



An Accident, a Recovery and a Trust In God's Plan

Description

As most of you know, I am a humorist at heart. I like to write about silly things and I hope to bring a smile to your face. This story is not like that. It's a serious account of a fellow Whisper Creeker's brush with death and how his faith, wife, and his personal resilience have brought him back from a near death experience.

During the interview my questions brought difficult memories to the surface, but as they sat and held hands, Earl and Mari drew strength from each other.



Earl and his wife Mari had just arrived at their winter home in the Glen section of Whisper Creek when they realized that they had forgotten a few key items way back at home. Earl, always ready to take a

long ride on his motorcycle, cheerfully volunteered to take the 10 hour journey back to Alabama to pick up the missing items.

Earl left LaBelle early the next morning heading north. As he approached Ft. Meade near Sebring he watched a garbage truck in the far distance in the opposite lane take a sudden turn across the highway into a local street. Minutes later, he backed out onto the highway right in front of him!

Riding at around 40 miles an hour and given no time to stop, Earl's only option was to lay the bike down on its side and slide right under the truck. The collision caused Earl extensive injuries. An ambulance was called and Earl was taken to the hospital.

Mari got a call from a sheriff at the scene and was told that Earl had been in a serious accident. He was being taken to the Lakeland Regional Trauma Center. When she arrived at the hospital, although initially numb, Mari's medical background kicked in. Fortunately she was able to compartmentalize her emotions to support Earl in any way she could.

In the emergency room, the doctors tabulated the many injuries. Earl had broken 3 front and 4 back ribs, with one rib nicking a lung. Doctors rebuilt his collar bone using 16 titanium screws. His shoulder bone had popped out and his spine was twisted, rupturing the C3 and C4 vertebra. Earl was told he also needed a total knee replacement. It took several surgeries to repair all of the injuries.

Earl was wearing a complete set of riding leathers at the time and also a prized leather vest. When the ER doctor went to cut the vest off, Earl stopped him from damaging it by telling him to cut it at the seams by the shoulders. It was his favorite vest after all!

Earl spent 5 days in the hospital and then the long process of PT began. It proved to be so painful that Earl asked for a towel to bite down on in order to muffle his screaming. One of the other patients chastised the therapist for causing so much pain, but Earl is stubborn and wanted to win the battle over both the pain and his injuries.

Life has changed. Mari says that Earl is physically about 80 to 90 percent back, but as expected, Earl reports that he still suffers from PTSD and the remnants of a traumatic brain injury. After rebuilding the damaged motorcycle and then purchasing a 3 wheeled trike, he decided that motorcycle riding is no longer for him. He continues to be tense whenever he is in a car in traffic and he can experience flashbacks revisiting the accident.

During the interview Earl asked me to thank the wonderful members of the Whisper Creek community for their help around the house and especially their prayers. "There is no way I can begin to thank all of our dear friends in the park for encouragement, prayers and especially for their sense of humor." said Earl

Earl's initial therapy included daily walks around Whisper Creek starting with smaller walks and increasing them each day with Mari faithfully at his side. A skilled pickleball player Earl has returned to the court but says his motions are limited.

As Whisper Creekers watched, Earl would walk around the park wearing a neck brace, full soft cast on his right leg and left arm in a sling from the collar bone surgery. At first the pain was pretty intense but it wore off as time progressed.

Whenever Earl finds himself sinking into the rabbit hole of depression as memories of his accident resurface, his coping methods include keeping himself busy and forcing himself to not dwell on it. He also relies on his deep faith to help him get by.

Earl concluded the interview by saying,



MEET THE AUTHOR ??

Fellow Whisper Creeker Greg Stangl comes to us from the great state of Wisconsin. He and his wife Colleen spend summers on Lake Wisconsin and enjoy the leisurely winter months here in our little paradise together with their beautiful Springer Spaniels Isabella Rosalini and Sophia Loren.

Greg is a professional photographer, speaker and writer who not only owned a photography studio for 40 years, but also taught college courses and lectured on the subject in 35 states and 7 countries.

Greg's other passion is writing. He has published works in 10 national magazines and also authored workbooks employed in photography and marketing. Whisper Creeker News is both honored and excited for Greg to share his creative writing talents with us as well!

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