

HOW THE BET CAME TO BE MADE

Several business men were having luncheon at a club in Chicago some weeks ago, and during the course of the conversation the subject of railroads was brought up. One of the men, Mr. L. B. Miller, mentioned driving to California. The time required to make the trip was discussed, and when Mr. Miller made the statement that 11 days was sufficient time to make the run from Chicago to San Francisco, he was immediately challenged and some one offered to bet that it could not be done. The result was that before they left the table \$650 was wagered by Mr. Miller that he could cover the distance in his car in 11 days.

The following account is Mr. Miller's own story of how he completed the remarkable run of 2485 miles in seven days from the time he left Chicago, driving an Elgin Six Coupe, with an average gasoline consumption of 20 miles to the gallon. Mr. Miller has no connection whatever with the Elgin Motor Car corporation, and made the trip entirely on his own initiative. He is general manager of agency sales of the Victor X-Ray corporation, 236 South Robey street, Chicago. The car he used was a standard Elgin Six coupe, No. KL-10595, purchased from the Northwest Motor Sales company, Chicago.

Upon hearing of the proposed

trip, the Elgin Motor Car corporation requested Mr. Miller to send a telegram each night, giving the number of miles covered, amount of gasoline used, etc. After reaching San Francisco, Mr. Miller wrote the following interesting letter, unsolicited, which tells its own story:

San Francisco, Cal., July 3, 1921.
Elgin Motor Car Corporation, Argo, Illinois, Gentlemen:

In giving you a more complete report of the performance of the Elgin Six coupe on its trip from Chicago to San Francisco it certainly is a great pleasure to have my beliefs and confidences in the Elgin Six so amply proven, as the data which follows shows.

392 Miles the First Day

Leaving Chicago on Saturday morning, June 25, at 6:15 a. m., accompanied by Mr. George L. Bush, who is our distributor on the Pacific coast with headquarters at San Francisco, we started for the haven of the setting sun. The first 140 miles out of Chicago was along the Roosevelt road and with one or two detours a real boulevard to the Mississippi river. Crossing the river we landed on the Iowa side in Clinton at 11 a. m.

After eating breakfast and taking on oil and gasoline, we started

along the Lincoln highway dirt road boulevard and encountered our first slippery going at DeWitt, 19 miles out, rain having fallen several hours previous, making the going rather slow. This condition we found prevailed until we reached the town of Wheatland, at which point we ran out of the rain belt and found that the dirt roads were real boulevards and we could attain any speed that we saw fit. We bowed along through Cedar Rapids and Marshalltown. It had been our intention to stop the first night at Ames, Ia., but when we reached this point it was found that our running schedule would permit us to go on farther, so at 7 o'clock we stopped at Boone, 392 miles nearer San Francisco than we were at 6 o'clock in the morning.

Kearney, Neb., the Second Day.

Leaving Boone at 5 a. m., we again ran into a little patch of wet roads for some 20 odd miles but not enough to cause any great amount of delay, and covering the best roads of the entire trip, we rolled onto the bridge crossing the Missouri river into Omaha, as the good folks were coming out of morning services at church. No stop was made in Omaha. Through Nebraska a great many cars were on the road and as no rain of any sort had been experienced for several weeks, the dust and some sandy spots made the going very heavy. However, we had no trouble in pushing on through Fremont, Columbus, Grand Island

and on to Kearney, where we stopped for the evening, rolling up a total of 387 miles for the second day out. Drained out the crank case, washed out with kerosene, oiled universal joints, third member and springs, and was ready for an early morning start.

Third Day Out—417 Miles.

Leaving Kearney at daybreak, we determined to reach Cheyenne, Wyo., by night, but we found the roads—although being called dirt roads—better than any boulevard one could find any place. We gave her the gas, passing through North Platte and Sidney and rolled into Cheyenne with the sun too high in the sky to even think of stopping. Then we thought we would go on to Laramie, 52 miles away, but when we arrived the going was so good we kept rolling along until we wound up and decided, at Rock River, Wyo., a 417-mile run, was enough.

We camped on the municipal camp grounds furnished for the benefit of tourists and the edification of the local supply of mosquitoes, which are bred here in sufficient quantities to stock the shores of Jersey.

25 1/2 Hours at Wheel, Fourth Day

After an almost sleepless night from mosquitoes, howling dogs and squawling youngsters in several of the other tourists' tents, we rolled up our blankets at 3 a. m. and headed for Salt Lake City as the destination for the fourth day. Two hours out and having become careless with the fine going and the easy running of the car, struck a chuck hole at 45 miles an hour which should have been negotiated at not over five or six. We put on a spring clam and went into Rawlins, Wyo., at 9 a. m. the place we expected to spend, according to our schedule, our fourth night out. (Mr. Miller had mapped out his own private schedule for making San Francisco in eight days, giving himself plenty of leeway for unforeseen delays.) We pulled into a garage, called the proprietor, and he saw the sign on the car "Chicago to San Francisco." We explained this was a racing break, and he pulled his mechanics off of other jobs and one hour afterwards we were on our way, tickled to death to think we had lost no time because the one hour's time consumed in putting in the new spring had been the hour we had made by starting the hour earlier in the morning. We found after leaving Rawlins that the elevation which had been gradual began to show more and more, and it was interesting to watch the altitude meter climb steadily upward until we had hit an elevation of 7000 feet, thirty miles west of Rawlins, at which point the divide of the continent was passed, and the Elgin did her duty just as pleasantly as she did when she was at an altitude of 800 feet. But we commenced experiencing real before-the-war roads west of Wamsutter, where new roads are under construction, one stretch of 21 miles taking us 3 hours to cover. We had made up our minds to go to Salt Lake for our fourth night and we landed in Evanston, Wyo., at 9 p. m., 81 miles out of Salt Lake, but the car was doing so nicely we figured that physical endurance should match mechanical endurance, so we stuck to our idea of going to Salt Lake. If we had known what stood before us, God knows we would not have undertaken that trip only in a flying machine or a scented Pullman. Even the Lincoln Highway Guide says: "The Utah state highway department has a new road under construction, the old trail is being replaced by a new route. Travel will get through while the work is under way; the old route will be found poor, quite rutty, forcing slow going." No truer words were ever written. At 5:30 a. m. we pulled up at the Newhouse hotel with a total of 402 miles from the time we left Rock River for Salt Lake. Taking the time of putting on the spring clamp and the putting in of a new spring, the driver had 25 1/2 hours steady going, with nothing to do but sit and drive. Leaving the car stand in the street, we registered, leaving a call for 7:30, ordering breakfast to be served in the room at that time. We went up and had our first shave and bath since leaving Chicago. We had no more than pulled the covers over our heads when breakfast was brought in and was enjoyed in our BVD's.

