

It was a dark and stormy night

--- Bud Lawry 2/18/16

It was a dark and stormy night. Really, it was. Well, rainy anyway. But, perhaps I should start at the beginning.

Doug was two years ahead of me in high school and eons ahead of me in his knowledge of girls. He lived right across US 41 from me. Yes, it's the same US 41 we call Tamiami Trail, but it's at the other end, in Michigan. Anyway, because he was older, and more worldly than me, he had a car. It wasn't much of a car, but to a freshman like me, it was everything I could ever want. The ultimate symbol of independence for this pudgy 15 year old, assumed the physical form of an old Ford woodie. It didn't run very well and because Doug didn't have a job, its maintenance was minimal.

The minimalist part that was the most critical, was the battery. Sometimes it didn't have enough of a charge to turn the engine over and the car would need a gentle push. Woodies were usually station wagons, which made them pretty big cars, so pushing Doug's was quite a job. Fortunately, he lived in a house that was on a little cut that the highway went through, so he could always park on a hill and coast down, pop the clutch, and if he had remembered to choke it a bit, the engine would spring to life.

One Friday afternoon he came over and asked me if I wanted to go necking with Bonnie and Nancy. The girls he had in mind were close friends and were the same respective ages as Doug and I. It sounded like a good idea to me. 'Course one didn't ask girls if they wanted to go necking. You asked them if they wanted to go for a ride and get a Coke. However, these two particular girls were not naïve. They knew what they were in for.

We picked them up in Doug's car and went for a Coke at Salminen's gas station. Doug didn't have a lot of gas, so we couldn't go into town. Salminen's was on the way to the boys' swimming hole where the locals would go parking after it got dark. We got the pop. I had to pay for it, because it was Doug's car and I had to contribute something. We messed around for a while at the station and then when it was time to get back in the car, I got in the backseat with Nancy. Bonnie was Doug's regular girlfriend.

It was starting to get dark and Doug tuned the radio to WJPD and we listened to Bobby Rydell, the Everly Brothers, and probably some Elvis. Well what do you know, we ended up at the boys' swimming hole. No one was there because it had started to rain. We parked so we could see the sun set and listened to Bobby Darin, the Coasters and Chuck Berry. It was a great night and I think I may have gained a bit on Doug's lead in understanding the female form.

Anyway, far too soon in my estimation, we realized we needed to get the girls home. You guessed it. We listened to too much music. When Doug pressed the starter button all we heard were clicks. He turned the radio off, tried again and we got more clicks.

“Bud, you’re going to have to push,” he said. Fortunately, we were parked on a little incline, but it was a cold and rainy night and I wasn’t eager to leave my warm little comfort zone. But, I had to be the hero. Doug wound the window down so we could communicate, but his willingness to expose himself to the elements didn’t impress me much.

I put my shoulder to the car, got it rolling pretty good and yelled. “Pop it!” I saw the back tires bite and heard the engine turn over. But it didn’t start and the car stopped.

Doug stuck his head out and said, “Let’s try it again.” Easy for him to say. I was all wet and getting muddy as well. The road into the swimming hole was a two track with low spots that collected red iron-ore colored puddles. So, I tried it again. The ground was beginning to level out, it would be that time or never.

I got it moving good enough to yell, “Now!” Again the tires grabbed and the engine turned, but didn’t catch. I was drenched by then and went up to the window. “What’s wrong? It usually starts.”

Doug turned to me with a look I’ll never forget and said, “I forgot to turn the key on.”

Dark, rainy, way past curfew, and stranded in the middle of nowhere with two girls. Remember the Everly Brothers’ song, *Wake Up Little Suzie*? “It’s four o’clock and we’re in trouble deep.” That started going through my head.

It didn’t end too badly, though. It was a popular parking place and after about fifteen minutes a car’s headlights started flashing through the trees and another couple with ideas similar to ours appeared. We used Doug’s jumper cables to rescue a wet kid sitting in the back seat by himself with his three dry and cozy companions in the front. When we were sure the woodie would keep running we drove off to let the other couple watch the submarine races.

Bud Lawry 2/25/16

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