

MOUSE RIDE By James Collins

In 1994, my wife Eileen, driving my son-in-law's car, went to Stonington Connecticut to pick up our granddaughter, Eileen Semancik, from kindergarten. The trip was 5 to 7 miles and the weather was gorgeous. Literally, there was no traffic in their lane as they rode along. They were driving on very rustic winding Connecticut roads lined with rock walls for almost the entire trip. As they approached Mystic, Connecticut, the car started acting strange. When my wife applied the brakes, to slow the car down, there was no response. The car slowly continued to accelerate and this gave her concern.

Little Eileen was jabbering away as a five-year-old would oblivious to the concern her grandmother was experiencing. My wife kept trying to depress the brake, but the car did not respond it just kept slowly accelerating. This was scary. As she was rounding a curve, the car was going faster and faster. They originally started about 35 mph; now they were exceeding 50 mph. As Eileen came down a straightaway, she saw in the distance a red light at an intersection. She frantically tried to brake and leaned on the horn. She pulled the handbrake but the car continued to race. She shot through the red light at the intersection at 55 mph but, luckily, there were no cars in either lane. A large 18-wheeler had slammed on his air brakes coming in from her right. He stopped in time.

When he saw Eileen go through the intersection, he could see that she was terrified and realized something was wrong. He decided to follow the vehicle and see if he could offer some assistance. Further down the road, Eileen came through one more intersection with a traffic light but luckily this time it was green. To her left, she saw massive bushes two stories high, which ran for about 200 yards without any rock wall. She knew she had to stop the car and the only way she knew how was to drive into the bushes. She hit them with a crash that literally lifted the car up so that the hood of the car was about 6 feet off the ground and the engine was still racing but since it was front wheel drive, and the spinning tires were in the air, the car stopped moving.

The trucker pulled up alongside the car and yelled for Eileen to shift into neutral and shut off the engine. She did what he said, turned the key, and the engine and the wheels stopped. The truck driver then came over and helped both Eileen and her granddaughter out of the car and made sure that they were all right

Then they used a cell phone to call home. In a few minutes Jeff, my son-in-law frantically hopped out of his car and rushed over to make sure everyone was OK. Eileen explained the problem to him and described their wild ride. He walked over to the car which was still propped up against the bushes, reached in and turned the key. The car sped up as if it was at a racetrack. He had put the car in neutral so the wheels did not turn but the engine screamed. Jeff immediately shut it off and then called the garage that he normally works with and they towed the car.

The result was that the garage found a family of mice had built a nest using the paper from the air filter. The nest had jammed the accelerator so it would not respond when released. It cost eighty dollars to '*evacuate the mice*' as quoted on the bill.

Personally I drove three miles in each direction on every side road that Eileen could have driven during the event. That was the only space without rock walls with huge bushes that could have stopped the car without a major crash. The good Lord was watching over them that day.

Over the intervening twenty some years the Semanciks on four additional occasions have had mice enter and compromise their car engines. In that part of Connecticut it is a common occurrence.

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