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Oh, Driver!

Adventures of a Travelin' Man

My daily commute to and from work is about a mile each way, now. A couple of months ago, going on three, it was 11 miles each way, most of it on I-95. The first day that the 65 MPH speed limits were reinstated, the signs were up and my spirits were liberated. Granted, my little '86 Chevette gets nervous approaching 65, but that's good—it

kept me honest. Currently, however, the Chevette's starter won't, and Joy-Lynd has had to drive me to work on days she needs her car.

Joy-Lynd used to call me an over-cautious driver. I disagreed with her at the time, though in retrospect, and in a strictly relative way, she may have had cause. I've ridden with over-cautious drivers, who both terrify and exasperate me.

so I can see why she did not care to ride with me—aside from the fact that she loves to drive, and always prefers being in control of any car she's in.

But all things are relative. She's an excellent driver—in the sense that she has a good awareness of the road and the traffic around her, and what she can do with the car she's driving. Sure, I've had white-knuckle rides with *her*, not because she was driving poorly but because she was working her way at speed through traffic and/or territory that I *would* have been a great deal more cautious about. Once, in the mountains of western Virginia, showing me the sights, she was shooting along on narrow two-lane back roads off the Blue Ridge Parkway with remarkable lack of concern that we might meet a multi-ton semi or logging truck barreling the other way. We actually saw a deer bouncing across the road—split seconds closer and we all might have been in deep trouble. The scenery? Yeah, incredible—I think. That isn't what I remember about that trip.

She has a different description for me and my driving now. "Madman" figures in it somewhere. No, I don't speed—but I do like to stick close to the speed limit when and where I can, and I'll admit it—I get annoyed at those on the road who don't. I shake my head after those who whistle past me; I growl at the ones who block my way...

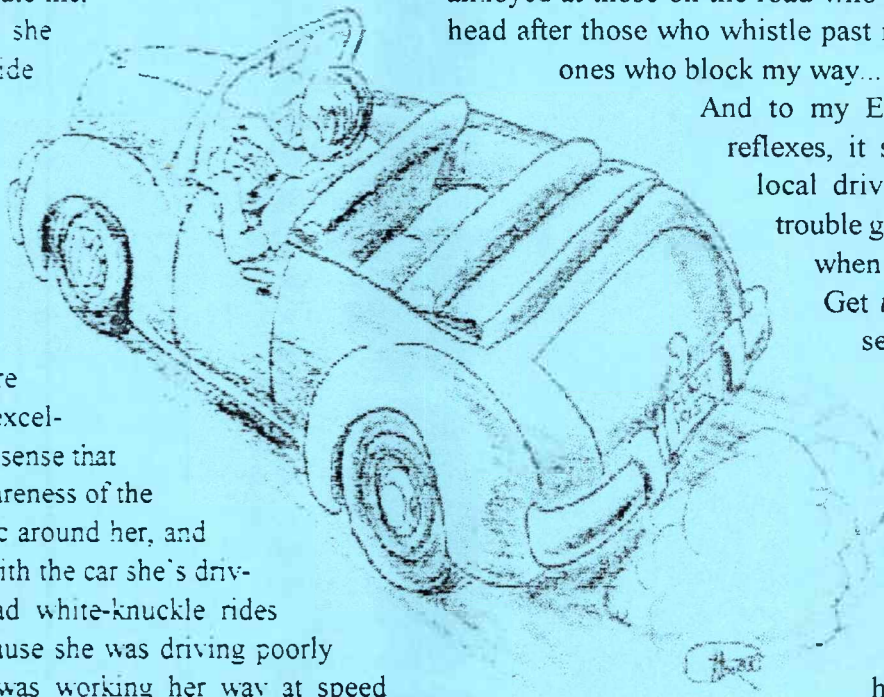
And to my East Coast trained reflexes, it seems to me that local drivers have a lot of trouble getting off the dime when the light changes.

Get *through* the intersection, *then* worry about putting space between yourself and the driver ahead! No, I'm not one of those dimwits who believe in hitting their horn instant the light ahead

the changes to green, but still...

And speaking of space—who in tarnation taught half the drivers in this town to stay two or three car lengths behind the car in front of them—*when they're waiting at a stop light!* That gets me ticked, especially when I'm trying to get into a left turn lane before the light changes! Grrr!

Maybe my next fanzine title should be *Irossible*—sort of a portmanteu word on irascible and impossible. Or maybe not.



But I do like to drive. Pretty much always have.

Okay, I first had my hands on the wheel of a moving car when I was oh, about five years old. True, I was on my older brother's lap at the time, and he was in control, but I liked the feel of it.