Ely, Nev., the Fifth Day

At 8:30 a. m., the town that Brigham Young and his followers made famous was fast being Lake we pushed out toward the southern shore of the Great Salt Lake we pushed out toward the Great American Desert. The markers of the Lincoln highway through Utah must have been Mormon installed because this was the first and only poorly marked stretch of road we found, with the consequence we found after a few hours driving that we were not encountering any such called for in the Lincoln Highway Guide. Upon making inquiry at a ranch house, saw upon your imagination, please figure how we felt when we were told that we were 70 miles off the Lincoln highway, and here we were trying to make time. Even as my good friend Ring Lardner would say, "Twas a subject the family would not care to talk over in company." We were told that if we could cross the mountain range there was a trail over which it took a four-horse team to pull an empty wagon, over the divide called Lookout Point. If we made this, we could reach the Lincoln highway in 15 miles. The writer, who is now driving his fifth Elgin car, felt confident that if four horses could pull a wagon across this trail, it would be easier and a saving of time to go over the range rather than to retrace the 70 miles just passed over, so at it we went and if any man should serve a sentence in the penitentiary for injury to other than a human being, I should be sentenced for the punishment I gave the car, pushing her over those tortuous mountain trails. But not a murmur, not a complaint, bumpety-bump over rocks,

down into chuck holes, dry washes, through cacti brush, greasewood and sage, we finally came out into view of a great wide expanse of white, dry alkali land as far as the eye could reach, with another mountain range in the distance, and, God be praised, the most glorious sight we saw on the trip was a red, white and blue sign with a big capital "L" Lincoln highway marker out in the middle of the desert. We were happy because we knew we were once more on the right road. We had lost something like five hours in time, but headed for Ely, Nev., which we had determined upon being our stopping point for the night. We made up our minds we would reach there no matter whether it required all night driving or not. Proper pressure was brought to bear to compel the state highway officials to close for traffic the passage of cars across the portion of the time and it would take a car with at least an 18-inch clearance to not hit and grate its innards on many of the high points. Some idea may be gained of how awfully this stretch is for passage when you know that it took us one and one-half hours to cover eight miles. It was terrible punishment to give my machine. Just ahead of us was a big, high-priced car being towed by three cars hitched together. It had broken out a rear axle, still our Elgin did not make any complaint at all. We pulled into Gold Hill, Utah, 107 miles away from Ely, at 6:30 p. m., and we had to make Ely to

prove to ourselves that we could at all to a fixed point of destination each day. The going was still mighty rough, up and down grades, running into many arroyos and dry washes which necessarily made speed out of the question. About 11 o'clock nature began demonstrating that mechanical force had the best of the argument, we pulled upon one

side of the road, curled up in the car and went to sleep. At 2 o'clock we pulled out and started on our way again and rolled into Ely, Nev., at 4:30 a. m.

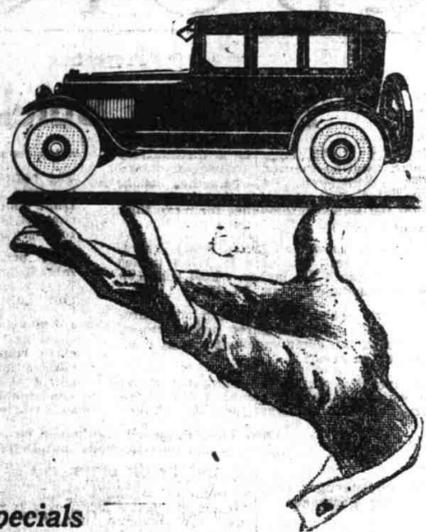
289 Miles the Sixth Day.

Ate breakfast at the Popular Cafe and left Ely at 5:30 a. m. for Fallon, which point we were told by the Lincoln highway garage at

Ely we would not be able to make under a day, and a half, as we would have seven summits or mountain ranges to cross, that the roads were rough, the flats we would find rutty, full of chuck holes and in places we would not be able to make over five or six miles an hour. The garage men

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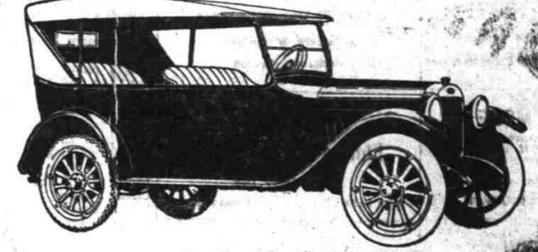
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