

## A Bubblegum Cigar

by Sam Turner © 2020

Two waitresses from Grand Canyon's Bright Angel Lodge were passing through my check-out line at Babbitt Brother's Grocery Store.

In a moment of inspiration, I asked, "Are you going back to the lodge?"

They answered, "Yes."

"There's a new girl working in the soda fountain who's name is Phyllis. She's a blonde."

"Yes. What about her?"

I grabbed the closest object I could find next to my register and handed it to one of the waitresses. She looked at it, then up to me. "What am I supposed to do with this bubblegum cigar?"

"Give it to her and tell her that Sam Turner sent it to her."

The waitress laughed. "Does she know who you are, Sammy?"

"Probably not, but tell her where I work."

Two hours later, Phyllis entered the grocery store, holding the cigar and looking around. "Who is Sam Turner?"

"I see you got my present," I said as I stepped away from my register. "When is your day off?"

"I don't know. I just started work today."

"Ask for Wednesday. No one wants Wednesday. I have Wednesdays off. I'll drive you around the Canyon. And when you are off this evening, I'll pick you up. A bunch of us are going to the school to play volleyball."

Although I had a date for the game, her supervisor, Lucy, (who was my X-girlfriend) assured her that this would be fun. Phyllis was crowded into the back of my 1947



Plymouth coupe with Lucy and her date (Don, my roommate from Pepperdine, whom she eventually married) and Jill and me in the front. The evening was a success.

Wednesday morning came. I was to pick Phyllis up at 0830 at the Women's dormitory.

My dad loaned me his 1955 Oldsmobile 98 coupe for this special event. At 0800, thirty minutes before our “appointment,” the doorbell rang. Three of my friends from Pepperdine had just arrived on the morning train, expecting me to fulfill my promise to take them around the Grand Canyon!



The guys piled into the back seat of the Olds, and I drove them to the dormitory. Phyllis was on time, waiting for me.

“Ah, I hope you don’t mind. Three of my college friends just arrived on the train, and I promised them I’d show them the Canyon. You won’t mind riding with four guys, will you?”

“No, I don’t mind at all,” she smiled with an excited gleam in her eyes.

And so the five of us started on the twenty-six mile East Rim Drive to Desert View and the Hopi Watch Tower. I drove while Phyllis turned around and kept a running conversation with the three young gentlemen. (We were all about the same age, being juniors in college.) I could tell somehow that she wasn’t bored. Neither was I. Later, by the end of the tour, my friends were ready to board their train, and I drove Phyllis back to her dormitory.

“I had a wonderful time, Sam.”

“I’m happy that you did. I hope you didn’t mind the boys coming along.”

“Oh, I didn’t mind at all. This was an exceptional tour of the Canyon. And by the way, I saved the bubblegum cigar to remind me of this date.”