

## On the Freeway with Children

By Beth Wyman

Hi Gary,

Here's a contribution to the "Staying in Your Car on The Freeway" conversation.

Back in the olden days, probably 1999 before cell phones, I was driving home to Morgan Hill on Hwy 85 in the evening with four children, ages 11, 10, 7,4, after spending the day doing fun things with them in San Jose. When they began to argue about who should be sitting in the middle seat in back, I pulled over to the cutout near Union Avenue in order to settle the issue. As I began to park, we heard a distinct "pop" from my right-hand front tire and when I got out to inspect this I heard the distinctive hissing sound of a tire losing air. Great! We had hit something that had blown the tire!

We could see a phone a little bit further on, so I put the baby on my hip and ordered the other kids to hold on tightly to each other as we trekked to the phone, made a call, and were told that it would be at least an hour before help was available.

My highest priority was safety and it was summertime, so I ordered everyone to sit still on the bank and continue holding onto each other (I know, I know!) while I thought about a better strategy.

Just then, a CHP car pulled up and the officer ordered us all to GET BACK INTO THE CAR ASAP! Okay, okay! After we were settled, he ordered us to STAY IN THE CAR UNTIL HELP ARRIVED! Okay, okay! Then he pulled his car behind ours and sat with us for the entire hour until road service finally arrived.

Of course, our little world inside my Camry became interesting. We sang every song we knew including all verses of *99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall* several times, told stories and wished for help to arrive. The children were very impressed with Mr. CHP and actually selected some of their art work that they were taking home to give to him. They so wanted to get out of the car, but dutifully remembered his strict instructions—at least all of them except the 4-year old who climbed from front to back seat about every 5 minutes.

I think I got Mr. CHP's name and called in a huge thank you; however, I still remember him every time I pass Union Avenue going east on Highway 85.

Yours truly,

Beth Wyman