



Leading the

Over the years, AAA has helped
travelers reach new heights.
Join us on our journey
through the century.

100
Years of
Service

By Jean Sherrard
Good roads with signs that indicate direction and mileage. Maps that show direct routes. Rational traffic laws, designed for safety, uniformly enforced. Affordable auto insurance. Travel booking and car rental, across the state or around the world. These are just a few of the things we've come to expect from AAA—and take for granted. But things weren't always this way.

September 23, 2004, marks the 100-year anniversary of AAA Washington/Inland. Through the years, the Club has helped pave the way for motorists in a number of

g the Way



Motorists make their way up a switchback on the way to Paradise Inn in Mount Rainier National Park sometime in the 1920s. AAA-sponsored tours like this one allowed the driving public to get close to nature. Inset: Early motorists had to fend for themselves when it came to maintenance.

AAA WASHINGTON/INLAND ARCHIVES

significant areas. In recent years it has even expanded its services beyond the automobile. To get a picture of the Club's achievements, journey back with us to times when the car itself was a new, barely proven means of transportation and when a handful of founding auto club members was shaping our automotive future.

You're the proud owner of a new "horseless carriage." After a breathless hour learning to drive it, you're ready to take it for a spin. Strolling shoppers stare as you motor across an intersection, swerving to avoid a spooked cart horse. You garner a handful of waves and ignore the rude gestures. Then, disaster: Your left front wheel plunges into an enormous pot-hole. Worse than the sudden crick in your neck, you're stuck in the mud. A bansom carriage passes by at a trot, its driver adding insult to injury with the words, "Get a horse!"



Virtually every early driver experienced a similar scenario. The combination of abysmal roads, unsafe driving conditions, and inadequate traffic laws provided a powerful impetus for car owners to band together and work for change. Ten owners of Washington's first commercial automobiles established a social club dedicated to a few guiding principles.

Safety topped the list: Members were to cultivate among themselves "an intelligent use" of horseless vehicles "towards the protection of the public and the sport from reckless and careless driving." The creation of "rational legislation, rules and regulations" furthered that goal. The Club also provided a forum for members to compare experiences and solve problems and called for improved roads and highways—all to foster "a love of healthful, manly and social sport for [members'] moral and physical well-being."

1923: The old Pacific Highway south of Chehalis was once paved with concrete.

One sunny Sunday, you pack the family into your new Model T for a country picnic. Nearing Tukwila, at a busy intersection, a Klaxon squeaks and brakes squeal as a massive Chalmers limousine bears down on you from the left. You'd forgotten that only in Seattle does the car to the right actually have the right-of-way. Outside city limits, the law changes: The first car entering the intersection has right-of-way.

Until March 1905, the state of Washington lacked a uniform traffic code. This subjected car owners to the arbitrary whims of whichever county, or even town, they happened to be driving through. Club members were instrumental in drawing up the first statewide traffic code.

Each auto owner paid a \$2 licensing fee to the secretary

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Miles and Miles of Milestones



1904-10

1904: The Automobile Club of Seattle forms on September 23.
1905: The Club

helps draft Washington's first traffic code, which requires licensing, a muffler, "one lighted lamp during darkness,"

good and efficient brakes, and a horn.

1906: The Club and members donate and begin installing 500 directional road signs.

1907: The Club organizes its first road trip. Destination: Cohasset Beach.

1909: The Club promotes automobile travel in Mount Rainier National Park, leading the

way to motor-ing being allowed in other national parks.

1910: The Club publishes its first tour book featuring destinations in western Washington.

1911-20

1912: The Inland Automobile Association

forms to service eastern Washington and northern Idaho.

1917: All automobile clubs in central and western Washington unite under the name of Automobile Club of Western Washington. The name is later shortened to the Automobile

Club of Washington.
1918: The Aero Club of the Northwest, headed by Bill Boeing, rents desk space in the Automobile Club's Seattle office building. This sparks the Club's interest in air travel.

