

Secrets are events that may cause embarrassment or result in a beating or entanglement with legal and police environments. A secret that can involve more than one of these events cannot be revealed. Like many crimes, several events have a statute of limitations in the legal system and are over ridden once the perpetrator is dead. It is only because life has run out for my cousin that I can relate this event.

In 1944 when I was eight years old, we spent the summer in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, with my aunt and my three cousins. My uncle had died five years earlier. The two boys were twins and were two years older than I was. My cousin Larry, who was the black sheep of the family, had spent part of the summer teaching me how to ride a two-wheeler. It was doubly difficult, as the bike had no chain. We went to small rises and used gravity to help accelerate the bike. Without a chain, you cannot get the bike up to sufficient speed to generate the gyroscopic action you need to keep you on the bike. I took dozens of falls.

Larry, one day after I took a nasty fall, asked me if I would like to go for a ride with him in his car. He was my older cousin and it seemed a good idea. At eight years old, you do not have a lot of common sense. We walked up the corner to a service station, which had a number of cars parked in the back. Larry walked over to a small foreign car that had the keys in the ignition and got into the driver's seat. Larry told me to sit in the passenger seat, and I complied. There were no such things as seat belts in those days. Larry said, "Hold on, here we go."

The car lurched forward and we hit the brick wall. Luckily, the car only moved about three feet. There was no apparent damage, but I was stunned and sitting on the floor. The only thing that confused me was that as I turned around I noticed the driver seat was empty. The door was open and Larry was disappearing down the block running as fast as he could. It finally hit me that something was amiss. Being a kid from the Bronx, flight from any event, was second nature. I also took off running and did not find Larry until late that night. At that point, I learned I had just experienced riding in my first stolen car.

Larry's dad was deceased and as a result, he had minimum guidance. However, my mother and father were there for the summer and had firm rules as to what was acceptable behavior. Stealing a car and damaging it definitely crossed the line. Potential arrest by the police and a criminal record moved you into a non-acceptable region. Since I was also in the car, the same brush painted me. Thus, a secret arose and became hidden until after my parents died – fully fifty years later.

You hear of it today because the statutes of limitations have run out, Larry is dead and I am not about to testify against myself. You are also bound by the terms of secrets to keep this to yourself.

THE END