

The Adventure

It was 2009 a beautiful Sunday morning in Laguna Woods Village. My husband, David, and I decided to go out for breakfast. As David opened the front door, he jokingly asked, "Are you ready to have an adventure with me?"

Can you guess what I answered? I grinned and answered "Absolutely!"

Our 1988 Nissan which David purchased new, waited in the driveway. We usually fired it up y monthly, so we decided to give it a run. David turned the ignition key; as usual, the car started immediately; it was a dependable car.

As we backed out of the driveway, I kind of wrinkled my nose and said, "Honey, I think I smell gas." David, my forever optimist, assured me there was no problem. At Santa Maria and Mouton, we hit a red light; while waiting, the car stalled. I was worried, "This hasn't happened before," but David simply restarted it and when the light turned green we turned left.

At Lake Forest we turned right and suddenly the car sputtered and stalled. I looked behind us and there was no traffic. David restarted the car but a half block later, the car sputtered and stalled again. A car swerved around us. I yelled, "David, this isn't an adventure; this is scary. We need to get off the road." But David couldn't believe his beloved Nissan had a serious problem.

Suddenly, smoke billowed from the engine; I screamed, "David, we're on fire; we got to get out of here." Luckily, we were at the extreme right side of the road. David listened, and jumped out of the car. I tried to open my door -- it wouldn't open. Fear and panic nearly overwhelmed me; then it hit me -- get out David's door and I quickly climbed out.

The car burst into flames raging high in the air, as we ran from the car. A good Samaritan stopped and sprayed the flames with a fire extinguisher, but it was too late.

We had new cell phones which weren't easy to operate. As I dialed,, the phone turned black. Just as I successfully reached the 911 operator who asked "What is the nature of your emergency?" a fire truck pulled up beside us. The firemen were out on maneuvers and just happened to see the flames. The firemen quickly donned their waterproof gear and sprayed water from their huge hose towards the flames. They tried to open the hood to get to the source of the problem -- it wouldn't open, so they had to pry the hood open with a huge tool.

While they were working, I decided on a plan of action. "David, I want to make this a good adventure. While you handle the problem here, I'm going to walk home and get our other car so we will have transportation." David didn't much like my idea, "Sunshine, that's a long walk!" But when he saw I was determined, he agreed.

I'm a fast walker -- or at least I was in 2009. I was almost to Gate 8 on Santa Maria when I a fire engine passed me; they waved and I waved back knowing they were on their way to help

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some other villager. However, the truck made a u-turn at the gate and then stopped beside me.

The captain explained "The walk is too long; get in and we'll give you a ride home. I'd dressed warmly for our outing because I'm always cold in restaurants and carrying all the outer layers. I was hot and tired and gladly accepted the offer.

And so it was, I had a lovely adventure after all. I got to ride in a fire truck! That was a new, exciting experience. One of the firemen took a picture.



I'd told our kids and grandkids about our adventure and about the picture the firemen took of me in the fire truck. I guess I should have had the picture taken outside the truck because you can't really tell from the picture where I am – but you'll just have to believe me – I'm riding in a fire truck!

As the fire engine stopped in front of our home, I could see the neighbors watching. I waved at them and told everything was ok. The captain got out; he looked closely at the driveway

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where the car had been parked and saw a trail of liquid. He told me that the car must have developed a gas leak which caused the problem. As the fire truck pulled away, I waved my thanks, then jumped into the Avalon and drove back to pick up David. Poor David, he loved that Nissan -- and it was totaled. But he recognized quickly that it was just a thing. We were fine -- so we went and enjoyed our breakfast.

The next day, we had an early morning interview at Channel 6; as we went out the door, I struck a sexy pose and asked David, "Do you want to have an adventure with me?" David just smiled, shook his head and said, "No more adventures like yesterday!"

Postscript:

A strange thing happened just three weeks after the car was destroyed. We received a letter from the Toll Roads company which contained a citation for toll violation for the Nissan. The fee was \$4 for the toll and \$55 as a penalty. But the violation date was nine days after the car burned. We surmised that the tow truck which towed the car to the junk yard, must have used the toll road and that the toll booth camera took a picture of the vehicle being towed.

Fortunately, when we called the Toll Roads Company and explained that the car was totaled in a car fire nine days prior to the date of the violation, the company representative reversed the fee and fine.

Whenever I see a fire truck passing, I wave. I don't know if it's the same team that took such good care of us, but just for fun, I imagine that it is. I'm so thankful we have the Orange County Firemen close by to help our community.

