

Rhapsody

My Freshman Year

It was March 31, 1976, and it was my freshman year of high school. I was so excited that my father was dropping me off at school for my first donkey basketball game. I went in the school, and I started talking to a couple of my friends who told me that two of my other friends didn't have a ride to the game. Seven of us jumped into our friend's 1969 station wagon. There was a driver, my friend's brother, and four other girl friends. This was a disaster waiting to happen. Needless to say, we didn't make it back to the donkey basketball game.

The driver, who was a new driver, decided she wanted to drive fast. We told her over and over again to slow down, but she didn't listen. She lost control on an S-curve on Hutchison Road in Newtownsville. Everyone was able to get out of the car except me. I was trapped under the engine of the car, and it took the EMTs about 2½ hours to get me out. One of the EMTs knew who I was, so he sent the police officer to my parents' house. My father answered the door, and the officer told him about the accident. He just couldn't believe it. My father told him I couldn't have been in a car accident because he had driven me to school. Dad was in shock!

After the EMTs got me out from under the engine, they took me to the nearest hospital. Later that night they found out that my pelvis was broken, and my left shoulder was pulled out of its socket. My face, which had cuts all over it, had to be stitched up. I was a mess. In fact, a month later I was still in a wheelchair. I had to go through a lot of therapy before I could walk again. How crummy is it to be sixteen, in a wheelchair, and learning to walk again? I felt like a 12-month-old child learning to walk.

There were six other kids in the car – three in the front with me, three in the back seat. The two girls in the front also got hurt. One of the girls went through the windshield, while the other girl had her leg broken in three different places. The driver didn't get hurt, nor did the three in the back seat. We all made it

back to school about one month later.

The kids at school had started calling us Hip, Crip and Stitch. I was Hip, because of my broken pelvis, the girl that had her leg broken was Crip, and the girl that went through the windshield was Stitch. Stitch had to get 74 stitches across her forehead. She had to go through a couple of plastic surgeries because of her scars. It split her head wide open. We were all lucky that we didn't get killed. I'm thinking the only thing that saved us was the 1969 station wagon – it's a heavy-duty car. If we had been in a newer vehicle, we possibly would all have died.

I have two children now, and I worry about what impulsive action they may take. I have told them this story many times and explained how crazy it is to get into a car with excited kids and new drivers. They need to understand the danger of kids and cars. I was one of the lucky ones; some are not.

~ April Norvell

The Scariest Day of My Life

I was almost done with all my exams in medical school in Nicaragua. I had to take the Gynecology exam on December 18. I was praying that I would have time to finish my last test before my daughter was born. My daughter was born on December 19, right on time.

The day she was born, I had been in class in the hospital all morning. Everything was fine when I returned to my house, and I decided to go to the house next door to give a classmate the notes I had taken that morning. As I was walking back to my house, I felt a movement in my womb, and I immediately looked on the floor, but I saw nothing.

I told my husband what had happened. I was a little scared! Since he was also a doctor, he examined me and told me that we needed to go to the hospital because I was starting to dilate. I was all ready for this day. In a bag, I had my prenatal medical records, but we were so nervous that we forgot the bag!

When we got to the hospital we knew a lot of people because both of us were students at that hospital. My pains continued, but it only hurt a little, not too much.

The nurse put me in a wheelchair. When I got to the labor room, the pain and the contractions were fewer. The doctor came in to help. When he was putting a catheter in me, he made a medical mistake, which caused my membranes to rupture prematurely. He told me to start pushing continuously. When another woman doctor saw how I was being treated, she ran to get the director of the hospital.

But she was too late. I had spent a long time pushing and I didn't have any more strength to continue. The nurses gave me Oxytocin so I would have more contractions and my baby would be born quickly. Then two women sat on me, right on top of my big stomach! I was so scared for my daughter! I was afraid that she

would be injured by the weight of those two women. I prayed to see my baby be born healthy. Finally she was born.

I didn't hear my daughter cry, and I was very worried! I said, "My baby doesn't cry!" The pediatrician told me not to be upset. He aspirated her mouth and nose. At last I listened to the first cry of my baby! I felt so happy!

My daughter was born with a lot of black hair. She had grayish blue eyes, and a red, round face that looked like a tomato. She was a big baby, weighing 8 pounds and 14 ounces. December 19 was so special to me. After all the stress and worry that day, I received the best gift: a normal healthy baby girl!

~Tania Montalban

Lil' Chris

Lil' Chris is what we called him.
We named him after his dad.
We were so excited, as time went on,
To deliver this child we had.

The labor came two months too soon
Before the due date we had.
The pain grew worse as we knew it would,
But the news we received was bad.

What we thought would be the birth of our son
Turned out to go all wrong.
His cord broke loose from the wall inside
And we knew our son was gone.

