

Cindi – victim of drunk driver

My daughter and I were going to the grocery store in the morning in November of 1979. And she was 5 months old, and we were hit head on by a drunk driver. It was his fourth time for drunk driving. He had no license. He had no had no insurance. He drank a pint of whiskey about . . . before 10:00 in the morning. My daughter was in a car seat, and she . . . the straps just busted on it, and she came around and hit the back of her neck right here [points to the back of her neck] on the corner of the dashboard, and crushed, you know, the cervical section of your spinal cord. And it goes C1 through C10 to right about here, and she crushed C4, 5, and 6 . . . these three vertebrae right here, and they kind of twisted like this and went across and then ended back on top of her spinal cord, and she was paralyzed from the neck down. And I broke about 14 bones from the waist down. And I have a couple of plates in my left foot, and I have a rod in my right leg.

You know, she always had pneumonias, and she had atelectasis, and she had bladder infections, and she had tracheostomies, and other kinds of infections. And she had seizures. I had, um, 7 years of playing tug of war with God, and I knew that he'd win someday. She died. And that was in 1986.

I try and have the good pictures in my head of Laura instead of the bad pictures now, but the bad pictures plagued me for a long time, and the hatred was just unbearable for the man that hit me. I mean, that was like just carrying an extra tumor, you know, a big tumor. And so you've got the hate, you know, just this intense hate, and you lay in bed at night, and you know, I used to think all kinds of plans on how I was going to kill this guy. And then I thought, I'm not gonna kill him. I'll hit him in the back of the neck with a lead pipe; I'll have somebody hold him down. I'm gonna paralyze him like he did Laura.

And then you just go on with these scenarios, and you just build this up, so now you've got all this hatred for this person.

And you've got all this pain and sorrow. Sometimes the people who do it—even after they've been picked up for drunk driving—they still don't see themselves as a problem. You know, because maybe somebody isn't in their face showing them a picture of their dead daughter, or telling them what that felt like, or how horrifying it was to have her chew her fingertips off because she couldn't feel them and was covered with blood one morning, you know? Let's . . . now let's start thinking about, what if it was your kid? What if somebody did this to your kid? Let's start thinking about that a little bit, you know. Or it happened to your mom or your boyfriend or your girlfriend or your wife or whatever, you know. Start thinking in those terms a little bit, and you know, maybe that will—I don't know—help deter you.