



The Popcorn Offensive

Uncle Jim, Aunt Carolyn and my cousin Eric came to visit us every summer, and Jim was always horsing around. On one particular trip he was going to show Eric and me how to pop popcorn.

I went around the kitchen gathering the pot, oil and corn kernels. When I handed my uncle the lid, he said, "I won't need this." I was only 9, but I thought he had lost his mind. When he stood over the pan armed with one of my mom's wooden spoons to slap down the popping corn, I was pretty sure it wasn't going to end well.

My uncle was boasting about his superior hand-eye coordination when it started—pop, smack, pop, smack, pop, smack! I was impressed that Uncle Jim was actually keeping up.

Suddenly the kernels took off like Old Faithful, shooting popcorn 2 and 3 feet into the air. Eric and I squealed with laughter as Uncle Jim swung the spoon feverishly and popcorn rained down on the kitchen



floor. For every kernel he hit, 20 would get away.

He screamed, "Get your bowls!" My cousin and I began running back and forth in front of the stove, catching the popcorn with our outstretched bowls. It was the most hilarious way to pop corn I'd ever seen!

I'm not sure Mom agreed when she saw the results of this popcorn bomb going off in our kitchen. She just stood there with her hands on her hips while my uncle mumbled something about keeping the kids entertained.

Kelley Jent • Pendleton, Indiana

DID YOU KNOW?

- Most U.S. corn for popping is grown in the Midwest.
- It's said kernels can pop up to 3 feet in the air.
- Volunteers in Sac City, Iowa, created the world's largest popcorn ball in 2009: 8 feet tall, 28.8 feet in circumference and 5,000 pounds.



Driving Lessons

"This gasoline-engine car (right), with me at the wheel, belonged to my friend Jack Witty and was made by his father in his basement workshop in 1937," says Jack Watterson of Suntree, Florida. "Jack's dad would let the neighborhood kids drive the little car up and down the alley in Beaver, Pennsylvania. For an 8-year-old boy, getting to drive this beauty was the high point of the day."



◀ SPARE PARTS

"In 1939, with many folks still feeling the effects of the Depression, not every family could afford extras," says **Jeannie Rydberg of Pine City, Minnesota.**

"So when my husband Buddy was 5 years old, he built his own wagon. He's pulling his cousin Donnie Schmidt on the Rydberg farm near Pine City. Buddy recalls that the rear wheels were from an old push mower."