To this day, our hearts are broken,
But we know he is with the Lord.
One day we will be with him;
That's what we pray for.

Just about eight months later
I planned to get pregnant again.
We found out right before Christmas.
Oh boy, did we have a grin!

At five months I went to the doctor.
He told me the child was a girl.
We were so excited and yet afraid.
Our whole life seemed to be in a whirl.

Hadassah was born this past August.
We know that she was a true blessing
For she stopped growing at six months.
At this, the doctors were guessing.

She weighed 4 lbs., 13 oz.
She had a pencil size cord.
The doctors stood in amazement
And could not speak a word.

In intensive care they placed her,
But only for about five days.
We took her home and she is perfect.
For that, we give God the praise!

~ *Lindsay Louis*

Best and Worst of Life

Throughout life, there are good and bad experiences. I have experienced ups and downs in life, as I'm sure you have. We can learn to appreciate the lessons learned from the bad experiences as much as we cherish the good experiences in life. We all have different experiences. Here are a few of mine.

The best experience in my life was when I became a father for the first time. I'm not sure how to explain my feelings; it was wonderful. It is...a new feeling. I didn't know what to do, laugh or cry. But when my little girl was in my hands, I forgot everything around me. At that time in my mind, it was just my little girl and me.

The worst experience in my life was when I began my new profession as a doctor in a tiny village in Colombia. I had a little 4-year-old girl as a patient. She was very sick. I was not sure what she had but I saw her in the worst physical condition. Unfortunately, her mother waited until the last moment to take her to the hospital. The little girl had respiratory problems, probably pneumonia, and I didn't have the right equipment to treat her. That night at the hospital, I was alone in the E.R. I made the decision to send the little girl by ambulance to another hospital that was bigger and better equipped. At the larger hospital they had medical specialists and everything to help keep her alive. On our way to the other hospital, the girl's respiratory problems got worse. I had to put a tube in her mouth to help her breathe. I knew in my heart that her prognosis was not good, but I was the doctor and I had to do everything I could to keep her alive. When we got to the hospital, everyone was waiting anxiously for the patient so that they could continue the treatment. Unfortunately, a couple hours after we arrived, the little girl died.

Whether it is life's good experiences or bad experiences, there are valuable lessons to learn from each. Often times it's the same reminder; life goes by so quickly, you need to be grateful for every moment.

I am grateful for my family and the lives that I have made a difference in by becoming a doctor.

~ Abdelrahman Saleh

Where Did Those Times Go?

One day long ago, when I was maybe eight or nine years old, I was playing with my sisters. Lilly is two years younger than I am, and Dora is two years younger than Lilly. We were playing next to the beds and using an old end table as a desk. I pretended to be a doctor. As always, I took this position in the group. I laid down the dolls on the desk, I interviewed the moms, asking why they brought their kids to me, “the doctor.”

One of the moms, Lilly, said, “Doctor, my daughter fell from her crib and she has a big cut on her forehead.” I suggested that she would need to have twenty stitches because her injury was very deep. I did my job as a doctor, I put on a bandage, recommended that she give orange juice in the morning and that was it.

The other patient came with a tooth pain. I recommended to her mom that she not give so much candy to her child. I also suggested that she take her child immediately to the dentist because probably she needed to have the tooth pulled.

On the other side, my brother Albert had the pretend bus ready. He aligned six chairs to use as bus seats, and then he used a pot lid as a steering wheel. We paid for the bus ride with money. Of course, we were too little to use real money; instead we used leaves as money. The biggest leaves were used as the highest denominations. He returned our change with small leaves. What funny times those were!

Before I finished my elementary school days, we had a career custom day. I remember it as if it were yesterday. How excited I was! My mom sewed me a white nurse uniform and made me a white hat with a red cross quilted on the middle. The nurse dress had two pockets on each side of it and buttons in front. I felt so happy and pretty wearing my nurse uniform. I felt so clean and anxious to grow up. I identified myself with that custom. I thought I could be a doctor.

My elementary and middle school years came to an end. During the last two years in high school I worked so hard, studying English, French, Spanish, grammar, math, social studies, science, philosophy, and physics. I thought sometimes that my head would explode. But I continued to hang in there, learning, doing piles of homework. Sometimes I couldn't sleep, we had so much homework. Our goals were to end with the highest grades, not with the average. And we did. My class finished in the first position in the school on the government test that each student needed to take before graduation. This test was an equivalent to an SAT in the US. Our class had a score over 400 points and mine was 385. The class average was 355. Great, now I could enroll myself in medicine at one of the famous universities of the country. It's famous because the educational level and preparation for the students at that school were the highest.

I miss those days so much. This story is not finished...yet I am persisting in reaching my goals.

~ Betty Krimmer