Hale is 13 years my elder, so he'd have been 18 (or so), but he had been driving since he was maybe 12, including a local school bus. There were caveats and explanations for this, though frankly I have only the vaguest idea how it came about. I could point out that we were way the hell out in the back woods of North Carolina, for one thing, and it was in the early '40s, when driving laws were still being codified. The first point is actually only semi-accurate; for a while we did live well into Pisgah National Forest, in what had been a hunting lodge with minimal plumbing facilities built by John Jacob Astor before the area was established as a National Forest. But then we moved to a house just at the edge of the forest and only a few miles from Brevard, NC, where I was born—and where Hale and my sister Elinor were going to school.

My family had a habit of naming places and things. The lodge was called "John Rock," after a nearby stone outcrop that had been officially named that, probably after Mr. Astor. The newer place we called "Ecusta Vista" because it had a view of a large paper plant called Ecusta (eh-*koos*-ta) off beyond the highway. (There was probably more to the name, but by the time I got back to Brevard a decade and a half later it had been taken over by Olin Mathieson or somebody like that.) As a child, my favorite feature of the plant was a large, raised water tank that resembled a tanker car on a mechanical toy train I'd gotten for Christmas. I was convinced that the Ecusta tank was a train or part of one, and I wanted to ride on it someday. I was disappointed when we moved away that I'd never gotten to ride it.

We were not well-to-do by any means. Dad was in government work. Nevertheless, Ecusta Vista was a nice, two-story house on a hill (I think we were paying something like \$40 a month rent—), and at least at one point we had three vehicles at our disposal: my maternal grandfather's Model A Ford (a tan, two-door, four-seater hard top, called "Danny"), a slightly more modern four-door sedan (I think), brand uncertain (but I believe it was also a Ford), that I only knew as "Our

Car" (okay, so we didn't name *everything*), and my father's government-issue pickup truck with its shield on the side doors. I was learning to read, then, but after half a century (plus) I don't remember whether the shield identified it as belonging to the Fish & Wildlife Service or the National Park Service or what. It may have just been a generic "U.S." Dad took me with him now and then to the Ranger Station, which was a few miles into that section of Pisgah National Forest (our house was close to one of the Forest's official entrances), or occasionally to the F&W fish hatchery there, a bit further in. (I got a little better idea about these on the later visit, but that's still 40 years in my past, now.)

I remember Dad's making me get out of the truck once where a bridge was out, under repair or something of the sort, when he had to drive down the bank, through a narrow river segment, and up the other side. It seemed like a lot of fun, and the next time he took me that way I was disappointed he didn't do it again. Guess the bridge had been fixed.

Grandpa Taggart took me along a few times, too, in Danny. I liked Danny—it was distinctive, with its dash panel doohickeys, its extra levers off the steering wheel—one was the choke; I've forgotten what the other was. And I liked Grandpa, even if he was a little gruff with me now and then (looking back, I know now he was entitled). But I had my first auto accident with him. Happily, to date, it was my only relatively serious accident. He was wont to take along a newspaper or book and read in it while he was driving, you see. Hey, he was raised with horse carriages; reading would have been no problem with them! Just keep checking the road ahead now and then... So, one time he ran up an embankment. I happened to be along. I have no memory of that at all; what I do remember is a sharp pain in back of my head that came (as it was explained to me later) from the doctor clamping a wound closed. I have no idea if the scar is still visible—or would be if my hairline, which has receded pretty much all the way back there for 30-plus years now, didn't stop receding before it reached that point. There's another scar on my cheek that's just discernable if you know where to look.

I think it's safe to say that Grandpa forsook the habit of simultaneously reading and driving thereafter.

My moments of mock "driving," on my brother's lap, took place en route from North Carolina to Arizona, where my father had been transferred. I was five. I have only a few memories of that trip now. It rained early in the trip, yes. I have a distinct image of driving through a town at night in pouring rain, with all its lights rippling beyond the windows, the roar of the raindrops on the roof, that damp smell... Well; I have the visual image, anyway; the other senses are, perhaps, embellishments.

We had "Our Car" and Danny (though Grandpa and Grandma remained back in North Carolina for a while, with Elinor), and we stopped in a town called Franklin —I think, in retrospect, that this was in Louisiana, but I'm not at all sure. I remembered the town's name because it was the same as that of our President, about whom there was much discussion in those days. I think we arrived in rain, but woke the next morning to clear skies—and trouble. We had put up in a hotel, and at some point there was a considerable commotion when we learned that one of the cars had caught on fire. I boggled at this concept. In my five-year-old wisdom I knew that metal didn't burn.

What happened next? I'm not sure. It may be that whichever car was okay went ahead and the other came later. I only remember that for me it was a while before The Trip resumed.

