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DIFFERENT ADVENTURES ON PLANET EARTH...



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The Things You Do For Love

I once was persuaded by our grandchildren to go on the Scooby-Doo ride at Movieworld. Grandpa very sensibly stuck to his guns and left his feet on terra firma. (The less firma, the more terra.)

We climbed into this little car on a railway track, kids in front, Grandma in back. They shut the door and pulled a padded bar down in front of us. No straps, no harness. Oh this will be OK, it will be like the Ghost Train or Dodgem cars when we were kids. We set off, slowly, into the pitch darkness. They closed the doors behind us. Then all hell broke loose. The screeching, fearsome apparitions were of no consequence, nor the axes coming down on our heads - we dipped down in the nick of time. We were thrown at great speed this way and that, unable to see, ignorant of which way we'd be thrown next. They shot us up a pole, spun us around a few times then threw us down a steep slope - backwards. I've never been thrown off a cliff in a car, nor been bashed in the chest with a baseball bat, but I exaggerate not. Hanging on, I ripped the cartilage attaching my sternum to my ribs. I would surely have a stroke or heart attack before the bloody thing stopped. Must have been in there for five hours. At home those giggling, exuberant kids reported "Grandma was screaming, she shouted 'Stop' but it didn't, she was hysterical".

I'd been to hell and back, and everyone laughed, as you are doing now.

PS: I still love the kids but next time we'll go bushwalking.

In Warner Bros Movie World, Pacific Motorway, Oxenford, Queensland, Australia

Fine Thing, This Education

I've always been addicted to learning. My mother told me nobody knows everything. I determined to be a world first.

In sewing class I had to insert a sleeve into a dress. I sewed it into the side opening intended for a zip. My husband says he threw my needles away because they had holes in them.

In cookery class I joined the queue for sugar...for cheese scones. When the teacher was making egg custard, I advised her publicly that she'd forgotten the custard powder. (You don't have custard powder in egg custard. Really?)

Some wags in the Young Farmers Club dared me to have a go at sheep shearing. The instructor advised me to pick a fat one. I chose the largest ram, and brimming with unwarranted confidence, inadvertently clipped his nether regions. He took extreme exception to this, and galloped around the arena as I clung desperately to the remains of his fleece. I did, however, win the girls' ploughing match - being the only entrant.

I learnt to drive during my Young Farmer years, practising in open paddocks where there was nothing to hit. On Test day I scored a very dour examiner. Come the Emergency Stop test, a box of apples on the back seat rolled all over the floor as I hit the brakes. The examiner stopped just before he hit the windscreen. I passed. He couldn't risk having me again.

Mothercraft came next. What do you do with a newborn baby? I could put a nappy on a doll, but the real thing arrived untrained. The first time took twenty minute (I got quicker).

And that kid undermined my efforts at horticulture, feeding my tomatoes to the sheep.

Omniscience still eludes me, but the quest is fun!

Dirt Roads

I'm a wimp on dirt roads. I love to be where they go, but wish I could just be dumped there. The bone-breaking, muscle-wrenching drive, smashing head against vehicle roof, every uncovered orifice full of grit, heart pounding with fear of breaking down in this isolated spot or going down in a cavern full of bulldust...

On a bus trip to Mungo National Park near Mildura, everyone else was happy, swaying with the bus, relaxed and chatting. I was holding on for dear life, relieved to arrive back alive. They all looked at me with puzzled frowns. This road's TAME they said, you wait until...

We went to Rainbow Valley near Alice Springs, 22km of the most terrifying drive of my life, my fear proven by our friends rolling their vehicle.

Then there's the getting-bogged option. In QLD, a ranger gave us a mudmap and turned us loose. Down, down this forest road we went, getting further into the mire, slipping and sliding. This must be right, there is no other track. It was. We emerged triumphant, kids and husband laughing, mother crying. But at the end of the day in every case, we declared we'd had a grand adventure.

I'm fine on my pushbike. A control freak? In all the above cases I was at the mercy of experienced and careful drivers. On my bike I thud and skid between rocks, through muddy creeks, down impossible inclines, with no fear. But if it's too far to pedal, just fly me there please.

What Have I Done?

I was seven years old. My mother was unpacking the grocery order and discovered a packet of tea to be missing. "Christine," she shrieked, "they've fiddled us of a quarter of tea, go to the shop and ask for it." Very politely I went and said "Please Mrs Kirby, Mum says may we have the packet of tea you fiddled us of". In front of a shopful of customers. Mother always said my mouth would get me into trouble one day.

Unwanted guests, husband's relatives, had just left...all except one, who caught me in mid-sigh-of-relief. She'd come back to use the loo and heard me exclaim 'Phew, that's got rid of that lot!'

The Mouth again.

After a school staff meeting I couldn't find my car keys. Not in desk, pigeonhole, handbag... retrace steps...I knew they weren't in the car as I'd had them for other purposes since. Ring husband at work for help. Irate husband leaves meeting to rescue. Pick up French horn case...hear rattle, rattle...open case and there...!

After my last book launch, I was invited out to lunch by friends who'd attended. Mid-lunch, I remembered my three passengers who were waiting anxiously, wearing puzzled and irritated frowns, back at the venue...

Then there was the time when someone lent me a Pierre Cardin scarf, present from her husband, to dress up an outfit for a wedding - on Scotland's windy coast. Husband and I went outside for some fresh air. Back inside, he paled visibly. 'Where's your scarf?' he said. As one we shot outside and went opposite ways, scouring Peterhead. After half an hour or so, there it was, trapped under a rock, right on the cliff edge. We never told a soul until now.

Tigers

We stopped at a café, dusty and tired. The glum waitress glared. Nearly knock-off time. She stood, unsmiling, notepad in hand, tapping her pencil. I determined to make her smile.

Photos of tiger cubs adorned the walls. As she wrote our order I commented. "I love your pictures, what's the significance of the tigers?"

She said, still glowering, "I used to be a tiger tamer in the circus." I tried to transfer her from here back to there. She lit up as she excitedly poured out her story.

Then, smiling, "I'll get your tea."

About Author

Chris Leckonby

Raised in UK, married farmer, emigrated to Australia with family, now grown up, became science teacher, now writing again and travelling lots in retirement. The whole story takes 150,000 words!

Why is the website called bytestories.com?

This is a place for "byte-sized" stories and there is a 1500 character (about 250 words) limit for two main reasons. Firstly, we want you to know that "War and Peace" isn't required to leave your mark. Secondly, it takes about 2 minutes to read each story meaning you can head here whenever you want a quick (and entertaining) read.

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