

Background Note from Mark Rockefeller:  
When my Aunt Florene Rockefeller was born, the first thing my Grandma Rockefeller said was "My Goodness, what a fat little Dutchman!" -- The rest of her life she became known as Dutchie. Of Grandma's 6 children, she [was] to live the longest, 102 years.

## AN ODE TO MY DEAR OLD AUNT DUTCH

As it works out, one does reminisce about a loved one after he or she is gone, or about to leave. Such is my case right now with Aunt Dutch (Florence ("Flossie") Rockefeller...

The first memory of her as a person I can remember for a life-time was when I was trapped in her Whippet convertible in a rural part of West Haven, Connecticut. We were going on a picnic into Hubbard's Woods, near Rockefeller Farm where I grew up in the Great Depression of the '30's.



We had gone through a gate as a convoy of two cars; my grandfather's Model "T" Ford and Dutch's Whippet, into a rocky pasture amid scattered small trees and brush. Suddenly, we were met head-on by Hubbard's VERY large, VERY angry, and VERY aggressive Jersey bull.

I was in the rumble seat with my mom's friend from New York, Virginia Veltzer (sp?). Suddenly, the bull slammed into my grandfather's Model "T" head on, and then tried to turn it over by hooking its horns under running boards. Dutch jumped out of the Whippet waving her arms shouting at the bull while at the same time shouting to us in the rumble seat to pull the lid down and keep it shut. From that point on, all I could hear was the bull bellowing and Dutch and my grandfather yelling, while the huge, sweating women beside me began crying and sobbing.

It seemed like hours passed with Dutch cussing loudly, and my grandfather and grandmother shouting, "Be careful, Florence! Be careful!" Then I heard the Ford move off with that typical Model "T" "cuurd, currd, currd," sound, followed by the door slamming on the Whippet, the engine starting, and the car rolling. So, I decided to raise the lid of the rumble seat and see what was going on.

As I did, hot, sweet breath hit me right in the face, and right there, inches away, was the bull's nostrils, horns and huge red eyes! I remember slamming the lid back down and didn't raise it again until Dutch called out, "Ok, Catsfur, you can come out now!" As I raised the lid and looked out I could see the Model "T" alongside us and that we were back on the paved road with the enraged bull stomping and bellowing on the other side of the closed gate.

SON-OF-A-BITCH, CATSFUR! YOU SHOT ME!

Another time, we were rabbit hunting with my grandfather (her father, Benjamin Franklin Rockefeller) and her two brothers, Harry and Horace in what was once an undeveloped part of West Haven. That day on the rabbit hunt, I was using a little single-shot 410. Dutch and "Puffy," my grandfather's nickname, put us all in a line along an old paved road not too far from the old Rockefeller Farm below Jones Hill Road. The hounds were chasing the rabbits out in the low scrub and would bring them back so they'd run out onto the open roadway where we would shoot them.

Dutch told me to be careful, as that old bolt-action 410 had a hair trigger, but as usual, I was fiddling with it while standing waiting for the rabbits with the piece held in the crook of my arm, the muzzle pointing at the pavement.

Suddenly, without warning the shotgun went off and flew out of the crook of my arm. In the following silence, Dutch shouted, "Sonofabitch, Catsfur! You shot me!" I about died! I was so shocked. I just stood there, trembling in fear looking at Dutch, but I couldn't see any blood and she didn't fall over — she just started laughing her fool head off. "Oh, shit, Catsfur," she shouted, "it didn't hurt, the shot fell on me after bouncing off the pavement!" Then she started to laugh so hard she doubled over and came up with a new nickname for me: "Slash-ass the Hunter."

PLEASE JIMMY! TELL YOUR MOTHER WHO IRENE IS!

Then there was the time when she put in a call to the US Navy Submarine Base at Key West, telling them I was to make an "Emergency Phone Call" to her special number at the New England Telephone Company where she was a Supervisor.

In the late '40's I enlisted in the Navy and was eventually sent to Chicago where I was enrolled in the Diesel Mechanic School. While there, I came down with Rheumatic Fever and almost died. Thankfully, I was befriended by a very lovely nurse by the name of Irene, with whom I became quite attached — for reasons other than health.

My dad came out to visit me (my best memory of him is his standing at the doorway with two big grocery bags of fruit, asking Irene where I was among the other dying patients in that huge ward). His visit was a turning a turning point, after that, with dad's bags of fruit and his tender moments (which were few-an-far-between for dad) I recovered and was eventually transferred to Jacksonville, Florida in a hospital train, along with Irene.

It's a long trip from Chicago to Jacksonville, and I often became chilled on the

trip, and we all know that nurses are by custom and training required to make sure their patients are kept warm and in good health...

Anyway, as is the custom in the Navy, when I left the hospital I lost contact with Irene and was sent back to active duty on the USS PCS 1384, a wooden sub-chaser based in Key West. Over Christmas, Irene tried to write to me, but not having a current address, she sent a note and card to "James O. Anderson" at my home address — also my father's name.

