

CRAZY HEALS—SOMETIMES

It was Thursday afternoon and fifteen year old Eddy was goofing off with his friends in the trailer park. School would be out for the summer in two weeks, and the weather was warm and inviting.

Eddy jumped on the neighborhood bike and started riding down the road to go to the convenience store that was located at the bottom of the hill that led into the trailer park.

Skip yelled, “Where you going, Eddy?”

“Store,” shouted Eddy.

“Give me ride. I’ll go with you,” said Skip as Eddy stopped the bike to allow Skip to climb onto the handle bars.

As long as the two of them were tooling around on flat land, there was no problem. When they started to move down the incline to get to the street at the bottom, they knew they had to be more careful because the bike had no brakes.

Eddy was never worried about riding down the hill because he could see if there was any traffic coming in plenty of time to stop forward movement. As a matter of fact, he was sure he could get across the road before a car that had just come into his peripheral vision could actually arrive at the intersection and cause an accident. He had done that many times. He had the timing down to a science.

He saw a yellow flash. It was moving too fast.

He shoved Skip off the handle bars into the hedges that lined the gravel road he was traveling on at the unstoppable high rate of speed without brakes on his bike.

All his mind could figure was that the added weight of Skip before he shoved him off the handle bars had slowed the bike's momentum down and he wasn't going make it across the intersection.

He was right. He didn't make it across without a collision.

The front wheel of his bike collided with the back tire of the yellow car, and he was thrown several feet into the air caused by the rubber bouncing against rubber. When his body ceased flying up from the bounce, he came down hitting against the roofed cover of the gasoline pumps in front of the convenience store at the bottom of the hill before continuing on to slam against the pavement.

He was unconscious for days and when he finally woke up from his coma he was angry. He didn't know why he was angry. He was just angry,

"Where am I?" he asked when he finally spoke.

"You're in Bristol, in the hospital," I said as I fought back the tears of joy. My son spoke. I was so very happy.

"Why am I here?" he asked. "What happened?"

"You were hit by a car when you were riding that old bike down the hill at the trailer park," I explained in soft words so only he could hear.

"What? What did you say? Speak louder, Mom," he shouted at me.

I told him again in a much louder tone.

"I'm tired. I want to sleep," he said with anger popping in his one uncovered eye so I would go away and get out of his sight. I wondered what would happen next.

I went in search of the doctor. I wanted to know why he was so angry. I wanted to know how I should react to this anger. What do I do now?

I had been spending day and night at the hospital. My husband, Sonny, who was Eddy's stepfather, was driving back and forth daily from our home in Tazewell, Virginia, to Bristol, Virginia, because he had to see that Eddy's grandmother, Winifred, and Eddy's brother, Aaron, were taken care of and doing well in our absence.

"What can I expect from Eddy?" I asked the doctor.

"Your son woke up angry. He could have been happy and easygoing when he woke up, but that didn't happen. His damage occurred in the area of his brain that caused that type of reaction," explained the doctor.

The doctor went on further to explain that from all appearances that it could possibly take five years for his brain to heal.

After many questions posed by the doctor and myself, we discovered that Eddy had lost about two to three years of his memory.

His brain was not accepting the fact that we were living in Virginia. He was determined that we were still in Ohio.

He wanted to speak with his grandfather. I had a really difficult time trying to get him to accept the idea that his grandfather had passed away two years before and that he would not be able to visit him. He loved his grandfather, who was a father figure for Eddy for more than eight years.

The skull fracture was the injury that everyone thought would be the longest one to contend with because of the possible five year healing process. He had many contusions and abrasions to his thin body with the black swollen eye being the most visible along with damage

to his left ear that caused permanent deafness on his left side. He also had a broken leg that had to be set with pins that would prove to be a major problem during those same five years of brain healing because of a recurring bone infection in the leg that caused him major pain on several occasions.

