



I just wanted to relate an incident that happened to me 55 years ago which I shall never forget.

One Friday night in the Fall of 1961, I had a date with a really nice and pretty young lady to go to a ball game in Copper Hill, Tennessee. I was a high school student and didn't really know my way around much - but thought that I did. I borrowed my mother's car and picked up my date.

We had to drive about 50 mile through the mountains of East Tennessee to get to the game. It was a really lonely and desolate drive, the moon was out in its brilliance and reflected off the waters of Lake Ocoee as we drove. The mountains stood brooding and joyless on the opposite side of the road.

When we reached the halfway point in our travels, I had a flat tire. No problem. I went to the trunk to get the spare and there WAS no spare. Later I learned that my mother had left it at a service station for repair and forgot to pick it up. An automobile would pass by only about every 10 minutes. I did not know what to do, and I was also concerned for my date.

Finally, I began to signal any car that came by for help. At last a pickup truck stopped full of hunters. I offered \$20.00 to them to take me the 20 miles to Copper Hill to get the tire repaired (it was all I had). They declined saying that they had been away from home for 3 days and wanted to get back to their families - as if 40 minutes more would have made a difference.

They acted sad to leave us - but they did! After a few more minutes I saw a car coming around the mountain slopes in the distance. He was really driving fast, but in desperation I signaled him to stop. It was a rough, older model car. The occupants were two of the roughest looking men I had ever seen. They had long sideburns (which was unusual at that time -1961 - in East Tennessee) and several days growth of beards. They were dirty to boot. Now I wished I had not stopped them. They asked gruffly, "What's the problem, boy?"

I asked if they would take me to Copper Hill, Tennessee (about 20 miles) to fix the flat. I offered again the \$20 bill if they would take me. They looked gruffly at each other and said, "Get in!" I asked if my fiancée could go, as I was afraid to leave her on the desolate road. They shook their heads affirmatively.

I felt very uncomfortable as we began to drive off. I was fearful that they might just kill me outright and rape my fiancée. All sorts of possibilities filled my young imagination. Then as they began driving 70+ miles an hour around the mountain roads I began to be concerned less about them and more about being killed by plunging headlong down the mountainside.

Finally we arrived at a service station in Copper Hill. They got the tire from the trunk for me and had it repaired, for which THEY paid. They bought my date and me a coke. And we headed back.

Arriving back at my mother's car, they replaced the tire onto the wheel themselves and waited to see if the car battery was not drained from the flashing caution lights we had left on. The car started and I got out to pay the two rough-riders for their trouble. When I offered the money, they looked at each other and the driver said, "No. You keep your money, son. Our reward will come when you find someone who needs help and you give it." That was all. They drove off to see their own families that had been waiting one month to see them at Gatlinburg. They were big, strong railroad workers and came home only once each month. They also had very BIG hearts.

I learned a really valuable lesson that night - angels can be bright and shiny, but they can also appear as dirty, grimy workmen, and . . . you can't judge a book by its cover!

These two taught me early in life to stop and help when someone needs it regardless of my own schedule.

Thanks for reading my true story.

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