I Don't Remember

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At the top of the hill sitting at the drive-in, we took inventory to see if anything flew out of the car. Dolly was the lightest and still in the back; we deemed this a successful trip. The red torpedo was still smoking and groaning as we started back down the hill. My little sister Donna had the responsibility of holding the two buckets of chicken that epitomized our dinner. As the red torpedo gained speed we were in sight of the house when Karen looked towards the trunk and saw Dolly standing in the center.

I have always marveled at that little dog's ability to balance on a trunk of a moving car racing down a hill. She might have stayed there had Karen not tugged at my dad's sleeve. What happened next has been the stuff of legend in the Canham household. Many versions exist, but I believe mine is most accurate: as dad saw Dolly on the trunk, he did not hesitate and slammed on the brakes.

The red torpedo was a very fast car but it could also stop on a dime with two cents change. As my body bounced against the back of the front seat, I saw Dolly flying through the air. Just before she slapped against the windshield, she had the most content look on her face; I thought I saw her smile. Since my father thought seat belts were an unnecessary government intrusion, everything not nailed down defied gravity and hit whatever was in front of them.

Realizing what he had done, my father screamed: “SAVE THE CHICKEN!” I was still seeing stars, picking chicken pieces off my shirt when I sat up and realized we lost one bucket. I told my sister to be quiet because if we told our father he would want to take the red torpedo back up to the drive-in. I don’t remember the rest of the trip home because my stars turned into short bouts of blackout. As we were coming through the front door, Dolly was the only member of our party who displayed no ill effects. It looked like she still had a smile on her face.

Our grandmother, still transfixed to the television commented: “You missed Tony Bourne absolutely demolishing Shag Thomas.”