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The Speeders — A blog by Luke Sommer Glenn

I am the product of my predecessors. Dad had a a model T or A, maybe both a T and A. His folks admonished him for driving like a maniac up in the hollows of West by God (Virginia). This was the training ground for his eventual role as a funeral director and embalmer which the funeral home also ran an ambulance service post WW2, before the days of 911 and community sponsored, dedicated paramedics.

Dad was a skilled driver who drove a lot of miles on unpaved mountain roads in all kinds of weather. That being said, mom didn't share dad's fondness for hauling ass on gravel roads in the mountains.

We were heading out to California to visit my sister in the summer of '72. We stopped at the typical tourist spots like New Orleans, the Astrodome, Boot Hill in Tombstone, the Carlsbad Caverns...

Mom was so afraid of heights that she refused to get out of the car at the Grand Canyon. That didn't stop dad from hauling ass on the narrow gravel roads around the Morenci open pit copper mine in Arizona. I have no idea why dad wanted to go there but I was standing up in the back with my arms draped over the front seat, enjoying the thrilling ride, with no fear, not even the thought of the possibility that dad could possibly crash.

Mom was on the floorboard of the car, crying and begging my dad to slow down... he would remind her of his experience on "worse roads than this." "Oh Sam..." she sobbed in a voice trembling with genuine fear. Dad's given name was Talmage but they called him Sam. Go figure.

The more frightened she was, the angrier dad got. It

hurt his pride that she didn't have enough faith/confidence in his abilities to sit in the seat. Most people put on the seatbelt in a speeding automobile but mom would have crawled under the seat like a cat if she could have fit.

It wasn't the speed but the sheer, 1000' drop-off that got to mom. She loved speed, well going fast anyway.

Dad would always get the most powerful engine that GM offered. They had a 500 cubic inch Cadillac hearse at the funeral home. He had a 454 cid Oldsmobile Delta with the oversized 4 barrel carburetor that mom and I were coming back to Florida in after leaving dad to work at the funeral home in WV.

The interstate wasn't completed back then and we had to take a lot of two-lane roads. Mom had a lead foot and we were scooting through Georgia, "flying low," mom called it. I was standing on my knees in the back seat playing with my toys on the big back deck, looking out the back window. This was before child seats or mandatory seat belts, obviously. The freedom of movement while on a long ass road trip was worth the risk of going through the windshield in the event of a head on collision, as someone who has been through a few windows...

Any who, as mom was zipping along nonchalantly, I was watching out the back window

and I noticed a tiny, bubble gum cop light way off in the distance. After a while, I could tell that it was gaining on us. Had I not been an unwitting child I might have thought to tell mom to step on it.

Another short while passes and he is finally upon us and mom pulls to the side. I was about five or so making my mom about 47-48, needless to say he assumed that she was my grandmother.

I had never seen my mom carrying on like that. Dad was always the bullshitter, not mom. She went right along with his assumption that she was a grandmotherly type who wasn't used to having to drive by herself in her husband's muscle car.

The officer tells her that his interceptor barely caught up with her, that he had been chasing her for 30 miles and what was she doing going 120 with her grandkid in the car?

Mom turned on the tears, explaining how MAD her husband would be if she got a ticket and promised to watch her speed. He was impressed with dad's taste in cars and was surprised that it was a little old lady driving it. As soon as he was out of eyesight, mom was back to speed.

She naturally drove fast. She got pulled over all the time for speeding and always got away with it, being the apologetic, little old lady. She even got stopped for speeding in the school zone taking my niece and nephew to school when she was in her 80s. I inherited that tendency to haul ass through traffic. The only thing that kept me from speeding was the fear of being pulled over and searched, which happened enough for me to know how unpleasant it is to have your entire life interrupted for a few grams of contraband. I also grew up driving with a beer between my knees, before that was illegal. When I got off work and bought a twelve pack for the evening, I liked to enjoy the first frosty treat on the way home, especially through the slow, rush hour traffic. That and a joint made the ride home a lot less stressful. Now that I'm sober and don't have to fear going to jail for having my state-approved marijuana (as opposed to the street variety), I drive like my parents did, fast. I relieve stress by cussing out "no driving morons." I don't gesture or blow my horn, I just vocalize my displeasure to my van and any poor soul that chooses to ride with me. It allows me to be more patient with my fellow inhabitants of this torturous world of aggravations when I have to deal with them face to face. Mom was 92 when she last told me about getting pulled over on the way to church... "what cop is going to give a sweet old lady on her way to church a speeding ticket," mom let out an evil little laugh...



A 1966 Olds with the biggest motor GM offered that year.

Luke Sommer Glenn is a local entertainer and Conch Character.



For more info: www.lukesommerglenn.com

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