1921-30

1922: Mapping crews are



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of state. A single conspicuously mounted lamp was required for driving at night. Each vehicle also needed a muffler, "good and efficient brakes," and a horn or bell. The speed limit was set at 12 mph in cities and town centers and an optimistic 24 mph in the countryside. This handful of regulations marked a distinct change. For the first time, the state had a single code, and drivers could breathe a sigh of relief.

On November 1908, you read the Spokane Spokesman-Review's full-page description of that city's first auto fatality. The death of Mary Nicholls, notes the article, would be "the grim reaper's harvest from the plunge of the automobile . . . down the precipitous bluff." Till now, your beloved sport of motoring has seemed removed from any real sense of danger. Perhaps you should be thinking more about safety.

From the beginning, the Club promoted safety. In 1914, AAA joined with Seattle city officials to sponsor the city's first traffic-safety campaign, leading to the establishment of pedestrian crossings at intersections. The Club pressed for a minimum age for drivers and backed legislation to create a Division of Motor Vehicles.

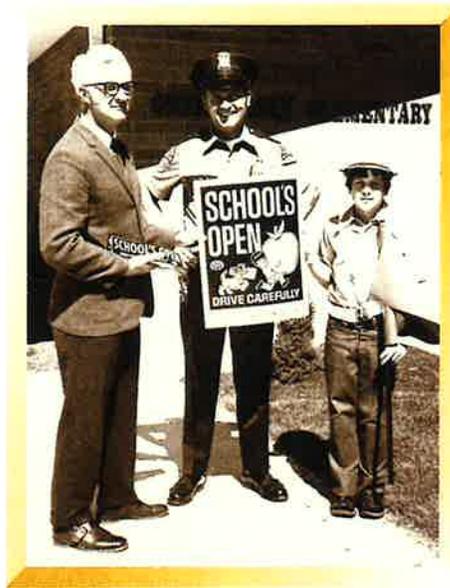
The throaty rumble of gasoline engines added a populist note to the "Roaring Twenties." Henry Ford ramped up production of his efficient and affordable Model Ts to meet the growing demand. The middle class discovered the affordable and dependable "flivver" and driving a car was becoming an American

birthright. Ever-greater numbers of cars rolled off assembly lines onto the nation's streets and highways. As accident rates skyrocketed, AAA mounted a safety crusade.

The Club helped create a state highway patrol and sponsored Safety First campaigns in schools to help reduce the number of schoolchildren killed and injured in auto collisions. When schools reopened in the fall of 1928, AAA also sponsored and equipped junior safety patrols throughout the state. The "School Boy Patrols"—years passed before girls

were allowed to join—were the first crossing guards. Additionally, the Club subsidized high school programs to provide "behind the wheel" training for young, would-be drivers.

To this day, AAA reminds drivers to be extra cautious when schools are back in session.



After your collision with the heavy Chalmers limousine, your Model T has a broken axle and its rear side panel is dented. You kick yourself for not taking out an auto insurance policy, even if it was pricey.

AAA understood that inexpensive, dependable insurance was another vital service. Car insurance costs could be prohibitive, and many automobile owners risked going without insurance rather than purchase pricey policies offered by independent agents.

In 1921, the Club published a comparison of auto insurance rates in major cities across the country. The cost of insuring a 1920 Ford in Seattle was almost \$130 a year, which



dispatched to survey all highways as far as Salt Lake City and Denver, through the national parks in Montana, and into Alberta and British Columbia. **1926:** The Club contracts with "reputable

garages" to offer emergency road service for members.

1927: The Automobile Club Insurance Agency sells first auto insurance policies to members.

1928: The first School Safety Patrol students are recruited.

1930: The Club offers "air travel services" and advertises "trip planning

anywhere in the world."

1931-40

1933: The Tacoma Service Center becomes the headquarters for United Airlines and handles its



reservations. **1936:** Mrs. Louis Marks, future head of the Club's Women's Safety Department, leads a traffic course for ladies at Rhodes Department Store. Four

hundred attend. **1940:** Lt. Col. Dwight D. Eisenhower joins AAA while stationed at Fort Lewis.

