

Best Costume

by Martha Tolles



As I strolled through the exhibit of antique cars here at our retirement community, Casa Dorinda, I was fascinated. I was even more intrigued by the car owners. They were all dressed in costumes that were supposed to reflect the period of their ancient vehicles. At the end of the hour we were to vote on the best outfit, as well as best auto. It was going to be difficult to choose...there was the gal in the flapper dress of the twenties, another in a plaid skirt, and one with a braid of hair wrapped around her head.

Meantime, as I studied the cars, memories came swooping back to me. The yellow Pierce Arrow with the rumble seat made me think of the time when I rode in such a seat in our Chevrolet, all the way from Rye, New York to Bethel, Vermont. The wind blew in my hair and my younger brother and family cat were squeezed in next to me.

Now, I've come to a thirty-eight Packard sedan which reminded me of the twenty-six Packard my husband, Roy, bought before going overseas in World War Two. Ours was an elegant black car with enormous white wall tires and delicate window shades and Roy named it the *Fighting Lady*. Gas was rationed so every day he drove the two miles into town, parked it, then thumbed a ride to the Marine air corps base. Fueling the *Fighting Lady* was a problem in more ways than one. Roy used to tell people with a chuckle, "When I take it to the gas station I tell them to check the gas and fill it up with oil."

Now, here I was coming to a shiny blue Camaro. How our daughter had loved the one we gave her. How thrilled she was as she drove off to UCSB in it. I moved along, admiring the costumes of the owners as well as the cars. Suddenly it's time to vote on these cars and costumes. I quickly picked up a ballot, selected the Packard in memory of my husband and the *Fighting Lady*, and also I voted for the old gent in a long white coat standing by a twenty-six Ford Model T... for best costume. Then, I cast my ballot and tired, I moved on and flopped into a chair near a Studebaker race car. I studied the nearby cars and costumes, and thought I'd made good choices.

Then I glanced around and noticed a little group of people standing nearby, holding their ballots and looking in my direction. Why, I wondered. In a moment they turned to leave but one young gal gave a friendly wave and called, "We think your costume is the best. We're voting for you." What? She thought my good clothes were a costume? I'm in my long swishy skirt, flowery blouse, pearls and big floppy sun hat.....Well, maybe they did fit right in and certainly they were as old as some of these cars. And I was, too.

Spectator Cover Photo: Courtesy of Larry Liddle


CASA DORINDA

805 969 8011 | www.casadorinda.org

Casa Dorinda is a private LifeCare CCRC Community, owned and operated by the Montecito Retirement Association, a nonsectarian, nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. State of California Licenses RCFE #421700160, SNF #050000112, CCRC Certificate of Authority #126