

It Only Takes a Second

Narrative Essay by Jessie Smith

A normal Saturday in June for me, at the age of eleven, was competing at a swim meet and spending the evening in the harvest field. However, this Saturday was different in that it had rained, so harvest was put on hold until the golden fields of wheat had dried enough to resume being cut. Savannah, our custom cutter's daughter, was going to spend the night with me.

Like normal girls, we had watched a movie. When the movie was done it was still light outside, and we wanted something fun to do; so Dad took us to the shop to ride the go cart. Savannah was driving the go cart and we were talking about boys and the rest of our summer plans and laughing as the wind whipped our hair. When we turned a corner, the go cart rolled. When I opened my eyes I was lying on the hard ground with the go cart next to me. Savannah ran for help. Dad took me home. We got Mom and went to the hospital.

Once there, we went into the ER. Blood was dripping down my legs and arms.

"Dad, who is going to clean that up?" I asked.

"Don't worry about that. Just lay down, Sweetie."

When we got to the room Dad tried to clean the dirt and dust from my knees, legs, and feet. My parents talked to the doctors, and I lay there in pain.

As the nurse gave me stitches, Dad said, "She sews almost as good as Mom!"

I was transferred to another hospital that night because I required services that could not be provided at our local hospital. We drove about an hour and a half in the dark, with rain pounding down upon us. It was one of the longest car rides I've ever had.

I don't remember much after that except that the doctor said, "Good Evening."

My reply was, “What’s good about it?”

Three days later, we followed up with another doctor. After examining my arm he said, “I’m off at 5:00, and you’re going to have to have surgery before I leave.” Hearing those words gave me goose bumps all over. I could see the fear in my mom’s face. Mom called Dad, and both grandparents and they arrived at the hospital right before my surgery. It was a wonderful feeling to know that everyone was there for me.

Due to infection in my arm, I required several surgeries and ended up with an external fixator. I spent three weeks in the hospital that summer. Being eleven years old, I got rather bored. Mom stayed with me every night, and Dad came to visit every evening after spending a full day working in the fields and finishing harvest, without me. Mom and I watched a lot of movies. Some days, just taking a shower and walking down the hall was exhausting work. There were times I was angry because this accident happened so fast and ruined my summer. I couldn’t swim or hang out with friends, or anything a normal child does during the summer. I just wanted to go swimming. I wanted to go home and see my friends and sleep in my own bed.

On July 4th, the nurses encouraged us to watch the evening fireworks from the helicopter pad. We made popcorn and around dusk Dad, Mom, and I went to the helicopter pad with our popcorn and soda. The hospital was on top of a hill, and we were surrounded by fireworks of all colors soaring into the dark sky. We believed we had the best seats in town!

Finally I got to go home. I was so excited to sleep in my own comfortable bed, see my friends, and go to the pool, even if I couldn’t swim. But after obtaining a second opinion regarding my arm, I was scheduled for another surgery. The next several months were spent with various surgeries at Children’s Hospital in Denver. Eventually, after missing lots of school, my arm was healed.

This experience has changed my life forever. I will always have scars on my arms and hip, to remind me about the accident. I am missing fat tissue in my right arm due to the infection. I almost lost my arm. After junior high, I decided not to play sports because if my arm is hit in just the right spot, I experience immediate and intense pain.

I realize now that I will always have the support of my family. My parents, grandparents and family will always have my best interest at heart and be there for me. I have learned that no matter how difficult situations may be, I need to keep my faith. I need to analyze my options and make the best choices for me. I should try to keep a sense of humor at all times. I have also come to realize not to judge people based upon appearance, immobility, or bodily defects. Some people are born with them, and others have fought a long hard battle. Life is precious. It only takes a second for an event to change your life.