

Shut Up and Drive: My Inspiration for Being an Ace Driver

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My parents never encouraged my brother and me as children to buckle up in the backseat, but about a year ago, a young woman ran through a stop sign. My mother was in the backseat, mad at my dad, as usual, and to keep from ramming into the back of the passenger seat, she broke her hand while breaking her fall. Because it was her dominant hand, she, who loved to do crossword puzzles, suddenly needed a scribe, much to everyone's annoyance, as we would often be trying to watch politics. "What's a sweet name for a woman's shape?" she would ask (like a Jeopardy contestant) in the middle of a Presidential debate, which would cause my dad to hit pause, Trump's face frozen in time for about a minute. (The answer was apple, by the way.) Dad also missed a lot of Jimmy Fallon jokes that way. Though it didn't affect my quality of life, it affected my mom's and she became frustrated while she had her cast.

Because of that accident, I insist on all laps being buckled in. I want to be a good example for my daughter, because a seat belt, when I was sixteen, saved my life. I can thank my Driver's Ed teacher for not allowing us to turn the car on until we buckled in. A man was coming off the Interstate exit too fast and rammed into me, assuming I was going to pull out in front of traffic because all Pensacola drivers under the age to qualify for Social Security are in a hurry. If I hadn't worn my seatbelt that day, I would've been dead or critically injured.

I have made it a habit to always leave ten minutes early, bringing a book with me if I get somewhere early enough, so that I am never in such a hurry as to put someone's life in danger. I try to make sure I get enough rest, and if I do happen to be tired, I make myself a cup of coffee. A boy my brother knew was killed while riding his motorcycle because an elderly woman wasn't paying attention and ran a stop sign. I've thought about that woman every now and again, and I don't want to ever have to think because I was careless, a life was lost.

It hasn't just been one instance, but many, that have inspired me to drive uninhibited. When I do have a drink, my husband drives; I don't do drugs because I saw what cigarettes did to my mom, and I'm a Luddite when it comes to texting (I only have a cell phone for emergencies, which makes me a one-percenter, especially among my millennial generation); I don't like people thinking they have access to me twenty-four seven. The time most people spend on their phones I've spent reading a book. I may have my nose in a book, but my life is not lived through a screen. My daughter plays with our old phone more than I play with our new one. They say half of life is just showing up; I believe the other half is simply paying attention.