

THE ACCIDENT

“Your son has been in an accident,” said my economics instructor who was joined by two of the administrators at the local community college.

“Which son?” I asked.

“He was riding a bike and there was an accident,” explained one of the three men.

“Is he okay?” I asked.

“I don’t know but you do need to go to the hospital to give them permission to treat him. Do you want me to drive you?” asked the evening administrator who was one of the big shots.

“No, no thank you. I will need to take my car,” I said as my mind whirled around trying to accept what they were telling me.

On the way to the hospital, I had it in my mind that the son struggling to survive the accident was Matthew, my youngest, who had two days earlier received a new bicycle for his birthday.

I had envisioned Matt lying on the gurney with his broken eyeglasses next to him. He was always looking for an excuse not to go to school and the broken glasses would work as a good reason. Matt couldn’t see anything without his glasses.

In my mind, I was preparing to chastise him for breaking the glasses because I didn’t think there was anything else wrong with him.

When I arrived at the hospital, I signed papers, and was told to go to the waiting room. I still had not been told which of my sons had been injured but I had it in my mind it was Matt.

I waited and waited.

I walked through the doors that led me to the cubicle where the doctors and nurses were surrounding a bed.

I was told to return to the waiting room but I defied the instruction and marched on to see my son.

I saw a thatch of dark hair, not the blonde strands of Matt.

“My God, it’s Michael,” I said as I held on to the wall to keep myself from falling to the floor.

Mike was on that bed and he had tubes running every which way from his body.

I shuffled back to the waiting room to wait, again.

In my mind I apologized to Matt for blaming him but I couldn’t accept that the boy on the bed was Mike. He was the practical, safe son without the recklessness of his younger brother, by two years.

Finally someone entered the waiting room to tell me they were transferring him to another hospital because of his skull fracture.

Other than the quick stolen glance, I never got to see him before they placed him aboard another ambulance to be taken eighty miles away from my home. I had no idea what was going to happen next,

I ran to my car and followed that ambulance with its flashing lights and blaring siren.

When we arrived at the new hospital, Mike went to emergency and then to surgery to relieve the pressure of the swelling of his brain. A hole was drilled through his skull and a gauge was attached.

From surgery he was taken to ICU where he remained in a coma for over a week.

I stared at my son as his broken body was stretched out on the hospital bed.

That was the moment I realized I hadn't told him or Matt how much I loved them and I made a promise to myself and to Mike and Matt that would not happen again.

I prayed for the return of my son but if he was going to be a vegetable due to brain damage, he would not like living that way,

His return to me was left in God's hands. I truly didn't know what to pray for other than to go along with God's decision. I knew I couldn't make the decision of whether Mike should live or die.

When Mike decided to resurface from the deep, dark hole he was in, he came back to my world as a completely different fifteen year old.

He was no longer the peaceful, shy boy he had been prior to the brain damage. He became an aggressive angry teenager that hated the world and everyone in it including me, his brother Matt, and Sonny, his stepfather.

He had it in his mind that I paid the lady driving the yellow car to hit him and kill him. At that point in his life, there was no convincing him that I didn't even know the lady and I certainly didn't pay her to drive her car into him

Sonny and I were finally able to take him home after almost two weeks of me eating and sleeping at that hospital in his room while he raged at me throwing anything at me that he could get his hands on.

His release from the hospital came because he wouldn't eat. The doctor thought if he went home, he might eat more and stop losing so much weight.

It was a long battle with his recovery as we waited for the Mike to return to the young man he was before the accident.

Five years had passed before I actually realized my Mike had returned. Well, almost; he still had the problem of being paranoid and that has never gone away.

As I promised, every time I speak to each of my sons I end the conversation with 'I love you.'

God made the right decision and returned Mike to me. It took a while, but we became a loving family of four again.

SHAMEFUL GYRATIONS

“Those gyrations are shameful,” said my father as he watched the television show that was displaying the motions and movements of the youth of the day.

That quote was from my father almost sixty years ago and he was directing the remark to me. I listened to him and I watched all of my friends doing exactly what he referred to as shameful.

I learned to dance and perform those same shameful gyrations but never around him where he would be able to see me and scold me.

As I settled into my teenage years the gyrations and movements changed with the music. Most of my dancing was done at home, alone, and out of sight of my family because I was shy and overweight.

I sat at home during all of the school dances because my father wouldn't drive me there and return to pick me up. He was sure I would be enticed to join the pot smoking, youthful degenerates. My mother didn't know how to drive so I couldn't beg her into taking me.

I graduated from high school without ever having been asked out on a date.

That was when I decided to change my life by going on a diet. I wanted to lose weight so I could be like everyone else.

Day after day I cut down on the amount of food I allowed to enter my mouth. If I ate anything at all, I did not lose weight.

My only choice was to really reduce my intake of food by an alarming degree and I don't recommend that choice to anyone.

For about six months, I ate a can of unseasoned green beans for every meal. Once in a while, I would eat some of the forbidden food but mostly I lived on green beans.

I did lose weight, a whopping fifty pounds. And then I got sick. I was so sick my mom sat up with me through the night because she thought I would stop breathing. Dad didn't believe in going to the doctor for what he thought was merely a cold.

When I survived the sickness, I went to work full time and attending college at night full time. I was trying to fill my lonely hours so I wouldn't think about it, the loneliness I mean.

Finally, one of my college classmates asked me to go on a date.

I knew Jim to be from an affluent family while I was from the other side of the tracks because my father was a blue collar worker. Jim was shy and awkward around women so I didn't have to worry about the fact that I, too, was shy and awkward.

Jim helped me realize there might be hope for me to someday get married but not to him even though he did ask me.

After a few dates, I decided that I was not ready to take the final step so I chose not to see Jim again which I think to this day may have been an error in judgment.

I really wanted to gyrate into the lives of other people and be the social butterfly I dreamed of being.

A few months later I met the man who would become my husband. I was an outcast as far as his mother was concerned because I was not Polish, not Catholic, and from Virginia. That move was also an error in judgment.

I did have something good come out of that marriage. I gave birth to two wonderful sons.

Despite what my father thought, the gyrations of my youth didn't make my life unlucky. I believe the need to be married like all of my friends did that.

Oh well, I still have my two sons.