

There's More to Life Than Increasing Its Speed

by Penney Fox

It happened on a Sunday in March of 1983. It was an ordinary Sunday in Stone Mountain, Georgia. The kind of day when you think it's just going to be nasty and rainy and then the sun surprises you, changes the color of the sky and decides to come out to play.

I was fifteen years old, just about to turn sixteen. I lived in the typical high school world with a teenage boyfriend and being a part of the high school drill team. That particular day in March, I woke up to the grey sky at my best friend's house. Her name was Marjorie. We met in 8th grade and became instant friends, which in teenage language meant we were constant companions in school as well as outside its doors.

We connected on another level other than just sharing an English class together. At an early age, Marjorie developed a sense of adventure about her. As a teenager trying to break free from my introverted personality, her world with the popular kids was a welcome diversion from the boring moments of my day-to-day life. We spent many weekends together sneaking out of her house looking for trouble and on several occasions, it found us.

But this Sunday was not one of those days. When the sun made its appearance, we began to make our plans. Technically it was Sunday morning so there was still one more day left in the weekend before I had to go back home. The phone rang and we had our answer. It was another one of our friends, Candi, from school calling to see if we were heading over to Stone Mountain for

the day. The idea to head to the Mountain crossed our minds and the call helped us close the deal.

Marjorie was already sixteen and most days, was our designated driver. Since we knew Marjorie would have access to her father's Volvo stationwagon, we agreed to pick up Candi on the way. We would just meet the rest of our friends at the usual place. Having been to Stone Mountain many times in the past few months, our little group proclaimed the area around the last bend of the Mountain as our own meeting place. After a couple of phone calls and more important decisions were made like what shorts to wear and if this lipstick looked good with Marjorie's brown hair, we agreed we would pick up Candi at 1:30 p.m.

We left Marjorie's house at exactly 1 p.m. We knew we better hurry if we were to be on time to pick up our friend. Marjorie started weaving through traffic and I figure we ran at least two red lights. When we finally reached familiar territory at 1:20 p.m., we took all the shortcuts we could think of to get to Candi's house. We hit most of the residential roads because we knew there wouldn't be much traffic and most likely, no policemen.

The last stretch of the drive was a road that wound up, down and around the Georgia hills, opened up into a straightaway that ran for about two miles and then emptied out into sharp curve before the road dumped you back onto the main highway. We hit the straight part of the road as if we were qualifying for the Daytona 500.

"How fast do you think this car can go?" I joked.

"Only one way to find out," was her reply.

I watched the speedometer. 60 ... 70 ... 75. *Slow down please. The brakes, Marjorie, put your foot on the brakes.* I can't remember if I said it out loud or just in my head.

My thoughts were racing. *Holy crap, we're skidding off the road and heading towards that tree. Marjorie, you're not laughing anymore. What's happening? We're being thrown around the car. Damn it! I just hit my head. The car, it just stopped. What the hell just happened?*

Within seconds, Marjorie figured out how to undo her seatbelt. "This way," she motioned to me. She crawled around the front seat until she found the door, opened it and climbed out.

"How?" I pleaded. "Where are you? How do I get out of here?"

No answer from Marjorie but somehow I figured out how to crawl out of the car. As I made my way out, I heard a loud hysterical shrieking sound. It was Marjorie and she was screaming something about her car. As quickly as the screaming started, it stopped and she took off running to the nearest home.

When I finally caught up to her, she was frantically pounding on the door. A woman in a robe appeared. Marjorie was still having problems controlling the volume of her voice, "My car's just been wrecked. Can I use your phone?"

The woman nodded and we followed her into the living room. It was a pre-cell phone world so Marjorie called her father from the woman's kitchen phone.

I'm numb. No, more like shocked. I haven't reacted to this yet. I mumbled something about getting our stuff out and made my way back to the car.

"It looks different," the words echoed in my head. *You're so stupid Penney. The car, the damn car is upside down.* The car had hit a ditch, turned over and it was now sitting upside down with the wheels in the air.

I don't remember much after that moment. I think I blacked out. I have brief memories of people driving by asking if they could help or if anyone was hurt. I think I nodded my head or shook it depending on the question. With the exception of a few bumps, we both miraculously walked away from the accident unhurt. Eventually, I did cry and I prayed. I did a lot of talking to God that day.

Marjorie stopped going to my school after the car accident and she had no desire to drive for quite some time. For most of the year, Marjorie found herself in some sort of trouble and the accident was her parents' final breaking point. They transferred Marjorie to another school with the hopes for a clean start.

The accident didn't prevent me from wanting to drive. I was going to be sixteen in a couple of months and I wanted to drive as much as my parents would let me. I believe I learned a valuable lesson that day about driving a car and how something so powerful could get away from you if you're not in control. More than that, the experience taught me to appreciate my life knowing I came so close to not having it anymore.



My name is Penney Fox. Even though I went to the University of Georgia, I still consider myself to be a native Floridian. I've been blogging about my life for the past three years and that's what brought me to the writing class. I'm a single mother, a business owner and a Social Media marketing speaker who has been on a quest to live an authentic life. I feel truly blessed to know that my support team has been along with me all these years as I continue to move through this journey called life.