1941-50

1941: During World War II, the Club solicits members to volunteer for "emergency transport duty" in the event

Left: Circa 1923, Club members go on tour to draw attention to how "Our Signs Serve You." Middle: AAA's School Safety Patrol at work. Right: Mrs. Louis Marks touts the safety features of a 1936 Plymouth.

might seem a princely sum unless compared with New York City's \$270. In Southern California, where AAA had been offering insurance since 1912, Club members paid a mere \$76 a year to insure the same Ford.

In 1927, AAA formed the Automobile Club Insurance Agency to serve members in the Northwest. Premiums were considerably lower than those of the competition, and other agencies eventually reduced their rates as well. To this day, members expect high-quality coverage at a competitive price. Indeed, savings per policy can be more than double the cost of membership.

D *Driving to the first Bellingham Tulip Festival in the spring of 1920, you get lost. At a crossroads, more than a dozen signs direct you to restaurants, inns, and shops. Fortunately, your spouse, a step ahead as usual, coolly whips out one of AAA's lovely new maps.*

A vital part of the Club's mission was to provide road maps for its members. State maps indicated only major routes. In 1917, the Club issued its first set of 25 strip maps, an innovation that provided a convenient and detailed view of the roads.

Each summer, AAA's engineering department traversed the state, refining and correcting its previous efforts. Each mapmaking team included a driver and a cartographer, whose complex notation duties were compared to those of a "one-armed paper hanger." The hardy teams drove between 180 and 250 miles a day, a week to 10 days at a stretch. By 1925, they had charted more than 70,000 miles of highway.

In July 1934, the ever-popular strip maps were assembled into pocket-sized booklets called TripTiks, handily capturing the exact itinerary of a trip in 50-mile segments. TripTiks were available for routes from Washington as far



east as Chicago and as far south as San Diego.

If maps gave members an overview of where they were on their travels, AAA road directional signs provided on-the-spot confirmation. Two years after it was formed, the Club donated 200 signs (private individuals donated another 300) and placed them "within a radius of 30 miles of the city [Seattle]." By 1916, AAA had its own department of road signs to cover the entire Northwest. It spent more than \$300,000 on signs during the next 30 years. The Highway Department took on the increasingly complex task after World War II.

T *he drive back from Uncle Jake's farm in Maple Valley has turned sour. You're stuck in the mud . . . right up to your running board. A "helpful" farmer has offered to pull you out for a fee. You figure he's been watering more than his fields. But what choice do you have?*

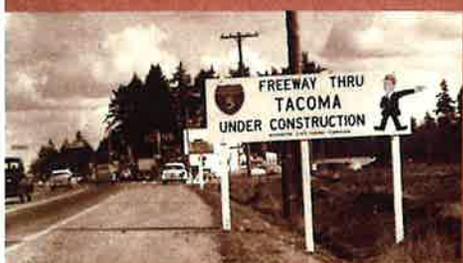
In 1926, AAA began offering free "towing and mechanical first aid" to members whose cars were "unable to proceed along the highway." A call to the nearest AAA office or authorized service station brought a tow truck and a

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of a military emergency evacuation. **1942:** Members are urged to take shorter Sunday drives in light of national tire- and gas-rationing programs. The Club provides

trip routings for troops, military families, and military supply vehicles.

1951-60

1952: Citing a need to meet future traffic demands, the

Club supports a plan to build a freeway linking Tacoma, Seattle, and Everett. **1954:** The AAA travel agency becomes known as the Worldwide Travel Department and offers



ticketing for 45 airlines, 24 steamship lines, and all bus and rail lines in the U.S. **1956:** The travel agency holds its first group tour, "Hula Holiday," to Hawaii for 87 members.

1961-70

1965: A driving school is launched. **1970:** The Club broadcasts rush hour traffic reports on KIRO-AM.

