I was sitting on the front porch step, thinking wonderful thoughts about the neat little shiny-yellow sports car I'd seen down in Mr. Twilligen's used car lot only four days ago, wondering just what I could do to get enough more money to get down there and say, "Here, Sir: the money for that Z28," when I heard a loud rattle and a roar coming from our lane.
I jumped up like I'd been shot at, scared out of my beautiful and wonderful thoughts about the sleek little job down at the car lot. I raced around the side of the porch until I could see down the lane to better decide what the horrible rattle and roar was all about, and what I saw threw me back on my heels and forced a gasp out of my mouth.

I leaned my tall, sparse frame against the porch railing for support as an unearthly "bang" exploded from the roaring, rattling monster of the "vintage-heirloom" emerging in slow but steady motion over one small rise after another towards our farm. Or was it the neighbor's farm?

The last rise was the worst of all. I held my breath as I saw the engine's nose rise in slow motion to top the little hill, exploding the loudest "bang" of all, as if in triumph shouting to all within hearing distance that although it was a relic of the long-ago past its great motor "heart" had never died; it was still active and well able to "take the hills and climb the steeps."

My jaws gaped open. Wide open! I marveled -- and I mean marveled! -- that the noisy, rattling, monster-looking contraption of a car could even so much as move. That was marvel number one. My second marvel came in the form of wonderment; who would dare to drive the rattle-trap? Who would so much as think, even, about putting it on the highway as a means of transportation?

To say I was flabbergasted is putting it mildly; I was positively dumb with awe and amazement. I wished with everything in me that my father and mother could have been home to view what I now considered to be the excitement of my entire lifetime, so far. I felt like I had been catapulted nearly a hundred years back in time; I felt like I was seeing history. It was awesome; I was breathless.

The rattles and the roars became almost deafening as the driver accelerated in what seemed to me to be uneven and spurtlike acceleration. Maybe that was the only way to keep the odd looking, shaking, quaking thing running, I thought, as a loud "bang" jostled me out of my thoughts and I saw the noisemaker come 'round our barn and shudder and sputter to a shaking, quaking stop, as though breathing its last and final breath. Well, at least it was safely "entombed" in our driveway if, indeed, it had "breathed" its last breath.
I stood as one mesmerized, squeezing my lanky form tight against the porch post, wondering if some dead ghost of the past would emerge from the ancient relic. I felt like I was dreaming; like I was living in another era; a long, ago time.

I heard a door handle click, then I heard a door squeak on its hinges as I disentangled my arms from the post. Whoever the brave adventurer was was real! No dead ghost of the past here. I was not back in time, neither was I dreaming. What my eyes were beholding of this high-riding, skinny-wheeled job was real. Every bit' as real as I was real. And inside that high-seated thing called a car, was a person; a living and real human being. Who was it? I wondered, and what brought them here, to our farm?

"Yoo hoo," a feminine voice called out cheerily and pleasantly over the squeaking door. "Anybody home?" she asked, stepping down onto the running board before taking the final step to the ground. My mouth flew open wide. Then wider. Then still wider. Coming toward, the house, wearing her always present welcoming smile, and dressed in garments as ancient and "vintage-like" as the car itself, was Aunt Cordelia.

I stood as one dumb; I was speechless. Absolutely speechless! Aunt Cordelia! Rich, wealthy-wealthy Aunt Cordelia. But she was over in Africa. Or Brazil. Or, was it the Orient? The Philippines, maybe?

"Anybody home?" she called but again, in a musical tone of voice.

Collecting my scattered senses together, I came toward her from my viewing place on the porch. "So it was you who 'rattled' me out of my beautiful day-dreaming, thoughts!" I exclaimed, rushing toward her and gathering her in one great swoop into my arms and dancing around the porch with her. She laughed with childlike glee and wonder. "Where did you come from?" I asked.

"If you'll put me down" she said, still laughing in that sweet childlike way she always had, "I'll tell you, Ryan. My, how tall you've grown since I last saw you!" she remarked. "This is your last year in Chestnut High, isn't it?" she asked.

I nodded.
"Have you decided which Bible school you'll be going to after you're out of school here?" she asked seriously.

"I thought I may just go to one of the colleges near here" I replied. "I'd like to become an agronomist."

She studied my face for a long time. Running her dainty index finger across my forehead and tracing the outline of my profile, she said soberly, "I asked the Lord to make a missionary out of you, Ryan. Is your mother not home?" she asked abruptly.

"She and Daddy went to City Hospital; one of our neighbors was nearly killed. A piece of farm equipment," I explained.

"That's too bad" Aunt Cordelia remarked. "But I love the way everybody in these parts rallies to the needs of their neighbors. This is living up to Jesus' teachings. Now Ryan;' she said as she tripped lightly off the porch and headed toward the car, "if you'll help me inside with my luggage I'll rest for a while. I suppose the east bedroom is still vacant"

"It is, Aunt Cordelia and it's still yours. Mother and Dad and I call it 'Aunt Cordelia's room' Or if you'd rather have Priscilla's and Wendy's room you may use it. Since Priscilla's married and Wendy works away from home, we have their bedroom as another spare. You may have your pick."

"Isn't that nice!" Aunt Cordelia laughed. "But I'll take the east room; I like that room. And your mother said she fixed it up just for me. But say, what do you think of my car, Ryan? It rather becomes me, don't you agree?"

I gulped. I was totally unimpressed. Or rather, I should say that I was impressed -- "badly."

