

A Singer's Close Call

by Eydie McDaniel

"Vana Brown" and I cruised south on I-25 to the glorious classical music singing in the fine spring air. Suddenly she paused and we rolled to a stop on the shoulder just below the crest of Berthoud Hill. I popped open the hip pocket of the old brown VW bus to find a pea sized hole burned right through the metal connector plate under the distributor cap. "There will be a way," I declared with all my heart and gusto, as I ran up that shoulder.

Fully aware that hitchhiking was a bad bet, I stuck my thumb out vowing I would be safe. A little red car pulled over, instantly. Its driver was a kind young woman with long brown hair. Feeling relieved and surprised, I opened the door. "I'm I singing in the 2:00 opera performance at Boettcher Hall, in Denver." By something more than luck, the young woman announced that an airport shuttle would soon stop at the next exit. "That's it," she said as the van passed us before she regained full speed, "maybe we can catch it."

Behind the gas station it stood with door open and one remaining seat. I rushed in. "What's the fare?" "Nine dollars," said the drive sliding the door closed. I plunged my hand in and pulled my 5 and 4 ones out.

At Stapleton Airport the van driver told me, "That bus up there will get you downtown to 16th Street." I ran the hundred yards and up the stairs. The fare was 50¢. I had only 2 quarters in that pocket, and handed them to him. He told me there was a free bus on 16th Street that would get me to 16th and Curtis. On both Denver buses, the minute or two wait to leave seemed like forever.

I ran and puffed from 16th to DCPA, through the plaza, down the cement stairs across 13th Street, up the short stairs and in the performers' door. The Carmen overture was starting. I caught some breath and raced to the opposite corner of the building. The rest of the fully dressed chorus would be poised out of sight in the orchestra pit down 3 flights of stairs and up some more. A fellow Mezzo, handed me my costume and I sang the first note.