

In the spring and summer of 1951, my father had a part time landscaping business. This is when I became a redneck, working in the dirt with my father. He left his day job at 3:30 P. M. and was home by 4:00. With day light saving time and long summer days, the sun did not set until nearly 9:00.

We were able to get in a half days work after his day job. I did not mind the work since I had all day long to do kid things. Most importantly, my father was a great guy and I loved being with him. Although my father had left the farm in Georgia over 20 years ago, he was still a farm boy at heart. Landscaping was a natural thing for him to do. A red Farmall Cub tractor and a grey 50 Ford F-2 pick-up truck with an 8 foot bed were part of the business. The tractor and truck were stored at our house. We loaded the tractor on the truck by driving it to a nearby dirt ramp. What a thrill it was for a 13 year old boy sitting high atop the tractor to drive it to the ramp while my father drove the truck. Dad backed the truck up to the ramp and with the aid of 2 boards we drove the tractor onto the truck and subsequently to the job sites. Using hand tools at the work site was tedious, but driving the tractor was fun. My father sensed my pleasure at driving the tractor and allowed me to drive it as much as possible, while he labored with hand tools.

Sometime in this period, my father's partner in the landscape business went bankrupt due to other business activity and the tractor, truck and landscape business went away. It did not adversely affect my family financially, so it was still a great experience for me.

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The tractor was fun to drive but what really liberated me was a dark blue 1944 step-through Cushman motor scooter. I bought it for \$50. That was a considerable sum for a 13-year-old boy in those days. The money, most likely, came from my pay for cutting several lawns the previous summer. I had to have this scooter because my friend Vic across the street had one which I coveted. Initially, Vic had something called a Doodle Bug before he got his Cushman. The Doodle Bug was very small.,

about 3 foot long. When Vic and I rode double on it, we covered it up. Our friend's mother said we looked like we were gliding through the air.

Since I was 13 years old, I had no driver's license. The scooter was unlicensed and had a loud unmuffled exhaust. Although I drove my scooter everywhere, the police never bothered me about those details. I guess they had more important things to do. Perhaps they were busy catching criminals. The scooter had a small fuel tank and could be filled for 10 to 15 cents. I was making 50 cents per hour working for my father. For less than an hour's pay, my weekly fuel costs were satisfied. I wish I could say that now.

There were no leash laws in those days and dogs ran loose. As we drove through the neighborhoods, dogs would frequently chase us. Ordinarily, this was not a problem as they merely ran along side of us and barked. However, there was one dog that tried to bite me as he ran along side. After several times through that neighborhood, I was able to maneuver the dog to the left side of my scooter. As the dog was concentrating on biting my legs, I passed very closely by a bus coming from the opposite direction. I never saw that dog again.

In my memory, Vic and I rode double a lot although we both had scooters. It was probably because the scooters broke down a lot or needed maintenance. Since Vic was a better mechanic, his was running more often than mine and we rode double mostly on his. Once, we replaced the brake linings on both of the scooters. Like usual, Vic finished his first. I say finished but it was not quite finished. The brakes on these scooters are mechanical, not hydraulic. There was a foot pedal with a rod that attached to the brakes on the rear wheels. The new linings were thicker than the original linings and the geometry was changed. The rod would not quite reach. No problem, we were resourceful kids. We simply used some wire to attach it.



1949 FARMALL CUB TRACTOR

We then thought it was time to go to the beach. So, we both jumped on Vic's scooter and off we went. Our favorite beach was at the end of a descending hill with a traffic light just before the beach parking lot. We were descending down that hill when the light turned yellow. Instead of stopping, Vic sped up and hit the parking lot at about 40 mph. Brakes were applied and nothing happened. The wire broke!! We sped through parking lot bounced over a small curb and flew through the air on to the beach. I bailed out and landed on the sand, unhurt. Vic rode the scooter down and landed on the beach with the engine turning and kicking up sand. Thankfully, no one was on the beach where the scooter landed and no one was hurt. Only our dignity was damaged.

A very valuable lesson was learned. Do not make slipshod repairs to brakes. Brakes are very important. We both lived to implement that lesson.

Sometime in that same summer, Vic and I took off on a trip on his scooter. We drove from the Bay View section of Norfolk to Knotts Island, N. C., a round trip of 100+ miles. When we got to the ferry slip at Knotts Island to go to the mainland of N. C., we decided to turn around and go home. On the way home, the scooter broke down. We were close enough to call home for help but decided to try to fix it.

We had fuel and compression but no spark. Somehow with the most elemental of tools we were able to get the fly wheel off and discovered the points had come loose. We fashioned a screw driver from a bottle cap found nearby and reattached the points and got it running again. We returned home after being gone all day and were severely reprimanded by our parents. Never the less, it was a grand adventure.

Boys can't ramble like that today. Twenty five years later, when my son was 13 years old, I would not allow him to have a scooter or ramble like that. I remembered what I did and

decided that I didn't want him to take those chances.

When I was 14 years old, girls entered my life and dented the trunk lid of my scooter by riding behind me and holding on to me very tightly. Linda was a beautiful 13 year old blue eyed blond that rode with me in her short shorts and blouse. I particularly enjoyed the holding on tight part and the riding to secluded places for a tender kiss. Alas, Linda was fickle and moved on to other boys.

In my 15th year I met the love of my life. Nancy was to become my wife and mother of my children. At 15 years of age, she looked like a woman while I still was a boy. She was brunette, brown eyed, petite and voluptuous like Elizabeth Taylor in her prime.

As previously mentioned, my girl friend before Nancy was named Linda. Linda was blond and blue eyed. She was the opposite of Nancy. After school one day, I went home and got my scooter and returned to school. Nancy was attending an after school tutoring class. I tried to entice her to ride on my scooter with me. She was wearing a skirt and blouse at the time. Obviously, this was inappropriate attire for a young lady to ride on a scooter.

She informed me in no uncertain terms that "Nice girls don't ride on scooters with boys."

I replied, "Well, Linda did".

To which she replied, "I rest my case".

I left the scooter at school and walked her home. We talked of school and life in general. It was the beginning of a life long relationship.

Needless to say, she never rode on the scooter with me. In my 70th year I bought another 1944 step through scooter and she still refuses to ride with me. Nice grandmothers don't ride on scooters with grandfathers.

Prior to the actual purchase of the scooter, Nancy was replacing the wall paper in her elegant dining room. The wall paper hangers had removed the paper but declined to prepare the wall for the new paper. Nancy was faced with this daunting task. I jumped in and said that I would do it. It was a considerable effort on my part to sand the walls and put on a coat of paint to seal the wall. I looked upon it as foreplay.

When the job was finished, Nancy was impressed and said. "You must really love me to do all this work for me." I replied, "I most certainly do and I want to buy a Cushman scooter." She was astonished. What could she say? Well, she didn't say no. There was considerable back and forth; but, I got my scooter.



1944 CUSHMAN STEP THROUGH SCOOTER