

A Father's Story

My son had just moved to Des Moines from our home in Pella, Iowa. On May 19, 2004, at 6:14 P M, I was driving my pickup, loaded with my son's belongings, while he was following about one city block behind me on his bright yellow Yamaha motorcycle. As I drove, I would periodically look back to see my son. I was traveling at 60 MPH, so I know how fast my son was going. We were on Highway 163 when a female driver pulled out in front of him. My son's motorcycle struck the back of her vehicle, causing it and my son to tumble down the highway at 60 MPH.

This is what happened. As we approached the Prairie City exit, I saw a vehicle with a young female driver stop for the stop sign. I had traveled about one-half mile further when I looked in my rearview mirror for my son, but I didn't see him. I continued a little further when I met a volunteer fireman driving by with his blue lights on. At this point, I still could not see my son and I knew something was wrong, so I turned around to look for him.

As I approached the Prairie City exit, I saw the emergency lights of the ambulance, rescue, and fire trucks around this intersection. I pulled up to the scene and could see my son's legs sticking out on the ground behind the ambulance. I can't tell you all the horrible thoughts that were going through my mind when I saw this. I had just had knee surgery a little over a week before, but I never felt a thing as I ran across the median to my son.

When I got to my son, the paramedics had traction on his neck and were preparing him for transport to the hospital. When I looked at my son, I could see he was looking back at me, and at that moment, I then knew he would be OK.

My son was taken to the Pella Regional Health Center and was treated for his injuries. He had numerous X rays and examinations. Thank God the only injuries he received were severe abrasions, bruises, and minor cuts. My son stayed the night in the hospital just for observation to make sure there were no complications.

On that day, my son was wearing a full-face, DOT-approved motorcycle helmet, and leather gloves, along with blue jeans, T-shirt, and shoes. There is no doubt that God was there for my son that day, but also after examining his helmet, I knew that it had saved his life. The back of the helmet had been crushed in; and if my son hadn't been wearing it, that would have been my son's head. The gloves he was wearing had been worn through over all the knuckles. My son now knows that if he had been wearing his leather coat he would not have had the severe abrasions, bruises, and cuts.

I can't say enough about the importance of wearing helmets and all the other protective gear. I am a motorcycle rider myself for personal pleasure, and I am a motorcycle officer for the City of Pella. My hope is that by sharing my son's story, it may help save lives. Wearing a helmet is a responsible choice.

—David O.