I dare say I was a handful. Hale got angry with me once (at least) on the trip, but I don't remember why. I'm told (and semi-remember) that I asked him at some point, "Aren't I your Palsy-Walsy any more?" Sounds like a bit of dialogue from a '40s flick doesn't it?

It was the '40s. The War was on. Back in NC, at Ecusta Vista, I had had a recurring dream of airplanes flying over our house and a bright light that would come down through the roof and get me. I don't remember Hale or Elinor (my sister) telling me about bombs and things, but the way my mind interpreted it, it didn't damage the house—I'd be outside and hear a drone coming from the sky, though I didn't see any plane. I'd run inside, because there was danger, and then there was just this gradually expanding spot of

light that would appear from the kitchen ceiling, and I'd feel all tingly, and then I'd rise up with it (through the ceiling again, evidently), as I woke up.

On that first trip west, I was fascinated by the phenomenon of road mirages—the lakes and streams of water that appeared to be crossing the road ahead, only to disappear as we approached them. It was many years before I learned some kind of scientific explanation. I've yet to see (or at least recognize) a "real" mirage such as I've heard reported—whole scenes from distant locations. I hear they sometimes appear upside down.

We stopped once at one of those roadside zoo places. They had a monkey in a cage. I was warned not to get too close to it, but I did, of course, and it made a grab for my glasses. I wasn't wearing any—I didn't get my first glasses for another

two or three years—but that was the explanation my folks and I were given. The monkey's claws scratched me along the temple just above the cheekbone—not really anything major, but there was fear of infection. (As I recall, the scratches did take a while to heal. And I was lucky; it could have scratched my eye.) I felt betrayed. Not to the level of those poorly informed tourists at Yellowstone and the like who want to get a snapshot with a friendly bear, but disappointed, nonetheless.

I believe I had some early introductions to acrophobia as we traversed some ridges in New Mexico and eastern Arizona. We were heading for San Carlos, an Apache Indian reservation east of Phoenix, where my father had been transferred to look into stocking local farm ponds.

I have a lot of memories of San Carlos, but few appropriate to the topic. I turned six and started school there, but walked daily to school. There is a larger town nearby named Globe that I occasionally joined a trip to—once to the hospital to have my tonsils out. I was put under with ether; I only remember a kind of nightmarish sense of going under, and then the pain in my throat afterwards, barely assuaged by the ice cream they gave me.

There was one trip we took to a town a little past

IF MARVIN THE MARTIAN SANG,
HE'D PROBABLY SOUND A LOT
LIKE CHUBBY CHECKER

Globe called Miami. My only memory of that was our going to a Mexican restaurant and biting into what I thought was a nice red tomato. I'm not clear on whether I was encouraged into this by Hale or possibly Elinor or if it was on my own, but in any case I left the restaurant and stayed outside until the rest were done...

In the summer, we went for a month or two to a town called McNary at a higher elevation to get away from the heat in San Carlos. We had a neighbor who kept snakes, and while he had several rattlesnakes in terrariums there were some others that roamed free in his house. I don't remember that I was scared of them particularly, but I did have a healthy respect for the rattlers.

In the spring of 1944 Dad was transferred again, this time to College Station, Texas. I have no real memories of that trip. We stayed in a motel while we waited for permanent lodgings to be settled. The Blue Tops, it was called—but I don't think the term motel was used; I have a sense that "motel" was coined later; we had another familiar term for such lodgings in those days. Maybe that's it—"Motor Lodge." Maybe just "cabins." Something on that order. Anyway, it was in an area of town I was later to learn was called North Gate, on the main highway. There were of course no Interstates, then. If I had my trusty Rand McNally Road Atlas to hand, I'd check, but I don't, so I can't.

We lived in College Station about eight years—this seemed like permanence to me, and I suppose somewhat to the rest of the family as well, who were familiar with being shuttled from point to point around the country. Dad kept getting sent to places around the country for long periods of time, but we were based in College Station. We took no major trips anywhere. Bryan was the closest town, a short street bus ride away and actually walkable, though I only did so once or twice. (College Station originally was part of Bryan). I remember we drove a couple of times to a town called Nacogdoches (nak'uh•do'ches was how we pronounced it then), probably 30 or 40 miles away, and once I got a trip to Houston, roughly 100 miles away. Elinor was talking Nurse's training, there, at Hermann Hospital. Hale, who'd joined the Army while we were in San Carlos, was by then out on medical discharge, but was usually living far from home.

For a while he actually worked on Bahrain Island

for some oil company. He came back with a beard, but soon shaved it off, much to my disappointment. I have no doubt but that this sowed a seed that is in part why I've worn whiskers for most of my adult life.

