

# My Great Adventure *by Miss Geraldine*

Most of you know me but I'm sure a few don't, so by way of introduction my owners, Lee and Mary Jean Dunn, have cared for me for the last 10 years. I came from the McManus family in Greensboro, NC where I had resided for the first 49 years of my life. That makes me a 1957 Series 62, model 6239 Cadillac 4 door hardtop sedan. Grandpa McManus was a farmer and didn't have a truck, so my big old butt trunk hauled pigs, chickens, goats, feed, hay and who knows what else. I was quite sick at the time but since coming to Waleska, GA, I have been brought back to a decent cruiser by several area shops, and have had the distinct pleasure of leading several PSCLC driving tours while my owners served as activities directors. I've been kind of laid up the last couple of years with transmission and other aged problems, but have been feeling much better the last few months.

Earlier this year I heard my owners, no spring chickens themselves, planning a trip to their home towns, 30 miles apart in northern Illinois. They were going back to their homeland to celebrate their 60 year high school class reunions, each to be held during the hometown major festive event of the year a week apart with parades and car shows along with the class reunions. I was very sad, even cried myself to sleep a couple of nights, as I was sure I would stay behind again while they took my much younger by 19 years sister, Goldilocks, on another long trip as has been the case recently.

When Master Lee came to me after we took a, news to me, "test" drive one fine day in which I had performed masterfully, and asked "Geraldine, I know you are getting old but do you think you could take us on a 2,500 mile adventure?" Well, I was flabbergasted and overjoyed with the question. "But of course" I responded, "when do we start?" Well, it was just a couple of weeks away so I started going to bed early to get rested up, I really wanted this to be a great trip for them, they were so looking forward to it. Then on the last day of August I was backed out of the garage and parked in the loading area. I was



feeling so grand with my trunk open and tons of materials being loaded aboard. I did notice in particular that there were a lot of tools, safety and emergency equipment, a hydraulic jack, "now what would that be for I thought," lots of cleaning materials, folding chairs, extra spare parts, quarts of various fluids, "I do leak a little here and there," and there was even some show wet shine. "Oh my goodness," I thought, "am I going to be in a show? Master, I'm not a show car." He calmly explained that he knew that,

but these were special events and he had no expectations of winning but believed those Yankee hot rods needed to see what a real car was. So I conceded to do that, and really wanted to see how that wet shine would make me look, kind of like makeup for us ladies.

Shortly after leaving the house we turned north on I-75 for the big run. Master's foot was a little light at first but after a run at 65 he brought me on up to the limit and I think a couple of times maybe a little more. That dang low slung orange McLaren had to get after it pretty good and he gave me a thumbs up as he went by, now that's pretty cool. So I was feeling my oats now and cruised on to Paducah, KY, for a 360 mile first day without a problem. I was the hit of the



parking lot, as well as all of the gas stations and other stops. Sometimes Master finds it hard to get away from all the onlookers marveling at me.

On Thursday morning, the 1<sup>st</sup> of September, we rolled out of Paducah for 3 miles then crossed the mighty Ohio River into the great state of Illinois, proceeding north on I-24 as we had since Chattanooga. A beautiful day for

cruising, we connected to I-57 north then west on I-74 at Champaign, home of the Fighting Illini, into Peoria, a 380 mile run to Master's cousin where Illinois banners and colors abound. Guess where he got his journalism degree before spending his career with the Peoria Journal Star as a features writer and editor.



On Friday we visited the Riverside Museum in Peoria before cleaning up for Masters high school class reunion in Bradford 40 miles north. I got a quick wipe down but no serious attention while he came out in an orange and black shirt, his class colors. There he joined 13 other



classmates from the class of 1956, out of 37 graduates, for a wonderful evening of memories. Yep, they put him between the two tallest dudes in the class and yes, had a dang good basketball team.

Saturday was a welcome off day and the only thing on the schedule was a good clean up for me. That show thing was going to be the next day, so Master worked hard on trying to make me look younger and even more beautiful.

