving out of Palmer and pointed in the general direction of Anchorage. The return to Anchorage was disrupted temporarily when two antique automobiles became ill, probably from ingestion of too much carbon monoxide, coupled with the twisting and turning encountered in the foothill roads, and had to be towed home. I won't divulge the identity of the drivers, but the incapacitated vehicles were both Model "T" Fords.

The third annual State Fair will be long remembered as a well-rounded tour with its variety of activities, work, sweat and fun.

Participants driving old cars to Palmer, Alaska were: Len Grau and family driving a 1923 Model "T" Ford, Depot Hack; President Leo Knuf and family driving a 1929 Studebaker Sixwire wheel sport sedan; Fred Tisdal and family driving a 1936 Ford Sedan; Treasurer Mike Spezialy driving a 1915 Model "T" Ford Roadster; Mrs. Mike Spezialy and family driving a 1931 Model "A" Ford Sport Coupe; Ted Richards and family driving a 1930 Model "A" Ford Town Sedan and Pierre Strong and family driving a 1926 Model "T" Ford Flatbed Truck.

8. SEPTEMBER MEETING NOTES

September's business meeting was held on Tuesday, September 3.

The success of the annual State Fair Tour and activities captured most of the meeting's business. The various suggestions on further improvements in next year's tour were evidence of the interest generated by this annual event.

Preparations were completed for October's annual election of new officers for the coming year.

Plaques and trophies for participation in the State Fair Tour will be awarded during the October meeting.

No special events were scheduled for the remainder of September.

9. ACTIVE MEMBERS 1963

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>HOME PHONE</u>	<u>OFFICE PHONE</u>
Combs, Allan	P.O. Box 4016 Star Rt. A Spen.	-----	-----
Grau, Len	Box 3755 Star Rt. A Spenard	-----	BR 55401 Ext 536
Hartlieb, Gordon	2306 Foraker Blvd. Anch.	FA 24712	BR 40201
Heitz, Charles		-----	TO 38191
Knuf, Leo W.	5001 Chena Ave Anch	FE 34508	753 4211
Morgan, Royce H. Dr.	2203 Lord Baranof Blvd, Anch	FA 23304	BR 23005
Nemeth, John	Indiana	-----	-----
Palmer, Edwin	2805 67th Ave	FA 21558	-----
Pikaart, Delbert	333 G Hoonah Ave Ft Rich	TO 36307	TO 27288
Randall, Josh	1426 W 15th	-----	-----
Raymond, Henry	PO Box 3292 Anch	BR 77671	BR 82822
Richards, Ted A	3004 Brookside Drive	FA 22258	-----
Simpson, Stanley	604 $\frac{1}{2}$ Park	FE 31135	-----
Spezialy, Marco	Klatt Road	DI 41666	BR 25254
Strong, Pierre	Bruin Park Subdivision	DI 41984	BR 25254
Terreault, Alan	Minnesota	-----	-----
Tisdell, Fred	1510 H	BR 88523	-----
Wells, Hi	Klatt Road	-----	-----
Col Wm C Myers	6550-B <sup>E/m</sup> I St	7531132	7533109 055

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS 1963

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>HOME PHONE</u>
Columbus, Joe	1430 K	BR 40704
Nystrom, Warren	831 Gambell	-----
Nystrom, John	831 Gambell	-----
Odsather, Ken	537 M	BR 47792
Redden, Phil	Box 4073 Spenard	-----
Reeve, Bob	209 East 11th	BR 41735
Riley, John	1352 10th	BR 65292
Roop, Minor	1321 W Hillcrest Dr.	FA 23808
Ross, Robert A (Bob)	445 Ea 14th	BR 40845
Savage, John M.	1517 Birchwood	FE 32297
Seltenreich, Bud	Washington D C	-----

HONORARY MEMBERS 1963

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>OCCUPATION</u>
Eagan, William E	Juneau, Alaska	Governor of Alaska
Harrah, William	Reno, Nevada	Owner of Harrah Auto Museum
LaBarre, Warren	Portland, Oregon	Owner of Commercial Machine Works