

# Senior Center

Category: Motor Vehicle Accidents

written by Pamela Adelstein | March 16, 2026

The constraints of traditional marital roles put Rita at a disadvantage when she was unexpectedly widowed in her 80s. Finances, cars, and home repairs had been her husband's purview. But Rita was determined to learn to manage her own affairs, despite her grief.

Her learning curve was steep and her missteps frequent. She initially needed reminders not to pay bills set up for autopay. Duped by scammers, Rita had to cancel credit cards and open new bank accounts a few times. After learning the art of the screenshot, she frequently texted photos of mail to her daughter with a query: "Scam?"

One day, Rita surprised her daughter, revealing, "Someone hit my car and I already took care of it." Rita had been happily playing bridge at the senior center when a staff member called her to the lobby. Louise, another senior, had accidentally hit Rita's car while trying to back out of a parking spot. Louise asked for Rita's phone number, hoping to discuss reimbursement later. But Rita was not going to allow a fellow senior to dupe her! She demanded that Louise drive her around town right away so Rita could procure a rental car and arrange for her car to be towed and repaired. Rita exclaimed to her daughter, "Louise and I spent the day together!"

Rita did briefly panic when she tried to start her rental car, because she couldn't find the keyhole! She marched back into the rental agency—and a patient employee instructed her about keyless engine starting.

Louise suggested that Rita pay for the repairs, and Louise would reimburse her later. Again, Rita refused to give Louise the upper hand, declaring that Louise should pay immediately for the rental car and the repairs.

Soon after the incident, her daughter came for a visit and Rita proudly proclaimed that her car was fixed and working well.

Today, Rita knows how to detect scams. To be safe, she continues to text screenshots of mail to her daughter to confirm fraudulent requests, still with the caption "Scam?" When her daughter gives the thumbs-up, Rita replies, "I thought so."

Rita's daughter once shared that Rita had been an ineffective mother, limited by generalized anxiety. Her daughter thus became hypercompetent, almost turning into her mother's parent and spending much of her life tending to Rita's needs. But now, unexpectedly, Rita has been teaching her daughter how to live as a widow by leaning into new challenges and, for the first time, learning self-sufficiency.

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