

## A VENT WINDOW VIEW – *The Note Stop*

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Norton became our first-string quarterback because he was faster than Bannister and could throw a football sixty yards. To add frosting to that cake he looked like a young Errol Flynn. Last, but certainly not least, he owned a beautiful '47 Ford coupe. I wasn't jealous of his looks or football skills, but I surely coveted that car. There was something about its Forties styling that made that machine seem ideal for a kid like me.

The car and his football skills had little to do with Norton's ability to attract females. My girlfriend, Roxy, looked at him in much the same way Pooh gazes at a honey pot. Age seemed not to matter. Women older than my Mom stumbled to a stop and sneaked over-the-shoulder glances at Norton with a hunger in their eyes that, aimed at me, would have sent me running for cover.

Since I already had a "steady," acquiring a car similar to Norton's topped my list of wants. His shiny little Ford met a standard set in my mind long ago by the lead in a mid-forties movie serial. He played a detective hero who drove a 1940 Deluxe coupe; his daring equaled the bravery of "oater" idols such as Hopalong Cassidy and the Lone Ranger. Like them, he triumphed over evil even when facing overwhelming odds. Still, as the weeks passed and the serial progressed, I began to wonder at his lack of forethought for, week after week, he drove that wonderful little Ford into situations that became more horrific with each episode.

In contrast to the heroics exhibited by that film-star detective, Norton seldom drove in a reckless fashion in our community. In fact, he was seldom seen on Saturday nights because his searches for feminine companionship covered areas far beyond our local haunts. Unlike me, he had unlimited range. Dad would have spotted excessive odometer readings and a near-empty gas tank if I had I dared a trip to far-flung fields in his Chevy.

I began classes at State some ninety-odd miles from home immediately after leaving high school. Studies and part-time jobs kept me busy, but evenings, with a dorm full of girls just a block from my place, I truly missed my long ago access to Dad's car.

Shortly after the fall semester began, I was downtown, walking toward the campus dining hall for my noon shift, when a shiny, black coupe halted beside me. Talk about surprises! Unknown to me, Norton had enrolled as a full-time student and was practicing with the football team. A scholarship was the reward if he made the team.

"Get in," he said, "I'll give you a lift back to the brain factory, but I've got to make a stop first. Won't take but a minute--this girl has some history notes I need."

"This girl" lived four blocks north in a brick mansion surrounded by an acre of grass mowed to putting green perfection. Obviously Norton had been there before, because he marched up to the brass-bedecked front door like MacArthur returning to the Philippines. Even as he reached for a polished brass knocker, the door opened and a ruby-nailed hand pulled Norton inside; it happened so quickly, I caught only a momentary glimpse of his blonde-haired greeter.

The car clock registered 11:20. We were only ten minutes from the campus, so I leaned back and relaxed. Fifteen minutes later, though, I began to wonder what was taking so long. At 11:45, increasingly desperate, I honked the horn. A moment later, Norton appeared. Shirtless, shoeless, holding his pants up with one hand, he signaled "go" with the other. Fortunately, he had left the key in the switch and seconds later I was rolling.

Sadly, Norton failed to make the football team and, unknown to me, dropped out of school a week or two after this event. When next we met some fifty years later, I mentioned his little Ford, but held off asking questions about that stop for history notes. His wife, a brunette, was unlikely to appreciate hearing details about that long ago blonde in Norton's history.