"I . . . never saw any . . . like it" I stated truthfully as Aunt Cordelia pulled open the squeaking door and stepped gingerly up on the running board and began handing her two pieces of luggage out to me.

"I love the old thing" she admitted. "But frankly, Ryan, there have been a few times when I wondered if it was going to get me where I wanted to go. Look at this interior, would you!" she exclaimed. "It looks almost like new.
Horsehair seats" she remarked, stroking the strange looking, straight-backed seats.

Horsehair seats! I thought, mentally comparing the beautiful Z28 to this thing before me, standing high off the ground. "I . . . I thought . . . you weren't. . . ."

"Going to make it here" Aunt Cordelia said, plucking the words out of my mouth and laughing softly. "Your Uncle Morris bought this before he left me to go Home" she said, patting the seat affectionately. "For a long time I couldn't bear the pain I felt when I looked at it. He always did like old things; preferred them to the newer, more modern things. I'm afraid it deteriorated considerably, sitting idle all these years. I decided to begin using it."

I gasped. I had forgotten how far away Aunt Cordelia lived from us. "You . . . you certainly didn't . . . drive it all these . . . miles?" I stammered.

"Oh Ryan, you dear boy! Do you think an old Woman like I would be so foolish? Why, the poor thing would never have made it, I'm afraid. You see, it needs to have some work done on it. Long ago, your father told me of a man in these parts who restores old cars -engines and all. I had it shipped by rail to your little town twenty-two miles from here, then I drove it here, as you can see. It took me almost three hours to get here. I saw beautiful scenery and did constant praying, all the way here. But God kept it sputtering and crawling slowly along. And I'm here, praise be to Him!"

Again she laughed musically. It sounded like a ripping brook, a gentle, soothing rain and a bird song all wrapped together in one package and delivered to my ears by this tiny-little spritely, indefatigable, effervescent personality called Aunt Cordelia.

I took the luggage pieces and started towards the house, excitement pulsating all through my being. Aunt Cordelia tripped beside me like a young girl, chattering about how good it was to be back at the farm again.

"Oh, Ryan!" she exclaimed in pure animation. "My trip to the Orient was so richly rewarding! I helped in the orphanage -- cooking meals, washing and ironing, as well as washing dirty faces and 'doctoring' sores. And I never let a day go by without going to the market place in the center of the town or the villages and giving out tracts, written and printed in each express language.
"In Africa I was chief cook and servant and dishwasher in the Bible school. This freed the missionary's wife, who is a qualified teacher, for teaching in the Bible school all those months:'

I gasped in surprise, almost dropping the pieces of luggage. "You . . . mean you did all that . . . that hard work for . . . an entire school year!" I was incredulous.

"Why not? I may be seventy-three but my body's still strong and I'm well able to work" "But . . . but couldn't you just have . . . well . . . ."

"Paid someone else to have done it? Is this what you were going to say, Ryan?"

Talk about a mind reader! Whew! Aunt Cordelia seemed to read my thoughts! "Well . . . yes. I . . . I mean.

"Oh, nonsense, Ryan! You're wondering why I didn't just write out a check and hire someone from over there to do it. Well, in the first place, I felt I wanted to do a service for the Lord by working for those dear, tired, over-worked missionaries. And the students, too. Then I thought the missionaries just may enjoy a bit of 'home cooking' flavor and taste -- USA style, I mean. I'm paying for two full-time cooks now, so the dear wife will be free for full-time teaching. Oh, I had a time, I tell you. It was wonderful! Why, Ryan" she declared with bubbly excitement, "you'd make a wonderful missionary. They need to learn how to produce better crops and vegetables on their lands, too. And just think of it, you could be telling them about Jesus and His power to save them from sin and to sanctify and cleanse their hearts while you were working. Imagine it, Ryan! You'd have a two-fold ministry. My, you'd be a wonderful missionary!"

I gulped as I led the way up the stair steps, pausing inside the east room to put Aunt Cordelia's luggage pieces on the floor.

As quickly and politely as possibly I could, I excused myself, telling Aunt Cordelia she should rest for a while. Then I sauntered thoughtfully out to the porch and sat down in the porch swing. This Aunt Cordelia, she was something special. Very special!
I knew that her earthly riches were not being squandered nor lavished on self. Uncle Morris had left her, as the world terms it, "well off" and "well fixed." And this spritely, diminutive woman, who could have had a mansion and servants galore, chose, rather, to live simply, in the house her husband and she had shared before his sudden Home-going. She was, however, lavishly unselfish and exceedingly generous-hearted with missions, orphanages, Bible colleges and schools and those whom she knew were genuinely needy.

Sitting there on the porch, deep in thought, I knew, quite suddenly, why Aunt Cordelia had come -- totally unannounced and unexpected -- to our farm: I had been praying much, to make sure that the gentle nudges I had been feeling toward the mission field were of God and not anything of my making. I had even asked the Lord to make it so plain that I would never question it, if it was He calling me. And God answered almost audibly, as I carried Aunt Cordelia's bags up the stair steps. I knew without a doubt that after graduation, God willing, I would, indeed, be studying agronomy and that, later, I'd be going to Bible school, landing, ultimately, on some mission field.

My heart felt like it was doing cartwheels inside my chest. And guess what; the Z28 faded completely away into obscure nothingness. I was completely overjoyed and happy in knowing God's will for me.

"Thank You, dear Lord" I said, looking upward. "Thank You for sending Aunt Cordelia:'