Sunday's car show was on the main corner, that's the only one with a flashing stop light, and down Main Street. The little town of 650 drew in 137 cars for the show, the largest in the 10 years of the show. Well, of course, they heard that I was coming and wanted to see a "real" car, don't you think. Master's two cousins and wives joined us at the show.



I really did shine with that "wet" look stuff covering my old paint and was a real hit with the many admirers that came by to ask questions, most of which were "Did you really drive this old car up here from Georgia? Man, are you brave." There was a show off '57 Chevy with shiny new paint, polished chrome, lots of updating in my class so I finished 2<sup>nd</sup> and Master received a folding chair award. See, the little old town is practical.

As the car show closed down the Bradford American Legion hosted its annual fish fry and about double the town population showed up for it.

Another cousin, yeah, Master has many of them, former Commander of the Legion, was working frying up fish and stopped by to say hello to family members as we ate walleye and all of the



trimmings. He's the dude standing.

Sunday morning we left for the 40 mile drive again to participate in the parade with classmates joining Master in my luxurious seats. At staging a nephew was also staging his ride, a super lawnmower, he's a landscaper and yard maintenance guy, and we discussed old times. Time to get in line, so he cranked me up and we moved into position with 3 classmates aboard. Idling along waiting for the parade to move I coughed and my engine died. Crank, crank, crank . . . no fire, oh dear, what's up. Had to let my nephew pass me with the lawnmower, a bit embarrassing, but in a few minutes my 365 cu/in V8 came to life and I moved back in the line, idled again, died again. This time a 1926 Model "T" Ford Touring car rolled by with a smart ass comment of "You need a pull Caddy, I'm running good!" Just what I needed, "Master, turn that key again, I'm ready to go" and sure enough off we went. I did notice that he was

keeping my revs up with his right foot and keeping my brake on with his left, and continued to throughout the parade, a good thing cause I was able to keep rolling along that way. I did look pretty dang classy parading down Main Street, and receiving lots of cheers, clapping and thumbs up. Really a fun parade and accolades for the class of '56.



Following the parade were the grilled pork chop sandwiches and trimmings. Master said they were really good, but it sure was smoky around there.



Now this was good old down home cookin'. This was Monday, Labor Day and Bradford celebrates it like this every year. Master said he used to ride his quarter horse, Becky, the 6 miles into town to participate in the scoop shovel race with his buddy Jerry. A little more

dangerous than my parading down the street, this event had a rider, a rope tied to the saddle horn and to the handle of a scoop shovel, a rider sitting in the shovel with hands on the handle, feet held up out front, and an oval course with timers for the fastest lap. We often ended up rolling through the corners which was not the fast way around but the crowd sure got a kick out of it. Those were the days he said.

After getting filled up on pork chops, Master took me out to the farm where his father was the hired hand when he was born. The house is of English stone construction with exterior walls 3 feet thick. He used to play in the window sills. This 1840 home still stands although no one lives in it any more. Master lived there two times for a total of



6 years. Said it was a great place to begin life but looked a little scary now.

I ran okay as long as I didn't have to idle, so we got back to Peoria just fine. The next morning Master installed a new fuel filter in case that was the problem, but it wasn't. So he called around, located an old time mechanic at Walt's Garage in Buda, just a few

minutes from Bradford, and got a Friday afternoon appointment, just in time for the parade in Princeton. Walt checked out my fuel pump and said it was really weak, so likely the source of the problem, as well as there was some crud in my fuel filter just out of the tank. I ran fine but Master made a note to drain and clean the fuel tank when we got home. After spending five nights in Peoria, we moved to Lake Thunderbird in Putnam, a few miles from Bradford. I really liked it there in the woods kind of like at home. One of the days between class reunions Master had me take him to the former Dunn Farm, a 360 acre farm with a “hard road,” as he called it, separating north and south acreage. The farm was sold many years ago and the main home and buildings and the farm hand home, which Master lived in during his first year of married life, are all gone and grown up in corn. The “lane” that led to the homes now goes to nowhere.