I rode a bicycle most of my years in Texas. It was a Schwinn, not the Black Whatsis that people are nostalgic about today, but it was initially a beautiful bike, with a horn (not on the handlebars but in the gas-tank-like enclosed section forward of the seat), a headlight, and of course the then standard back-pedal brakes. I was then no more of a mechanic than I am now. All the decorative metal parts on that bike—the "gas tank" sides, the chain guard, both fenders—soon got loose and began to rattle, and it was not too long before everyone could tell I was on the move from blocks away. In addition, toward the end of our time in College Station, I had learned how to replace its chain links and had to do so frequently.

I'd use it going to school, of course, and on trips to the arroyo we called White's Canyon, about a mile and a half, or so. Perhaps the longest trip I ever made on it, with my friend Jack Smith, then in our early teens, was six miles to the Brazos River. It was a hot summer day, and it gave me my first serious experience with "spittin' cotton"—and heat exhaustion. Tired and wasted as I was, the nausea that came with it was a total and most unwelcome surprise.

My grandfather still had Danny, but the old ford had been replaced, by what I don't remember, and around 1950 or so that one was replaced by a Buick. It had a name, but I've forgotten it now. It was one of those Buicks that had an adjustable sunshield outside, above the windshield. I never drove either car—I was only 15 when we left Texas, though I remember sitting in them and pretending a lot. I believe I remember releasing the brake or putting the gear in neutral or something once, feeling the car begin to roll, and quickly putting things back (not easily, but somehow successfully) and guiltily getting out of there.

Toward our last years in Texas, my father retired. He retired early—about my age, now, I think, or even a bit younger—because of a cerebral hemorrhage suffered on one of his trips away from home. While he was not physically incapacitated, he lost something of himself as a result and apparently was unable to continue with the kind of work he had been doing.

My grandmother had died while we were in College Station. Grandpa was still with us but, then in his 70s, was not well. Their old home, where Mother and her sisters had been raised, had been in Vermont. Dad, too, had grown up there. The old house in Newbury, Elm Bank, had been sold, but they all wanted to return to New England and familiar territory. By mid 1952, the end of my sophomore year in high school, Danny was sold; Dad and Grandpa flew ahead to the home of old friends in New Hampshire, and Mother and I began driving to Brevard, North Carolina, my birthplace, where Hale had returned to live. They had decided I should go to a YMCA summer camp, Camp Greenville, across the border in South Carolina.

Memorable moments on that trip were stopping at some place on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain and my being unable to convince Mother that we should go through New Orleans. In College Station I had often listened to "The Original Jazz Hour" on a college radio station, "The Voice of Loyola," from New Orleans, and had some youthful visions of it being a wonderful place to visit. Mom knew better, of course—especially in terms of travel schedules. Needless to say, I never got to visit New Orleans until many many years later.

The second recollection is of sweating overnight in a motel in or near Mobile, Alabama. I had never before experienced such heat and humidity (and only a few times since). That has ever since been my one and only experience with Mobile: the name forever is associated with that night, and though it's quite unfair, as a result I shall probably never again visit the town.

Aside from the fact that the camp administrators had scheduled me for the wrong age group and had to find a bunkhouse for a 15-year-old to stay in, my experience at Camp Greenville was pleasant enough. Besides the usual camp things like crafts (yea!) and swimming (boo!) there were various hikes for which we were to get certificates, an overnight camp-out trip into the woods, and couple of days' field trip into the Smokey Mountains including a visit to the town of Cherokee, NC (where I saw my first naughty souvenirs...but did not acquire any, much as I wanted to), and a speedboat ride along some popular tourist-attraction lake that, if I remember right, is a dam-created lake much as Lake Mead is—though of course

not on that scale! Also at Cherokee we got to see a long-running pageant/performance called "Unto These Hills" which told (and I hope still tells) the story of John Ross, the chief (and president) of the ill-used Cherokee nation and the Trail of Tears. (Though no relation, I was never prouder of the name I bear than then.)

The camp was located in an extraordinarily beautiful area of the Blue Ridge; its chapel (remember, this was a YMCA camp) used as its backdrop a deep, blue-misted gorge and panorama of hills stretching to the horizon that certainly provided an appropriately awe-inspired sense of natural majesty.

I stayed with Hale for a while after camp, then got on a bus for the long trip to White River Junction, Vermont, which is right across the Connecticut River from Lebanon, N.H., where my folks were staying. It was one of those buses, popular then, I think, with a passenger seat (perhaps a pair) to the *right* of the door as one enters the bus, with a direct view of the road ahead. Certainly it was popular with me. I'm not sure that I had that seat when we started out, but if I didn't, then when its occupant or occupants left, I took over. I don't remember that I had to share it, either. (After all, consider: I was a scruffy 15-year old who'd been traveling for at least a day or two without benefit of bath.) I know I had it for a large part of the trip, though I think that I had a change at, probably, New York, and the new bus either didn't have such an arrangement or I wasn't fast enough to get it.

