

to the phone and telephoned his business number. I knew it by heart.

"Mr. Fisher," I quavered, weak with flu and panic, "this is Jane Watts, the girl you saw at the Canoe Club, and my house is on fire."

That quiet voice went through me. I had known it would sound that way.

"I'll be right over, little honey."

That was how he came to sweep me, fifteen years old and in pigtails, away from my own stuffy world and off onto an enchanted road, in the fabulous white car with the black patent-leather upholstery.

I had never been in a car before the day Carl came and drove me to the broken field outside the city where he and his partners were building a Speedway on the strength of a dream that had been Carl's when he was a boy bicycle-racer. Only he didn't tell me this at the time. To me, those first trips were all a part of the fairy tale. Childlike, I basked beside my hero, loving the speed, so new to me, and so much a part of Carl Fisher.

Speed would be whipped forward in his lifetime from twenty and thirty to over three hundred miles an hour; and how much of this was due to Carl, no one can say. But I had no glimpse of this, riding with him at first at the incredible speed of twenty-five miles an hour.

Too shy to notice then all that would later become so familiar: the careless white felt hat pushed back, buccaneer fashion, over a face perpetually wreathed in a dimpled smile, the broad shoulders in the first yellow polo coat I had ever seen, the fine strong hands—a racer's hands—on the wheel. Altogether, I found Carl so dazzling that at first I could not look at him.

This was the start of what to me was a fairy story that began at the beginning of America's mad and merry adventurings on wheels. It was June—June, 1909.

"In My Merry Oldsmobile" became our courting song. We sang it in harmony, riding over the dusty, rutted dirt roads around Indianapolis, streaming behind us the bright five-yards-long chiffon veils Carl brought me by the dozens from his automobile and accessory shop on Capitol Avenue.