Master had me take him to the south side of the “hard road” where a cemetery and community house still exist. In fact he said his burial plot is in it. The land used to be part of great grandfather Orlando Dunn’s farm until he deeded it

to the community. His homestead is a few hundred feet away where Master hunted squirrels as a youth. Indeed, he attended a one room school located there while in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. He found a photo of the school and coal house in the Osceola Grove Community House, placed it on my fender located so that the former location was in the picture behind the third tree on the right.



The Osceola Grove Community House, built in 1917, hosts numerous events.



Master said there is a lot of Dunn history in that building, including

several photos of great grandfather Orlando Dunn. In the cemetery are the graves of many Dunn's and other relatives.

On Friday, while I was getting a new fuel pump, Master's Master, "MM" from now on, Mary Jean, attended a ladies luncheon with her classmates and then gathered at the motel in the evening. By the time I got back from Walt's it was near dark, so I would have to be cleaned up for the parade Saturday morning before the parade. And by the way, I was really running good, idling like a champ.

Saturday morning the motel manager told Master that he could not use that nice hose located very near me because "Everyone would be wanting to wash their car out here and we can't have that." So Master made 15 trips into the restroom with a dishpan hauling water to wash and rinse me. Needless to say, he was not a happy camper. But in the end it all worked out and I was shining again.

We lined up for the parade and several of MM's classmates would be aboard me, with bells ringing for the theme "Let Freedom Ring." Lordy, they were a noisy



bunch! The parade went approximately 2-1/4 miles down Main Street in Princeton. I was at my very best behavior, traversing that route at idle and left foot braking without a single

misfire. This town of 7,500 had an estimated 20,000 people lining the route solid and deep, what a crowd! And they were very happy to see this old gal, waving, thumbs up, yelling, children scrambling after candy.



In this area of Main Street, at the bottom of the dip where the DQ now stands, was a short order restaurant and ice cream manufacturing plant operated by Master and MM for a year in their early life. They soon found they weren't very business savvy. Their feature ice cream dish was the Belly Buster with 7 scoops of your choice.



After the parade disbanded they had me take them by the home that MM lived in



when Master went a courting. Beautiful home, one of first in Princeton, built around 1840, with a copula on top as a

lookout for Indians. MM's father ran the Elm City Cab Company out of this home.

Saturday evening was MM's class reunion, with a graduating class of 97 and 34 classmates in attendance. I took them to the Underground Restaurant, the namesake for a nearby home site used by slaves traveling North through the "underground railroad," where the festivities took place. It was a grand evening of remembrances, hugs all around and getting reacquainted with some classmates that she had not seen for many years.



That's her holding up the sign near the "S". Breakfasts at the motel were noisy and continued the conversations from the day before.



Sunday opened with a very quiet and overcast sky, the giant flag at one corner of the I-80 intersection, with three more on the other corners, all hanging completely limp at half-mast in honor of 911 victims from that awful day we all remember. It was a very sobering sight, one that made your heart tremble a little. The City of Princeton had all of

their flags, giant or small, at half-mast.



After breakfast I took them to Master's brother's house where a cousin also joined them. I was selected by the group to transport all 5 to a family lunch to meet up with another cousin and a nephew and his family.



That lunch was at Caponni's in Toluca, a family hangout from the past.

That evening they were packing up for our return trip home and starting to load me. Monday morning goodbyes were passed around the breakfast room and off we went. There was one stop on the schedule at one of Master's classmates on his conservation farm in Metamora. After lunch he challenged Master to ride his home built zip line and he was fool enough to accept. Off Master went flying



through the trees and living to tell about it. He said that thing didn't have a lot of (any?) safety features.

