

A Haunting Fear

Category: Motor Vehicle Accidents

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | March 2, 2026

It was December 1975, one month after I gave birth to my daughter. I had spent that month in a sleep-deprived state as I cared for her and my two-year-old son. I was also suffering from postpartum depression, a diagnosis not yet a part of the medical lexicon.

Most of all, I felt imprisoned. It was too cold to push the babies in the double stroller, and we did not live near enough to any indoor space where I might find an outlet for my locked-in feelings. That was why I convinced my reluctant husband to watch the children so I could go for an early-evening drive.

How free I felt on the highways of the Detroit suburb where we lived! I didn't have to focus on diapers or nursing; the sounds of crying faded with each mile I drove. What I did not realize, however, was that I was mentally, emotionally, and physically unprepared to be handling a weapon as powerful as an automobile. I was exhausted, my reflexes were slow, and my mind wandered from the road to some idyllic place where I had no responsibilities.

Then I slammed into the car in front of me. Even now, five decades later, I can hear the sound of metal against metal—and I panic. I can feel my chin hitting the steering wheel—there were no seatbelts back then—and my head jolting as if it had received an electric shock. The flashing lights of a police car awakened me from my stupor, while the angry voice of the driver of the car I'd hit made me feel like a villain in the drama I'd caused.

The consequences of this motor vehicle accident have lasted far longer than the driving classes I had to take. They remain with me every time I get behind the wheel, whether it is to drive local roads to the grocery store or to get on the highway to go to a medical appointment. I have an anxiety attack whenever I pass an accident on the road, thinking about my own accident and how much worse it could have been.

Now, at age 78, I contemplate selling my car and relying on Uber. I worry that my aging mind and body can no longer handle the automobile, bus, and bike traffic on the roads. My 1975 accident stays with me, haunting me with the fear of another crash.

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