I do remember the awe of getting through the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York. I'd never been in a building big enough to have doors identifying the *streets* beyond them!

I think this trip was also the one in which I experienced a wonderful kind of twilight zone state where, as I rode with my head cradled in the pocket between the window and the seat, I discovered I could make the whine of tires against the asphalt turn into an orchestra playing any tune I cared to make it play. The imagination can be a wonderful gift sometimes. But I've never been able to satisfactorily repeat that experience.

My main recollection of Lebanon is that they had a movie theater in some kind of public building there and it was showing a Leslie Caron movie that I desperately wanted to see, being then more than somewhat

infatuated with her after *An American in Paris*. The movie, in black and white, was called *Glory Alley*, and the image I carry is of Leslie Caron, in tights, singing "I hate to see/That evenin' sun go down..." Although that's the St. Louis Blues, I associate the movie with New Orleans. I never did get to see it. It never shows up even on late-night TV. [Just looked the movie up in my Corel All-Movie Guide CD: *Glory Alley* (1952) starred Ralph Meeker as New Orleans boxer; Caron is his girlfriend who stays true to him as he's given a bad rap. Also in the flick are Louis Armstrong (playing a character), Jack Teagarden (playing himself), Kurt Kasznar and Gilbert Roland, among others.]

Somehow my folks found a school for me, a private school that took day students, located in Kents Hill, Maine, 20 miles or so on a dogleg from Augusta, and we moved there. We lived in a house with a barn in back, and the, um, facilities, housed at the end of a covered walk that went through the barn. A two-hole outhouse is what it was. There was a water pump in the kitchen, the kind with a long handle that gave all of us who used it some good exercise for the right arm.

Grandpa's health failed seriously in the year we were there. He, who had walked all his life and loved it, lost first one leg and then another to some kind of illness like phlebitis that turned into gangrene. Eventually, after a few months, he died—the last of my grandparents to go. (My paternal grandfather had died long before I was born; his wife shortly after—I have no memory of her, but there is a picture of her holding me as an infant.) My two maternal aunts, Elisabeth and Miriam (but she was always called Bonnie), came to stay with us for a while through the latter stages of their father's life, and through the funeral.

Some time around then—it may well have been a ploy to get me out of the house—Uncle Bill, my mother's younger sister's husband, won the lucky draw and gave a valiant if nervous effort at teaching me how to drive. I think he professed greater nervousness than he actually felt, typical of his approach to humor, but I could be wrong. I believe I picked it up fairly quickly—he's a good teacher, but this could also be the time compression of recollection working—and all it took to develop into the driver I am today (over-cautious or madman; let the passenger decide—I think I'm pretty good, but what do I know?)

was practice.

I frankly don't remember how many opportunities I had to practice in the next few years or so, but I guess I basically took my share of driving time when it was needed. On the recommendation of one of my teachers, we moved fairly soon to an intentional community called Gould Farm, located near Great Barrington in the Berkshires, in southwestern Massachusetts. The place was a halfway house for troubled people of all sorts, from recovering alcoholics to people recently institutionalized for a variety of problems. We qualified in that Mother was pretty much devastated by the loss of her father, Dad was having his own problems following his cerebral hemorrhage, and I'm afraid I was something of a handful, too.

They joined the community as provisional staff; Mother in the kitchen as cook, and Dad drove the Farm car downtown to Great Barrington on a regular basis, taking guests for shopping trips or to and from the train station or bus stop. Everyone, including guests, had work to do, and that, it turned out much to my horror, included me. Hey, I'd worked a while that summer in Kents Hill, once a week or so, mowing somebody's lawn for loose change, but now, suddenly, I was expected to do some real, regular work on a daily basis.

It started innocently enough. They asked me one day soon after we arrived if I'd like to help one of the guys out at the pasteurizing plant down by the barn. I was game; I was curious about it, and I found the work interesting, if wet and at times steamy. But it was a great shock to me the next day to learn that I was now expected to do this on a regular basis. It took a lot of convincing and some tears on my mother's part to get me, grumbling and resentful, back down to the plant.

I actually rather got to like it, eventually, with a certain amount of pride of accomplishment as we loaded the back of the truck with huge metal containers and rattling bottle racks of rich creamy milk and delivered them to the walk-in refrigerator at the main house and to the doorsteps of the several other dwellings that constituted Gould Farm.

