

The Accidental Compliance Professional

Lesson 3. Study Your Failures to Find a Better Way

It was just a couple days past my 17th birthday and my buddies Mike Johnson and Tom Kelch (Mad Dog) were driving with me down a dirt road in the dark. My parents thought we were going to a football game. Instead we were on that long stretch of road, one perfect for joyriding. The car was my stepmother's—an 11-year-old Delta 88 with only 11,000 miles on it. It was, for the moment, in mint condition.

"Isn't this where we're supposed to go fast?" Mad Dog asked.

I was only going around 25 miles per hour, and since I had to be reminded, I decided to go faster than we'd ever gone before. I hit the accelerator and got up to 85. The road was straight, but it had hills. When we went up over a rolling hill, we got off the ground a little. After what turned out to be the last valley of our little joyride, we came up the hill and there was a car in our lane. It was very close and *it was not moving*.



A Delta 88, similar to my stepmother's car

(Photo credit: Sergey Kohl/Shutterstock.com)

Luckily, I reacted quickly and got us out of that lane, or there would have been carnage of unimaginable proportions. However, I couldn't keep the car in the left lane and we drifted into a ditch with two large oak trees and one rather small one. The windshield filled with branches and leaves. We just sideswiped the larger trees, but

we weren't so lucky with the smaller tree. We hit it, then the car spun completely around and stopped.

"Get out, it's going to burn!" Mike yelled.

It wasn't going to burn, but we were all scared. I got out, walked about 10 feet, knelt on the ground, and put my head in my hands. The other car's headlights illuminated me and my "oh crap" moment for dramatic effect. Then we assessed our injuries. None of us had been wearing seatbelts. Mike (an athlete) had put his hands on the dashboard and planted his feet on the floorboard. Remarkably, he did not hit anything. Mad Dog bounced around in the back with flying car parts and lots of tiny shards of glass. He rolled up his sleeve and his arm was red with blood, but didn't have any deep cuts. Me? I decided to stop my forward momentum with my face, which slammed into the steering wheel, causing a tooth to go through the skin below my lower lip.

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