When he discovered that his head had been shaved causing him to lose his sign for teenage rebellion in the form of his long locks of dark brown hair, his anger only deepened.

He blamed me for everything that had happened to him. He accused me of paying the woman who was driving the yellow car to hit him and kill him so I would be rid of him. When he woke up from a fretful sleep, he would pick up anything he could reach and hurl it at me. He wished me dead, and he was trying to make that wish come true right there in the hospital.

He did not know he had a broken leg. The pain from the leg break was not transmitting to his damaged brain. He would try to climb off the bed, over the raised bars, because he was going to go home. He finally had to have his arms and his one unbroken leg secured so he could not cause more damage to himself by trying to walk on a leg where the bone had not been set yet.

He was finally sent home to eat. He was not getting enough nourishment in the hospital because he wouldn't eat the food that was served to him. He was losing weight rapidly, and if he didn't start to eat soon, he would have to have a feeding tube.

We loaded him in the car and prepared for the nightmare that lay ahead of us.

I talked with psychiatrists, psychologists, and specialized people who dealt with traumatic brain injuries but received no useful information from any of them. As a matter of fact, I was the one to blame in the eyes of many of them or, perhaps I should say, the home environment was the cause of all of his problems.

Eddy was a manipulator. Because he couldn't remember his past, he would make one up

and what he spewed forth truly depended on what he thought would get him what he wanted most. I never did know what he wanted most other than he wanted his younger brother, Aaron, to have to go through the same kind of pain and torment that he was enduring.

According to Eddy's doctor, Eddy would lash out at those he loved most. Aaron and I would receive the brunt of all of the lashings.

On several occasions, I caught Eddy sneaking out of his bedroom in the middle of the night entering the kitchen, where he would be in search of a butcher knife to use to kill his brother. I stopped him from attacking his brother by sleeping on the sofa in the living room, where I would be awakened from sleep by the thud of Eddy's walking cast pounding the floor as he searched for the knife. The first time he did it, I caught him just in time before he got to Aaron's bed, with the knife held up over his head getting ready to stab Aaron. Sleeping on the sofa became a permanent place for me until I knew Eddy's brain had healed. I was a light sleeper, and any slight sounds would awaken me for which I was very thankful.

Soon after the first attempt at stabbing Aaron, Eddy attempted suicide. He had searched the house for medications of which he took two pills of each bottle that he found and swallowed them all.

Eddy had been deemed ready to return to school so we had to get him and his brother up and out of the door early so Sonny could drive them to school while I got ready to go to work.

My husband told me that Eddy was bouncing off the walls when he walked down to the bathroom after we finally yelled at him enough to get him out of bed. Bouncing off the walls was not a new thing; he did that a lot with that cast on his leg.

It wasn't until I had gone to work that Sonny found the note:

Mom,

My f-----g head is killing me. I can't stand it any longer
I've tried to tell everyone that there is something wrong
in my head.

We had an ambulance pick him up at school after the school personnel had placed him on the school bus so he could be taken back to his home school from the vocational center. He was rushed to the hospital where it took six strong men to hold him down onto the cot.

When I saw him in the emergency room, he glared at me with pure venomous hatred because I had not let him die.

We discovered that all that could be done for him was to run water through his veins to dilute the drugs that had been taken hours earlier. Again he was unconscious for a couple of days, but he finally woke up and he was still angry.

Some of the so-called medical specialists prescribed drugs to control his bad behavior. One of those prescribed drugs was what drove him to the suicide attempt. Once that drug was removed along with the phenobarbital, prescribed for seizure prevention, his mind began to clear, and he started heading back to being my son, Eddy.

Eddy did many crazy things during those five years, most of which he does not remember. Like the doctor had told me, it took five years for me to realize that he was back and could be trusted once again.

I am here to tell you that crazy heals—sometimes—because Eddy's only residual effect from the brain injury is a bit of paranoia.

I have my Eddy back—almost.

I am grateful for the return of my Eddy.