I had another first, transportation-wise, with the beginning of the next school year: the first time I ever had to ride a big yellow school bus on a daily basis. It was nine miles to Great Barrington. The driver was the

minister of the Congregational Church in Monterey, the town in which Gould Farm was actually located.

Sharing the trip with me were two girls, Patricia Feeley and Kathy Fabian. Pat and I were quickly becoming a couple, though this kind of attachment was somewhat discouraged at the Farm. Not frowned upon, quite the opposite, but because the therapeutic aspects of life at the Farm sort of needed a dedication that could become discombobulated by divided attention. Of course, we could hardly understand that adequately at the time.

Pat, at 18, was a couple of year older than I, but she was an epileptic and had not finished her schooling. Indeed, she still often missed school—more than once succumbing to a seizure as we were walking the mile it took to get to where the school bus would pick us up. There was a small general store not far from that corner where one of us (usually me, while Kathy stayed with her) would phone back to the Farm office to have someone come and pick her up.

Kathy was older yet. I believe, but had yet to graduate for what I have to imagine were social problems of some sort—I never learned why she had been at the Farm. She was one of the plainest women I ever knew, boyish in figure, quick of both temper and laughter, and New York streetwise in voice and attitude. If I had to guess, I'd guess she was lesbian in lifestyle, but if so she never came out to me. This was 1953-54...attitudes had yet to become as liberated as they are now (which may not be saying as much as one could wish). Nevertheless, we became good friends.

As the incident that cemented that friendship is transportation-related, it'll fit here. I don't specifically remember what happened to set her off, but one day after school she blew her top and decided to walk home rather than take the bus. It was dark already, or almost, and I decided that I wouldn't let her walk home alone. Anyway, explaining just that, I jumped off the bus, too—leaving a perhaps somewhat bewildered Pat—and followed Kathy, who continued to smolder and walk silently for at least a couple of miles before she finally looked around and gestured me to join her. I don't recall our getting into much more than desultory conversation on the rest of the way, but we made it home okay eventually. The three of us were all pretty much a team for a long time after that.

I turned into a bit of a wreck, though, over that school year and into the summer following. I was obsessed with Pat, and while every moment with her while she was well was wonderful, the rest of the time was difficult and demanding. I got to the point where I could not only frequently anticipate even a *petit mal* seizure, but sometimes I knew when she had a full *grand mal* when I was nowhere near her. I think that's a close to psychic experience as I've ever been, and there are probably natural causes for that degree of awareness that have nothing to do with ESP, but at the time it seemed very natural, if very wearing. In those days, where I normally weighed a healthy 180 pounds, I dropped to 140 and found it painful to sit for long on a hard chair...

(I'd be happy to get back down to 180 again, these days. Happier if I could reachieve my youthful muscle tone as well, but that's crossing the line into fantasy...)

I've mentioned elsewhere that it was at the recommendation of a psychiatrist that I went the following year to Buxton School, in Williamstown, Mass. We had some good trips from there—to Quebec, to Nantucket—but the emphasis there was on the stage, and I don't mean the Wells Fargo Express. I don't want to go into that again right now. At some later date, I'm going to put all this stuff together and write a real autobiography, but for now let's skip to my next major trek, in my first car. Let me set it up a bit.

After Buxton I went to Boston, lasted a few months in theatre school, dropped out, vegetated and wasted my time and my folks' money for a few months, and finally got my first job—at a silver wholesaler. This kept me alive for a year or so, then I returned to Gould Farm for a little while. My folks sent me down to stay with Hale, his new wife, son and three stepchildren for part of a summer, and it was there that I finally acquired a car.

Actually, my first car was a Dodge or Plymouth coupe, for which I'd spent the princely sum of \$50, and I was happy with it. But they had recently acquired a 1941 Dodge convertible, and they offered to switch—whether I'd given them the old puppy-dog-eyes expression or they otherwise recognized my wishfulness about it or I actually spoke of my desire out loud I don't remember. Regardless, I ended up with it, and frequently drove around the countryside,

often late in the evening and into the wee hours of the night, just exhilarated with the joy of driving. The car was tan with leather seats, solid metal body, manual shift (of course), and it ran like a dream. I don't think it ever gave me any trouble—until my sojourn with Hale and family was over and I started to drive it home to Massachusetts.

Brevard and Asheville are roughly 40 miles from each other; Hale commuted to work in Asheville every day. I hadn't made it as far as Asheville when the engine died on me. I remember spending a morning on someone's lawn, vaguely worrying about chiggers (fortunately without cause), waiting for help. I'm sorry and embarrassed to say that after all these years I don't remember exactly how help arrived—whether Hale came to find me and we took the car to a garage, or May, his wife, did, or what happened.