1971-80

1971: The "local loop tours" map series, drawn by a staff cartographer, is introduced.

1972: The Club is a sponsor of the CAR Institute, which works to rehabilitate DWI (driving while intoxicated) offenders. **1975:** The Gas Watchers Program is launched by the Club in response to national gasoline shortages.

1981-90

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A mid-1920s convertible roadster AAA tow truck assists a stranded 1927 Durant.

mechanic, and included up to 30 minutes of labor. If more extensive repairs were needed, the Club provided free towing up to 10 miles.

In a now-dated bow to gender, the Club stipulated that “unescorted women drivers may have tires changed . . . by the nearest mechanical service station”—one task men were evidently expected to perform themselves.

The Club vetted car repair shops; an early report mentions investigating shady practices such as “taking advantage of an owner’s lack of mechanical knowledge to make him believe certain work was necessary.” Of course, noted the report, one sure way of getting fair treatment was to take your car to an AAA-approved facility and show them your membership card.

Protected by AAA roadside assistance, you and your family have toured the U.S. and Canada using AAA maps, TripTik routings, and travel advice. Now the kids are begging to explore the castles of Europe. Where do you turn?

Travel services have always been part of AAA. Within five years of its founding, the Club published its first tour book, which initially contained maps, route travel information, and a listing of all automobile owners. Eventually, the Club established a plan to endorse worthy hotels and garages in cities and towns throughout the Northwest. A few years later, the coveted AAA logo had become a “seal of approval” known and trusted throughout the United States.

The Club booked passage on steamships for people and their cars and arranged European travel and car documents for members. It also sponsored group auto tours through Europe, which often included transportation, accommodations—and a mechanic—for one fixed price. In 1929, the club inaugurated its Air Travel Service, making it the first AAA club in the nation to handle air routing. To this day, AAA still provides members with maps, tour books, and travel advice. Club cruises and tours continue to provide the opportunity to travel the globe in comfort, style, and value.

Much has changed over the last century, but AAA has never forgotten its core values. The ever-increasing array of automotive, travel, and insurance services continues to make the Club a strong and beneficial part of members’ lives, and yet another aspect of AAA that is more difficult to quantify remains—a sense of trust. That trust has been earned over time, in service and commitment to the safety and well-being of its members. Throughout its one hundred years, AAA has always looked ahead, identifying new issues and developing solutions, while keeping in mind the lessons of the past.

Jean Sherrard is a writer, actor, and teacher living in Seattle. He is currently working on a book about Washington.

inspects auto repair shops and offers members Approved Auto Repair recommendations.

the supersonic jet for the return trip to London—and travelers return a week later on a 747.

1991-2000

- 1991:** Seahawk fans get complimentary road service after games.
- 1992:** The Club introduces AAA Plus RV service.
- 1996:** AOL hosts the Club’s first website; the Club develops its own website a year later.
- 1997:** The tabloid

member publication, the *Motorist*, is converted into the bimonthly glossy magazine *Journey*. **1998:** AAA-supported legislation to lower illegal blood alcohol levels to .08 (from .1) passes.

