

## **CARPE DIEM**

Beneath the Jersey's skies of blue  
in Montclair's mountain town,  
there stands our college, tried and true  
and growing in renown....

This "beauty" earned a great deal of money for me during my four years living on campus at M.S.T.C. As the only car on campus, it chased me into celebrity status before hazing was over.

In the beginning, the entire scene seemed surreal. First there were questions about the car itself:

How did you get it? Is it really yours? How did you learn to drive? How fast does she go? How do you operate the top? How do you work the seats? Where do you keep the keys?

Once I realized the endless potential possibilities of "Beauty," combined with the confirmation of my 8 PM curfew ... P.O.W.! "The Power of Wampum" was born!

It was 1951. I was seventeen. I was living in a dorm on a college campus. I had never been away from home, alone, in life. The college motto, Carpe Diem (Seize the day)! Yes, I did just that and very well, I might add.

The Power of Wampum evolved gradually over the first few weekends of my living in Russ Hall on campus. Russ housed one hundred female students, while Chapin, another one hundred upper classmen. All female.

I did not take long to know that this great majority were all W.N.D.L.s. (Without Necessary Drivers Licenses.) What a score! What a find! This was such an easy ploy. I felt guilty charging a flat fee of one dollar for all errands.

Picking up pre-ordered take out from Bonds, the local hamburger and ice cream place, was like taking candy from a baby. With burgers at twenty-five cents, fries at a dime, cheeseburgers for a quarter and shakes at twenty-five cents, each dollar fee usually swelled by the change – the coin or coins that were tossed in as a grateful tip. Exact change was a must, No big bills. Time was a precious commodity. There were only so many hours available for me to do these runs to town. If you broke my rules, you could suffer the loss of service for up to a week.

Trips to the bank, train station, cost two dollars and movie drop offs were one dollar, one way only. It took two years before I could acquire round trip movie drops. The eight o'clock curfew was a plague on my income. Every customer had my class schedule. In an emergency, see me. I can float a quick five- or ten-dollar loan, interest free for the first week.

Death in the family? You arrived home before your family could figure out how to transport you home. There was never any money exchanged in these rare, but painfully emotional times. Never. Often several of us would attend a service, a wake, a funeral mass, depending on class schedule. Money never entered into these serious, solemn situations. Never.

After the first month on campus, couples started to hook up. The Chapin girls were on a ten o'clock curfew. Imagine their popularity. This was cool. Very cool.

Rates for car use by others ranged from three dollars to ten dollars. The first applied if you remained on campus or drove to Bonds. The ten-dollar rate applied if you were going to Garrett Mountain, not too far from campus, where kissing and petting were scorched into the stories of this lovers' lane.

Beauty had to be returned on time, clean and with a full tank of gasoline. No exceptions! Keys, once Beauty was securely locked, were to be left in a pre-assigned location. Those returning by ten dropped the keys in a basket that was secured to the end of a line that ran from my dorm window.

Before I left home, my father made one rule – one very strict rule. I was never to return home until Thanksgiving. He wanted me to feel that I had “gone away to college” ... not just an hour drive door to door.

I began driving students home for the weekend and in some cases returning them to campus on Sunday evening. Curious parents sometimes showed their gratitude by slyly doubling the five- or ten-dollar fee charged. To actually get paid to drive Beauty was a mortal sin for certain. I am going straight to hell! I am certain of that.

In the spring, a few of the returning Korean veterans cut into my business. It was no problem. The C average I'd acquired due to lack of time for studying, it was like a yoke around my neck.

The fifteen dollars a week my father sent directly from my savings account for “expenses,” boosted my purse. My dorm business alone kept me in terrific financial shape, enough to help my friend Stella stay in the dorm for another year. No charge there, either.