But I did get on my way later. I drove many hours, and stopped near a gas station where I dozed in the back seat with the top up. I went in and bought a package of some Hormel lunch meat for breakfast. It might have made great sandwiches, but plain it was definitely awful.

And then the car wouldn't start again. They told me it was my alternator and it would cost me \$40 to replace. I had maybe \$25 to my name...

I was way too far from Hale and family to ask for help from them. I had this aunt and uncle who lived in New York—Long Island, actually—I thought they were rich and, being in New York, would be real close to a telegraph office. I called them up and asked them if they could telegraph me the \$40.

Well, I learned later that this had been a dumb idea, not a bright one. But they did send me the money, eventually, and I got the car working again, like a day later...

The weather was wonderful as I drove along over the miles. It was sunny and clear, and, with the top down, I developed an excellent tan. You were expecting me to say sunburn, no doubt, but I was lucky this time around. I suppose it had been the summer in North Carolina that prepared me for it. Whatever.

And then, when I crossed the Delaware Memorial Bridge into New Jersey the sky clouded over...

The rest of the way to Great Barrington was in rain and, sometimes, especially along the New York

Thruway and on the final stretch from Great Barrington to Monterey, there was fog so dense it was necessary to crawl along at 10 or 15 miles an hour.

I went to work in New York for a while, leaving the convertible at Gould Farm. Initially I went on behest of Kathy Fabian, who was working at a checkout counter in a supermarket in Long Island City and suggested I try there. As part of the arrangement, I was to stay with an uncle of hers who needed to be roused in the morning to go to work; he was a drinker and in danger of losing his job. And, I discovered, not an easy man to deal with, especially in the morning. Not violent, thank heaven, but very recalcitrant.

I did not last a week in the supermarket, and I don't believe I stayed long with Kathy's uncle, either, though it may have been a month or two, because I couldn't always get him to get up and go to work, and eventually stopped trying as hard as I needed to. I don't remember getting a new job in that time; I think I frequented the State or City employment offices for a while, trying for different jobs. Whatever. I'd had my attention caught by the ads in the subways—*f u c n r d ths...* I thought, if I could arrange it with my folks, I'd take the Speedwriting course. Well, it seems it was available closer to home, which would save them a bundle...

Over the next year or so the Dodge convertible served me reasonably faithfully as I commuted from Gould Farm to Berkshire Business College in Pittsfield, about 20 or 25 miles each way. The drive was about half by back roads north through towns like Tyringham or Lee (the closest entrance to the Massachusetts Turnpike) to Stockbridge (where Norman Rockwell lived, and the location of Tanglewood, summer home of the Boston Symphony), thence via U.S. Route 7 to Pittsfield.

One of the two back ways I frequently took involved a stretch called Under Mountain Road that cut off a considerable corner from Route 23, the east-west road that connected Monterey with Great Barrington, and north-south Route 7. The mountain referred to is Monument Mountain, a cliff-sided overgrown hill which would be strictly a local landmark were it not the locale of a semi-famous painting depicting poet and newspaper editor William Cullen Bryant meeting with some other well-known individual whom I've

forgotten now. I climbed it once in the company of a group of hikers from the Farm, and suffered a sudden attack of acrophobia as the path skirted close to the cliffside.

In the winter, Under Mountain Road wouldn't get plowed until Routes 7 and 23 were taken care of, and at least a couple of times I traversed it unplowed. Once, after a heavy snow, I succeeded in this definitely more by familiarity with the landmarks than visibility of the road itself. Not too shabby, especially with bald tires...

Somewhere along this time the canvas convertible top was damaged, and for a while I was driving topless through rain, shine and snow. I did eventually find a mail-order auto-supply that sold convertible tops and succeeded in replacing it.

Eventually, and to my everlasting sorrow, the block cracked, and my beautiful tan 1941 Dodge convertible, with its now badly cracked leather seats, broken

speedometer and only slightly weathered canvas top, had to be abandoned in a junk yard.

It was not only my first car but, come to think of it, the last car I've ever owned outright—all the cars I drove up until Joy-Lynd and I were married, were rental or parental. Since then she actually had title to the VW bug I drove in Cleveland, and the Chevette I was driving until just recently is also in her name.

Well, I look at the dead tree trail I've left behind me so far in this "auto"-biography (snort, chuckle) and realize that if I brought it all the way up to date I'd have the Arbor Society after me or at least have to deal for days with the excuses of people who would have read oh, maybe, the first page or two and—ah, hummm, *yawn*—put it aside for later.

Come to think of it, I just may run into this problem anyway.

