

Car Accident (David Merrick)

When I was still three years old but drawing towards four, I was in Wales as was our custom every year on holiday there for the summer. This was in about August 1975,

We had a big tent which we lived in, and my sister Diana and myself were asleep in our sleeping bags; my mother was in the main part of the tent, whilst my two older brothers Mark and Peter were outside, and my father about 500 kilometres away in Kent.

A nineteen year old had parked his car at the top of the field; but he had left it without the brake on, and as it was on an incline, it began to roll down - he either saw it happen but had walked too far away by the time he noticed, or he had already left.

The car, a medium-sized car, gradually picked up speed and headed for our tent - my eldest brother Mark, who was outside, actually stood there watching it as it came down the hill!

The car, ran into the tent, running its wheel straight across my chest.

My mother was making herself a cup of coffee, when suddenly the car hit the coffee right out from her hand, and the impact caused her to spin round and fall to the ground. And when she looked up - there was no tent about her!

The car continued down the hill, toward the cliffs, where there was a huge fall onto the rocks below, and no fence to prevent a car from going over it when it reaches the end.

The car ran toward the cliff, ever faster, it would soon plunge over the edge and be dashed to pieces on the rocks below! Our tent was draped over and under the car, for it had travelled into the tent, and I and my sister were bundled in a tangle underneath the car within the tent, being thrown about and bounced against the ground as it travelled toward the cliffs.

As it came to its imminent destruction, there was a very large rock that happened to stand there, and the car instead smashed into the rock and was stopped from plunging over the edge.

My mother, fortunately, had now recovered consciousness; the car had been so close that it had hit the cup from out of her hand; inches closer, and it would have knocked her unconscious, seriously injured her or even killed her. Had these happened, those around would have seen the two children safe and well and would not have suspected that there were two more children beneath the car in the distance, and this delay would have proved to be fatal to me.

But my mother was alive to the situation, and she immediately ordered a stander-by to run and to ring the hospital emergency service.

My mother ran to the car, and found my sister screaming and crying in pain, and so she knew that my sister was all right - for there was I, silent, uttering no sound, motionless. She could not see me, but she knew from the silence that I could well be dead.

I remember being beneath the car, trapped under the wreckage and caught in the material of the tent; I could neither breath nor cry, nor utter any sound, as the pain was so intense that I was completely paralysed by it. Maybe this is why for a long time when i was younger, I had a slight claustrophobia of entering into caves in large rock sides by more than eight metres (although that may be normal); and that I used to think of the air as a fluid, not a nothing, but slightly clammy.

Within ten minutes, a helicopter descended from the sky and we were taken onto it on stretchers, and the helicopter lifted off from the ground.

The next thing I remember after being under the car, is watching the fields go past and looking out of the helicopter window; I thought I was going to fall out onto the land below as the door was open. But my mother said that there was no window at my level which I could have seen out from, and that the door was closed; so I conclude that I might have been in a spiritual out-of-body experience, and that I was looking out from one of the windows, perhaps in the main pilot area, and seeing the fields I thought that I was going to fall to the ground below. My sister also had the same experience.

We were taken at once to the hospital. My sister was fortunate, as she only had bruising and her jaw was broken in three places.

My condition was much more serious, and the doctors did not know if I would live or die. They gave me a fifty percent chance of survival. My liver had 50% haemombaging, I was bleeding internally as my abdomen had been crushed by the weight of the car - it left its tyre tread-mark across my chest; my collar bone was broken; my leg was dislocated.

I was in intensive care for four days! I had a drip tube in my arm, a tube to suck the blood from inside me as it was bleeding, a tube to carry away my urine directly, and some tubes up my nose. The scar to this tube is still visible in my right-hand side. For many years I had wondered why the skin and flesh connected wrongly at that point - not until I was just twenty-three, did I realise!

There was a doctor there who looked after me without sleep for the four days continually. My

mother said that she could not sleep for three days, and that she found him continually there, looking after me. Surely, doctors must have a difficult time, doing such things regularly. But I think he must have had some sleep!?

After being in intensive care for four days, I was then moved out to a ward.

One of the junior nurses came around whilst the doctor was out of the room, and decided that she would put a pan underneath me (that is a device which catches your urine if you go to the toilet in the bed), and was going to lift me up to place me on it. My mother leapt over and prevented her by force, saying that she couldn't, as it would cause me great pain to move me. Eventually the nurse had to give up the attempt, as my mother refused to move away to allow her to do so, and was prepared to fight it out with her if necessary!

They were always injecting me with drugs. My mother says that this was to try to stem the bleeding and to facilitate the healing. But now I have a needle phobia on account of this, and I hate needles going into my skin; and I cringe as I watch or hear described an operation being performed. The drugs used to make me vomit; there was one nurse, who had to change my sheets because I had been sick all over my bed. Then she'd come back and find I had been sick all over the new sheets, and so she changed those also. And then when she had hardly gone I would be sick all over those sheets too! I remember them giving me a horrible injection in my arm. I couldn't understand what the plaster was for, or perhaps it was a swab. I hated the injections! These were given at a time that my secondary teeth were still forming, and the doctors told my mother that the drugs would disrupt the formation of these teeth, and that as a result my teeth would be weak and decayed in later life. My teeth are indeed decayed to a degree, made worse by the fact that they are naturally white teeth - which means that they do not have all the impurities that naturally discoloured teeth have to make them stronger.

My left leg was in traction, because it had been dislocated - this means that it was encased in plaster of Paris, and was lifted up high above my head at a large angle. My mother tied a balloon to this so that I could kick it around with my other foot, which was free!

They told me that my leg might well cause me problems later in life, such as arthritis. It used to be quite painful for many years in my early teens, but the biting pain that would cut in when I would walk as if my bones were misplaced and jarring,

eventually disappeared, and has not come back since.

At another time, there was a thunderstorm underway, and I suddenly exclaimed to the nurse who was present: "Ged doud de wey, I can'd see the thunter and likening! [get out the way, I can't see the thunder and lightning!]"

I remember a gigantic plaster which I had across my abdomen to hold me together after they had stitched me up. They took it off later, to remove the stitches underneath, and the removal of this plaster caused me to cry. This was the only time that I cried during the whole of the time that I was there; I never cried at the pain, sickness, drugs, the operation, injections, removal of the stitches, or my mother's departure and absence, or even at the crying of all the other children in the room who were bawling their heads off because their mothers were not there: I cried only at the removal of this plaster. The doctors told my mother that they'd never known someone not to cry as I.

After they had removed the plaster, I remember them removing all the stitches from my abdomen. I laughed and giggled throughout this whole operation, as it tickled so much!

The scar has remained very visible even to this day. In my days at school, I always used to show it off, calling it my railway line, and saying that I ran my electric trains upon it! they all appeared to believe me in awe - maybe they did; or maybe they didn't; but I thought that they did, and I asserted this so often that I almost began to believe it myself!

Now after a month I was released from hospital. For many years after, we all had a joke amongst ourselves, saying, "Ah, but Mark had coffee spilt all over his toothbrush!" - as if all the terror and the pain of the accident were utterly irrelevant, and that this was the only significant incident of the whole affair!

My mother says that a few weeks later, she looked out of the kitchen window at home, and saw me fifteen feet up in the top branches of the nearest cooking-apple tree, and she thought, Well he must be better now to get up there! and continued happily doing her kitchen work.