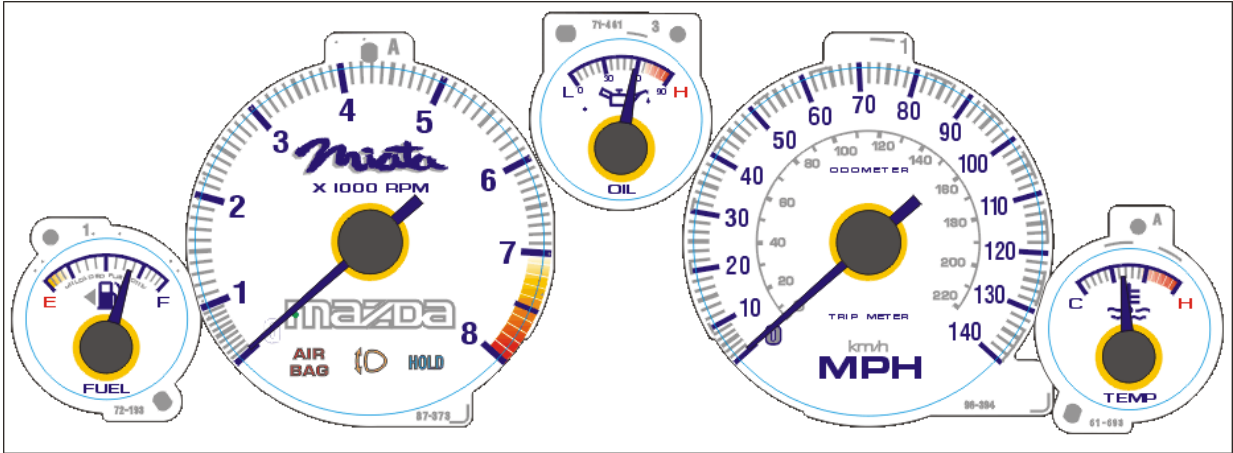


“You Led a Good Life”



By Mort Laitner

It was one of those days where my life’s real troubles were apt to be things that never crossed my worried mind; the kind of day where I was literally blindsided at 9 am on an idle Tuesday morning.

At 8am, I voted in the Bush-Clinton presidential election.

At 8:30 am, I cruised, top down, in my spanking-brand-new blue Miata. As the cool November breeze parted my hair, the sun baked the top of my head. I smiled the smile of a trouble-free man driving his mid-life toy. No need for the radio to be on, this picture needed no background music.

Damn it!

I heard the mood-breaking, troubling beeps emanating from my pants pocket. The digital number displayed on my beeper was a co-worker, followed by our emergency code. As I pulled off I-95, I worried about finding a pay-phone in this dangerous neighborhood. I found one and, of course, it was broken. The next phone I located worked, but my co-worker failed to pick up.

Machine: “This is the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, please clearly enunciate your name, phone number and message after the beep.”

As my mood shifted into negative mode. I responded in a firm tone, “If you beep someone with an emergency, please try to be near your phone so you can respond,” slamming down the receiver in an act of frustration.

At 8:45 am, fifteen minutes wasted, I jumped back in my car, clicking on my seat belt, as I started driving toward the 401 building. I remembered the promise I made to that state trooper three months earlier who was about to write me a ticket for failure to wear the belt. "Officer, as a fellow state employee, I promise you from this day on, I will always wear my seat belt when behind the wheel of my automobile."(The promise worked; I didn't get the ticket.)

At 8:58 am, I felt the beeper in my shirt pocket. I screamed, "I HATE PEOPLE WHO YELL EMERGENCY WITHOUT WAITING FOR A RESPONSE!" (You can do this in a convertible on I-95 and no one but G-d hears you.)

At 8:59 am, catharsis, the scream worked. I felt much better as I turn off the freeway. I was two blocks away from my office.

At 9:00 am, I drove under the overpass. Shadows in dark shades of grey reflected on the cement pillars as I waited for the light to change. Green appeared. I inched forward as I glanced to my right. I saw a ten ton truck running the red light right into me. I enter a slow motion world. I heard a deafening screech of brakes. Then, the loudest crash I had ever heard.

I blacked out as my brain shifted into pause.

In total darkness, an inner voice said, "You're dead."

The voice then said the five most important words I ever heard, "You led a good life."

Now the viewing screen in my mind imagined a large VCR and a heavenly finger pushing down on the play button. The VCR and the hand disappeared, only to be replaced by black and white twirling clouds. These clouds formed a tornado. This speeding funnel disappeared as my eyes began to focus on the exploded air-bag. The smell of burning rubber and noxious gasses burned my nostrils as my body rattled from the blow of the air-bag.

I had to get out of the car.

I WAS ALIVE!

Next thought, am I a quadriplegic?

Moving my left hand pinkie finger on the door handle, I appreciated that I have control of one of my hands.

Next thought, am I a paraplegic?

Slowly I popped the lock and the Miata door opened. Breathing in toxic fumes, I said a silent prayer, "Please G-d let me get out of this car."

I scanned my body for injuries. As I looked for blood, I only saw a small scratch on my ring finger from which one tear-shaped droplet of blood flowed.

With all the energy I could muster, I pushed my body out of the wreck.

I screamed and jumped for joy, "I'm the luckiest man--- I'm alive--- I'm not paralyzed!"

Standing next to me was the lady whose car the truck slammed my car into. In amazement she asked, "Are you okay?"

"Am I okay? I am the luckiest person in Miami," I bellowed.

She eye-balled my destroyed vehicle not appreciating my love of life and health.

The police arrived and issued the truck driver a ticket.

Then the ambulance arrived. The paramedics examined me. As I lay on their stretcher with a blood pressure cup strapped to my arm, I studied my ring finger. I couldn't believe what I observed. Miraculously, the scratch and the blood had vanished. The paramedics recommended I go to the hospital for further tests. I declined their offer, still mystified over what happened to the cut.

As I walked the two remaining blocks to my office, I reflected on how the airbag and the seatbelt saved my life. I marveled at the sun's rays piercing through the clouds. I wondered out loud, "Had I really led a good life?" For the third time that day, I stared at my ring finger which triggered the memory of that heavenly finger pushing down on the VCR play button. On that cool November day, I no longer worried about my life's troubles because I knew the answer.

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:http://www.amazon.com/Healthy-Stories-Sharing-Health-Department/dp/0615206344/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1225735883&sr=8-1

The authors of Healthy Stories are available to do readings and lectures concerning the book. Contact Tracie Dickerson at (786) 845-0360 to schedule an event.