My mom opened the envelope thinking it was part of the family Christmas cards, read the salutation— and the very personal note to me, which she thought was for dad — and went ballistic. That's what the "emergency phone call" was all about.

When my ship tied up to the dock in Key West Naval Submarine Base, a Jeep pulled up and an officer walked up the gangway saying he was ordered to transport Motor Machinist Third Class James O. Anderson to a phone where he was to make an emergency call to Operator Four in New Haven, CT.

As you can expect, I feared the worst; that something terrible had happened at home. In those days, all you had to do was dial the operator and ask for the operator's number you wanted in the city the call came from. I did so, and it was Dutchie who answered. "Boy, your father's in deep shit, Slash-ass," she laughed when she heard my voice. "Just a moment, please," she continued in her formal telephone operator mode, "I will connect you with your party."

My dad answered the phone, and as soon as he heard it was me, he blurted out. "Please, for God's sake, Jimmy! Tell your mother who Irene is!"

SORRY, SLASH-ASS THE MONEY TREE HAS BEEN CUT DOWN

Then there was that time when I was stranded in a little town in Maryland on a very dark, cold, windy, afternoon without any money to feed gas to the 1941, flat-head Harley 80 I was riding home after discharge from the Navy. I had been discharged from the Navy at Key West, was on my way home on the Harley, but hit a pig one night in Georgia. It cost a bundle for new front wheel, tire, forks and fender, plus I blew a lot of money visiting old friends and by the time I rolled into that little town in Maryland I was flat busted.

While in the Navy, I sent money to home for Dutch to put in the bank for me, with specific instructions to NEVER give me any of it, no matter how much I pleaded.

I'd forgotten those specific instructions when I sent her the Western Union

telegram that afternoon requesting money.

"Sorry, Jimmy," was the reply, "you said to never send you any money, no matter what."

So, I sent another Telegram back — collect — pleading again for the money, explaining the seriousness of my problem.

The reply was more blunt, "No money, honey, the money tree is chopped down."

It was at that moment that I remembered my instructions, and knowing Dutch, I was not going to get any money. Period.

I walked out of the Western Union office in the cold, pouring rain, wondering what I was going to do when I spotted a police paddy-wagon picking up winos off the sidewalk and store fronts, and an idea came into my poor cold and demented brain. I walked over to the officer putting the drunks into the van and asked him why they were picking up all those old guys.

"Oh", he said, "there's a bad cold front coming through, and these poor old drunks will freeze to death if we don't put 'em in jail tonight."

"They have no money?" I asked.

"Of course not," replied the officer, "they drink it up as soon as they get it."

"Look," I said, "I'm just out of the Navy, driving home to Connecticut in that Harley over there (and I pointed to the sodden machine leaning against the curb), but I haven't got any money to buy gas; can I spend the night in the hoosegow?"

"Sure," he said, "follow me to the jail."

I parked the Harley in front of the jail, grabbed my sea-bag of the luggage rack and went in the front door.

"You the sailor without any money?" asked the officer at the front desk.

I replied I was, a and he said, "OK, we got a cell for you, do you want to share it with a queer or a drunk." I took the drunk, who had already passed out; we both slept nice and warm in the itchy, wool jail blankets.

The next day I went to the cell door and noticed it wasn't locked, and stepped out into the hallway where an officer spotted me and said, "Hey, sailor, go on up front and talk to Jack." But beffroe I did that, I went out front to check the Harley — that wasn't there!

When I wnt back to talk to the guy at the desk and told him what was up, he aid, "I told you talk to Jack."

Jack turned out to be my savior. He said, "Yeah, I moved your Harley out into the equipment yard behind the station and covered it with a tarp," and added, "I understand you're stuck here with no money to get home." I said I was, and explained why. "That old aunt of yours must be a tough old broad," he said — for which I agreed profusely. Tell you what," he continued. "My girlfriend is a waitress at the diner down the street, and she told me the dish-washer just quit; if you want the job, go down to the diner and talk to Carol."

On my way down to talk to Carol I went to check the Harley, it was where Jack said it was, with a big tarp over her, and all nice and dry.

Well, for the week it took to earn the money to get home they let me live in the jail cell, free, and I ate my meals at half-price at the diner. For years those two wonderful people and I exchanged Christmas cards and laughs over that week I stayed in the jail earning money to get back to Connecticut.

When I finally got home, typical Dutch, with cigarette smoke blinding one eye, said, "Shit, Catsfur, I know you'd find some way to survive without my sending you any money." then she laughed, slapped me on the back and offered me a beer.



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FLORENCE M. ROCKEFELLER New Haven traffic  
40 YEARS

She worked 40 plus yrs  
Southern New England Telephone  
New Haven

↙  
Mrs  
May 6  
me  
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