We cranked back up and headed for home, with an anticipated stopover again in Paducah. While breezing along I-74 eastbound and nearing Champaign, I got the shivers. My gauge needles started dancing and my turn signals would do the same. But, dang it, I was running just fine, thank you. After a turn onto I-57 south, everything settled down again, but it was nearing 5 PM and shops would be closing so Master pulled into Tuscola, stopped at an O'Reilly's to get info on a mechanic which he did. But they were closing for the day and agreed to take me into their secure shop for the night and have a look the next morning.

In the morning they woke me up, raised my hood and checked my alternator. Declared it bad, removed it and hauled it off to a rebuilder. Rebuilder checked it out and declared it not bad, did a little magic on it, and sent it back to me. Further checking found a faulty wire going to my alternator, it was replaced and now my alternator worked fine. It's now 4:30 PM but we reloaded and headed south toward Paducah where we intended to stay the night.

But alas, about an hour down the road I started having trouble on any incline, it progressively got worse, then I belched and behold, no more fuel starvation and I ran like that McLaren. I got thirsty so they pulled me into Marion, fueled me up and decided it was getting dark and we had all better call it a day. I should have had them home, but we were still 450 miles away and I was feeling kind of sick.

Wednesday morning dawned and I pulled them out early so we could get home. The first hour was a piece of cake as we sailed down I-57, then I started spitting up again on any grade, then on the flat, then couldn't keep speed. Through all that we had burned a tank of fuel as we neared Kentucky. So we stopped, took on fuel, they had some early lunch and let me rest. I felt better after that and as we headed out I got my stride back, cruising across Kentucky and into Tennessee without any problem until a few miles north of Nashville. Back again was the fuel starvation. I made it through Nashville but soon was really on my last leg. I couldn't keep speed, inclines were really tough and I



sputtered along to the south side of Nashville. They pulled me off, fueled up with 93 octane, let me rest for 45 minutes. They checked the GPS and it showed 197 miles to home. They questioned if I could make it and I told them with some occasional rest I thought I could. So we headed south again and it was immediately evident that I was wrong, Monteagle was ahead and they didn't see any way I was going to get up it as I was sputtering shortly after getting back on I-24. The next exit was Murfreesboro and I exited to a gas station. Another mileage check showed 185, and with their AAA Premium, they can carry me for 200 miles. Didn't sound so bad, I was really tired and worn out.

Soon E. A. Towing pulled up with a Freightliner rollback flatbed and a crew cab. Pretty snazzy hauler and I am ready.



They snatched me up on that Freightliner's backside and tied me down nice and secure. As we entered I-24 again, we hit a big bump. The next thing you know a car was alongside waving his arms wildly. Master's look in the rear view mirror confirmed what I felt, that bump had punctured my fuel tank big time and the newly acquired 18

gallons of fuel poured on the ground. I saw the driver explaining to Master that he was at fault by hooking up the tie down chain with the hook pointing up too close under the fuel tank. This return trip was really getting out of hand now. The driver motored on but we changed our destination to C & C Auto Service. I was unloaded under an awning, living essentials removed and the car cover put over me like I was dead. Well I wasn't, but I was not in any mood to argue.

The next morning Master located a new reproduction tank to factory specs in Minnesota. He emailed the towing company with all of the information. Within two hours the driver called him, told him they had ordered the tank (\$540) and it would be shipped to C & C that day, that he had called Hollis the mechanic to send the installation bill to him and that they would reimburse \$50 for lost fuel. So as I write this on Sunday night I'm still under cover but the towing company stepped up and took care of things promptly. I should have a new tank soon, then we can explore why I was stuttering. Could it have been crud plugging up the filters from my old tank?

Master and MM had a memorial trip, one that they will treasure forever and I was proud to have been their transportation. They reacquainted with childhood friends, stayed with family, reminisced with high school classmates from those long ago and exciting days, showing me off in car shows, and parading me down both Main Streets. What a glorious time they had



Miss Geraldine casually relaxing at her current location.