

## Mother & Children

On the morning of November 19, 2000, we were headed down to our sons motocross race. At the last minute we decided to take two cars. If we had only taken our van as originally planned, our boys would no longer have a mother, because the passengers side was not survivable. Also, at the last minute before we left home, we decided to stop by the store in town, instead of the store the exit before where the accident happened. Those two decisions, I think about every day.

My husband was traveling in the left lane in front of me with our 6 year old son Joshua, 3 year old son Justin and my husbands daughter, 10 year old Merissa. I was behind him with our 4 year old son Jacob and our 2 year old son Jayson. As we were coming to a crest in the highway, right after the Lemmon Valley exit. I watched my husband swerve in front of me and my first instinct was that he was swerving to miss something in the road. Then I saw the headlights.

The following accounts are both of what I remember and what I found out later by witness statements, my husband and kids (traveling in the other car, but watching it all), the police report, and the Nevada Highway Patrol.

I never blacked out during the incident, but things did get fuzzy after out of the van. I remember seeing the headlights and less that a split second later with no time to react, the impact. It was an overwhelming blow, the feeling is unexplainable. There were no skid marks by myself, nor the drunk driver. After the first impact and the feeling of slamming forward, then a sudden jerk up and backlights. Then another impact. (we flew 56 ft. through the air before the second impact)

Everything was gray, I was not sure where we landed. My mind raced, Were we going to be hit again? There was silence after the first impact, but after the second, I heard my boys screaming "Mommy" in a scream that I had never heard before (and I never want to hear again). The best way to describe it is a death scream. The feeling of relief briefly came over me. My babies were still alive!

After the impact, I could not breath, I will never forget that moment. I thought to myself, this is how I am going to die, Then, after what seemed like forever, I was able to take a breath, it burned so bad. I tried to reach for the boys, but I was smashed into the drivers side door with the dash board wrapped up and around. I tried to find my seat belt and after a couple of attempt was able to release it. I knew we were not upright, but did not know which way was up. I fell towards the dash and then again tried to reach them again, but everything was so smashed together. I heard people yelling outside of the van and started screaming to get us out. I had never felt so helpless. It took a while, but I didnt know that the van was on fire and they were trying to find people with fire extinguishers. Also, that there was a group of people picking up handfuls of dirt and sand, throwing it at what was left of the engine trying to put the fire out. I heard bending metal, and heard them say they were trying to pry the door open, then I heard breaking glass (the drivers side window was still intact) I am not sure if I was pulled out or who helped me. I remember standing there, feeling no pain, screaming, get my babies out of the car. It seemed like forever that Jacob was in the van. I saw a man with a knife and I heard someone say they were cutting Jacob out of his seat belt. I heard him scream when they tried to pull him out. I was told that I needed to get away from the vehicle, I remember just repeating myself to get my babies out. I walked over to the car where my other children were watching everything and started crying. I could hear them screaming, but the windows were rolled up and saw Merissa point to my mid-section. I looked down and this was the first time I had noticed. I guess my adrenaline was pumping so hard I had not felt any pain. When I looked down, My arm and wrist looked twisted and my jeans were ripped down the sides with holes and blood. I sat down in the median next to Jacob who was laying down. A lady who said she was a nurse was kneeled down next to him. I could not stop crying and screaming get my baby out. I heard someone yell, we got your baby out. I screamed NO! My other baby. Because of the size of Jayson, the way the seat was folded and pinned around him, not to mention the thick smoke, they could not see him. I had not heard peanut (Jayson) cry since they pulled Jacob out. There was so many people around the car. I was told to sit down, that there were other people working on getting my son out. I remember sitting there crying, with a hurt and emptiness feeling in my heart and a sinking feeling in my stomach. Saying God, please don't take my baby from me, don't do this to me. You can't do this to me. Please God. I remember saying that over and over.



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As I sat there and cried, I stared at the van. Then I saw someone holding Jayson. I heard someone yell, He's breathing. I watched as they laid him down next to Jacob on the ground, blood everywhere, covering his face and hands. The next thing I remember is hearing a helicopter and a police officer leaning over me, telling me to close my eyes. I felt the dirt kicking up from the helicopter. After that, I do not remember much at all. I remember waking up in intensive care and seeing my husband, Mom and Father in law around me. I was told looked like my boys would be ok, they had been in surgery and were recovering in the pediatric Intensive Care Unit. I remember being told that the drunk driver died of her injuries. She was thrown from her care (due to no seat belt). We heard later that she was .27. They had tried to save her, but do to internal injuries, were not able to. When we got the police report 10 weeks later, the coroner did a blood test and was at .257. I deal with a lot of anger every day, but there is no one left to be angry at. There are a lot of people who either contributed to this accident or could have stopped her and didnt. That is where my anger is directed now. Why did her own work over serve her? Why had the security guards taken her to her car? Couldn't they smell the alcohol? The police told my husband that they could smell it on her from 4 feet away at the accident. The so called friend who rode home with her and was dropped of right before the accident. She told everyone at work that she had dropped her off at 5:30am and she must have gone and drank more after she dropped her off. Taking the blame off of her. But after we got the police report, it she stated that she dropped her off at 6:00am to the officer. Her husband, why did he let her drive while he stayed at the casino?

I believe it is called the Dram Shop law, well, we dont have one here. No one is at fault (according to the law) No one left to pay the continuing medical cost, not enough insurance, struggling everyday with bills and copays. Wondering if it will ever end.

We deal everyday with the stares. The scars on my sons face and legs. The stars when my son was confined to a wheelchair. The feeling of anger, everyday when I cannot play with my kids like I used to. I cannot bend my wrist, have been left with no feeling in my palm and 2 fingers. The scars on my right leg. The indent deep into my leg, permanent, because the muscle was ripped to the bone, the loss of feeling in my side of my leg, the twitching in my left eye and shoulder, not being able to remember things (short term) that I always could before. There fear of going back to the Dr. Are they going to find something else wrong? And two more surgeries to go on my wrist. For what!!!!???...so they can fuse it together. I will never be the same again. Someone decided to drink and drive and took my dreams in life away! Why!!!!? And then the comments "Your so lucky" This is what YOU call lucky??? I call it being cheated!!! Cheated out of living the life I wanted to, to be able to do things with my kids that I planned to. Not to live in pain forever. My oldest son asked me "Mom, why are you always sick now" I just cried. Also, the comments, "Well, she paid the ultimate price" I dont believe that. She paid for a decision that she made. We had no say so in that decision, but we were left to serve the life sentence!

I thank God everyday for not taking my boys away from me. I also thank the people who risked their own lives to save ours. The strangers, though I cannot remember your faces, I will never forget you. Also, to Deputy R. The one that got in the van and pulled Jayson out. Thank you!!! Also the other Officers who put out the fire, and all of the other things that you all did. (The things listed are of what I was told, but I am sure you did a lot more)