2001-Current

2003: AAA Washington

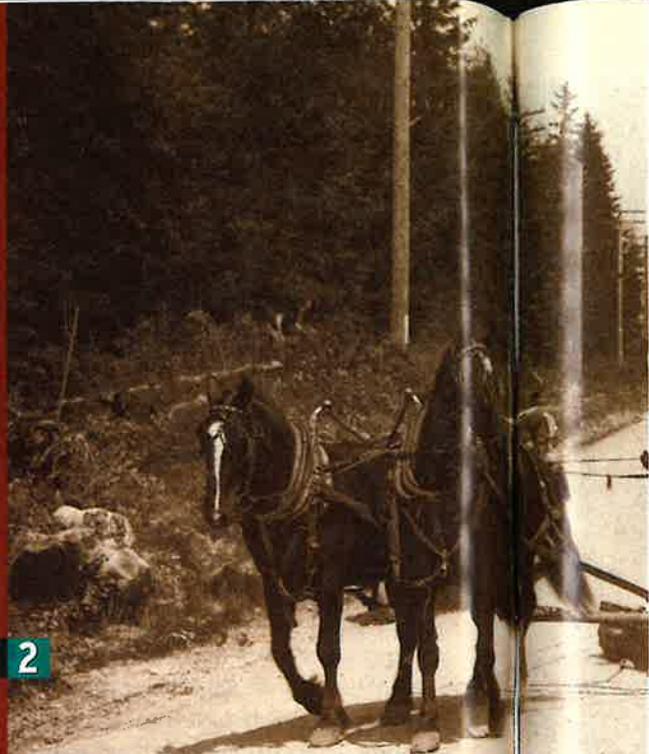
merges with the Inland Automobile Association and becomes AAA Washington/Inland. Its territory now includes Washington and northern Idaho. **2004:** AAA Washington/Inland has more than 840,000 members. Nationally, AAA has more than 45 million members.

Left: Highway sign designates upcoming road improvements. Middle: AAA offers its first group tour to Hawaii, still a popular destination for members. Right: Bill Blume Volkswagen receives AAA Approved Auto Repair status in 1984.



1984: The Concorde makes its first flight to the West Coast. The AAA Travel Agency charters

1989: AAA *World of Travel*, a half-hour show, debuts on KIRO-TV.



A Scenic Century

Vintage views from our photo album



Additional research on the centennial stories by Jennifer Harbison and Ellen Sevier.



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The Way We Were

1. Circa 1927: Drivers gather in front of AAA on Boren Avenue in Seattle before heading out to erect AAA road signs.

2. AAA, along with groups like the Good Roads Association, has lobbied for better, safer roads since its inception. A sign on the 1917 Stutz urges, DRAG WASHINGTON OUT OF THE MUD.

3. Ralph S. Hopkins owned Seattle's first "horseless carriage"—a Woods Electric costing \$500. It arrived on July 23, 1900. The car was donated by Hopkins's estate to AAA around 1926, then presented to the Washington State Historical Society in Tacoma by AAA in 1929.

4. A motorcade gathers at the entrance to Camp Lewis in Pierce County in 1920 before embarking on a national park-to-park tour.

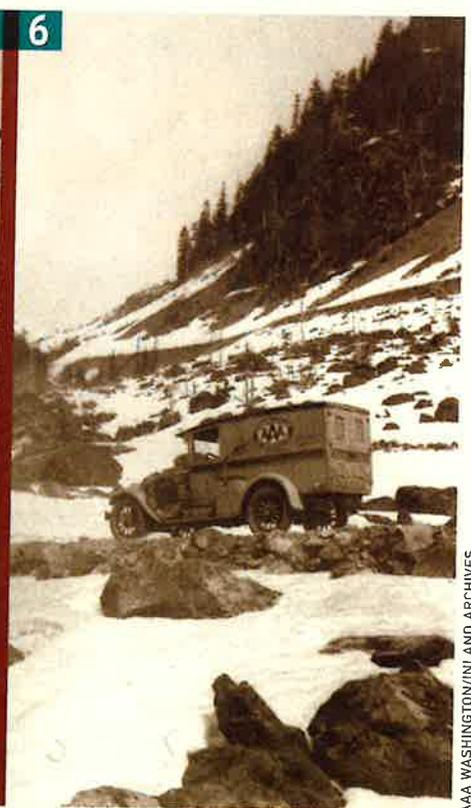
5. It was common for garages to convert from bicycle to auto repair. AAA members pose in front of the Ellensburg Bicycle Co. Garage before heading out for a drive.

6. AAA Emergency Road Service vehicles, like this 1927 Chevrolet Panel Truck, braved icy mountain roads to offer assistance to disabled vehicles.

7. 1958: A TripTik routing is compiled from 16,000 individual strip maps.



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