STRAIGHT UP #2 - Marcy

One New Year's Eve when I was 15 or 16 I took pretty (and pretty young) Teddy Funke to see the year in in Times Square. I've mentioned this in passing before; what I did not mention before was that we went to—hm, what was it? The Astor Hotel? Whatever, it was the place at which Things Were Happening if one wasn't outside in the Square. And we went into a bar or restaurant or some such place there and wanted to buy drinks. Tom Collinses were our speed and preference. I had ID. (Slightly doctored ID to be sure. Although this is now, for the first time, in black and—uh, pastel, I believe the statute of limitations applies...) As I think back I'm still mildly amazed that they decided to take our money there, but they sat us down 'way off around a corner out of sight, and we had our drinks and went out into the crowd and pretended we'd had a little more alcohol than we had. You know. A bit silly. For all I know, now (and believe me I think this is the first time it ever occurred to me), there may not have been any gin in those Tom Collinses at all!

As to the banana thing—you know, at this point I'm not sure if I ever tried it or just read about other

people trying it. My first thought is that I never did. It was one of those things one heard about, like taking aspirin with Coke—I know I never consciously tried that as a means to an effect other than, possibly, to get rid of a headache.

POWWOW #31 - Joyce

Ah, the wearin' o' th' black... I'm not so sure as I thought of that as rebellious as such; it was more of a calling card of the element I aimed to join. I did own a beret, but never cottoned to it. What I wanted was one of those flat English caps, the kind with a short bill that the front of the cap snaps to. I didn't associate them then with yuppie sports car drivers—I just thought they were cool. And I got one. I bought it on my trip to Quebec, a nice leather one.

I promptly left it behind in a movie theater and it was never seen again.

Musically, and I hate to once again admit it in this company, I never quite took to rock. This despite the thrill I felt when I sat down to watch *Blackboard Jungle* and heard *Rock Around the Clock* for the first time. I don't know how it was for others my age/younger/older, but there was certainly a shock of recognition involved. Much of that came

from listening to late-night radio in various areas of the South. How I wish I could remember what the location and call letters were of a station I used to pick up in the wee hours while I was staying with my brother and his wife in Brevard, N.C., the same summer that I got my first car (see my preliminary novel in these pages). I gather it was a Black station, but I don't know for sure because I wasn't assuming anything at the time. Just listening. All I know is that they played Rhythm n' Blues and old blues and other stuff that I loved to listen to and never heard anywhere else.

The only clue, and it would only be good if someone reading this were listening to the same station in those days and those hours, was that the main DJ on the show always referred to his engineer as "Cohort."

The difference between us in some respects, I guess, is that you paid attention to who was doing what.

IMPLOSION #31 - Arnie

So, in which Conrunning Wave would you place the SilverCons? Some kind of overlap, perhaps, between the First and Second Waves? And while you don't mention the new breed of Star Trek conventions (I won't either, by name, because I've suddenly drawn a blank on it; all I recall is that it doesn't seem to have anything to do with either SF or ST) which I'd gather are prime examples of Third Wave thinking.

I have this impish inclination to wonder what philosophy will be espoused by the Fourth Wave.

LET'S TALK - Raven

Raven, is dot yu? Yu donna put yur nem onna da faanzine, Raven. Howcum yu donna put yur nem?

Rebellion against the Fannish Norm, huh?

I dunno about this Owners thing. Yeah, there are the real Fat Cats out there who manipulate many of

the rest of us in a variety of ways, but you're giving them a kind of Illuminati cast that I don't think is there. We—the Big We—are too amorphous for anything but control by the statistics of Our behavior, and Statistics are not Us. There are among Us always the ones who will slip the mold and sidestep the pressure. Some pop out like watermelon seeds. And some die by the wayside.

I see the predictions about population pressure coming true. The senseless violence and the inward withdrawal that our populace, plebe to patrician, is both subject to and promulgating, are symptomatic of a mass movement, a—[hm. The word is one of the latest buzzwords. Bother... No. "Paradigm" is the word I was thinking of, but that's not it.]— It's a fundamental change in the mass gestalt, the human psyche. But this is not to say that Mankind has changed, as though the greater organism that is mankind had mutated, but rather that it is undergoing its natural process of change. We, the individuals who partake of the greater being, may or may not be directly a part of that process, but the process goes on nonetheless. And yes, there are nerve centers and active organs within the Organism that affect many others about and throughout it, and there are other elements upon whom these effects may or may not create or determine profound repercussions.

In other words, some of us are "fat cats" and some are junkyard dogs and some are spiders at the centers of their webs and some are butterflies and some...some are not analogical at all.

So saying, the simpleton rested upon his tuffet and ignored the sparrows where they fell.

And on that note of inexplicable profundity it's time for me to git while the gittin's good. Next time, folks...

