

Cottonwood Summer (Pages 107-108)

Grandma's Driving

Normally very conservative, Jase's Grandma Compton has one area of her life in which she has no inhibitions.

Grandma's reckless driving was the complete antithesis to the rest of her life in which she was completely reserved -- except, of course, for her marvelous sense of humor and skill at practical jokes. Her fondness for placing her nasty-sounding "Whoopee Cushion" under the seat of an unsuspecting visitor was my favorite. Or was it her plastic ice cube with the "frozen" fly in it? Maybe it was her dribble glass?

Anyway, when Grandma sat behind the steering wheel of that Hudson Terraplane, no doubt about it, her personality changed dramatically.

I could tell when Grandma was overcome by the urge to drive. She scurried around the kitchen as if late for an important appointment -- most likely, an appointment only recently invented. Finally, her pent-up desire would propel her out of the kitchen, through the screened porch door, and down the driveway toward the garage. Assignments for accomplishing whatever was to be done in her absence came flying over her shoulder to anyone within earshot.

Fortunately, most of my farm duties were deferrable, so I usually accompanied her. She liked that because I was such an enthusiastic fan, demonstrating my admiration with ardent "Wow's!" "Oooo's!" and "Great's!" as she zoomed over hills and around curves on her way to -- nowhere special.

My friends couldn't understand why I was so eager to spend much of my summer vacation "stranded" out in the country. But, with Grandma as tour director, I seldom spent a full day at the farm itself. More importantly, when on the road with Grandma, there was never a dull second.

As her frequent travel companion, I understood what drove Grandma to drive. Whenever her lust to leave struck, she was rendered powerless by a compelling fantasy. How this fantasy took form in her mind is anybody's guess. But, in my mind, there was no doubt.

Despite her abundant body and middle age, Grandma was transformed into the striking figure of a young and svelte Amelia Earhart. Her calico housedress, soiled kitchen apron, and black leather farm shoes were magically supplanted by a black, form-fitting aviatrix uniform of soft calf leather. I envisioned her sheepskin-lined, belted flight jacket, sleek trousers,

snug-fitting helmet, racing gloves, and highly polished boots laced to the knee.

Marching across the driveway toward her powerful flying machine, she whipped the long white silk scarf around her neck and slid her goggles down from their perch atop her leather helmet. She methodically tightened the fit of her racing gloves, one finger at a time.

Content with the splendor of her attire, she hopped into the cockpit, revved up her engines, and ordered the wheel chocks removed. Intently, she gazed down the runway, toward Japan -- and Victory.

Anyway, that's what I imagined each time Grandma launched a mission.

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