

Kellie's Story

This is Kellie's story. Her mother, who is a patient of mine, referred her to my office. When I first met Kellie on April 13, 1990, she was a 17-year-old, lean, beautiful, intelligent, bubbly, freckled young lady standing five feet seven inches tall. She was lean because she was on her school's swimming team, a lifeguard, and taught swimming lessons to infants through adults.

Kellie was referred to me because she occasionally had headaches and backaches. On the new patient intake form, where it asks the purpose of this appointment, Kellie wrote, "to check spinal cord."

Upon taking her history, I found that she had a mild case of athlete's foot from constantly being barefoot around swimming pools, slight stress headaches occasionally, and minor backaches when practicing swimming more than her usual two hours per day.

In the course of the examination, we found that Kellie had a short left leg by 8 millimeters. There were several subluxations in her spine, which she really didn't feel, but that I found via motion palpation and adjusted as needed. She responded very rapidly to the treatment, as her case was simple and straightforward.

On May 7, 1990, while working at her part-time job in a pizza parlor, Kellie fell backward onto a table on her back and left elbow. She also heard her anterior ribs "pop." She was standing on a stepstool, reaching up to a top shelf to get pre-folded pizza boxes when she fell. She came in for several office visits, and in a short time was released. Again, her near-perfect athletic form and frame and positive attitude assisted in her rapid acceptance of the chiropractic adjustments.

She was seen on a maintenance frequency for minor aches and pains. Kellie's life was moving along very nicely, thank you. She graduated from high school and went on to a local junior college, where she carried 18^{1/2} units while working two jobs - as a preschool teacher and a lifeguard.

In January 1992, her life nearly ended. She was struck broadside by a drunk driver. Kellie was 18 years old at the time of the accident. The drunk driver who hit her was a 55-year-old man with four kids; he had no license because of four prior DUIs, and no insurance.

Kellie tells her story from here:

The crash was on Saturday, January 11, 1992, at 7:56 p.m. A drunk driver was doing 79 mph in a 40 mph zone. He had run five red lights. His alcohol level was .40. People die at .50. The drunk driver was sentenced to four years; due to overcrowded jails, he only served two years.

My friend Cami and I were on our way to see a movie at eight o'clock at a movie theater about two miles from my parents' house. I had stopped at a stoplight a mile away from their house when the drunk driver broadsided my car.

Cami, who at first thought I was fine, like she was, got out of the car. Leaning down to look at me, she saw my head leaning on the door with blood gushing out of the top of my head, onto my face and the upholstery.

The first police officer on the scene of the crash was San Jose, California, Police Officer John Seaman. Since there already was glass embedded in my cheek and head, Officer Seaman told me that he was monitoring by breathing instead of performing CPR, for the fear of pushing pieces of glass further down my windpipe and causing even more damage. While he was monitoring my breathing, he said I was taking one shallow breath every 20 seconds. (Later, the police officer stated that I had been in the worse accident he had ever seen.) I have been told that the firemen had to use the Jaws of Life to get me out of the car. I have also been told that the firemen had trouble removing me from the car with my head being split open on the top.

When I finally arrived at the hospital, they did a secondary survey and found more injuries. My injuries included: a broken pelvis in two places, a broken tailbone, along with the four discs above, a broken left leg in three places, a collapsed left lung, and the left side of my body had poor circulation. Along with those problems, my left lung collapsed twice while I was in a coma for three and a half weeks at San Jose Medical Center. I also had a traumatic closed head injury and extensive brain damage; I found out later that I sustained a learning disability. I had feeding tubes inserted in me for three months because I couldn't drink water. My swallow reflex was severely delayed due to the brain damage, so water would go down into my lungs instead of going down my esophagus. My voice had also deepened dramatically because of having air and feeding tubes shoved down my throat for those months. I got pneumonia once while in the hospital, and have had it a couple more times since then.

When I came out of the coma, I had to start off by eating baby food for one and half months, and then slowly work my way up to eating regular food again.

After I had been in the coma for three and a half weeks, and finally woke up, I was transferred to subacute care at Meadowbrook in San Jose. I had three hours of therapy, six days a week. I stayed at Meadowbrook for over two months and had 24-hour care. While I was there, I had to relearn how to take care of myself all over again. In terms of cognitive activities, I had to be trained in learning, thinking, talking, eating, as well as relearning physical activities such as how to stand, walk, hop, skip, and be toilet-trained. It was not fun to wear diapers again, at the ripe old age of 18. The total cost of my therapy was \$275,000.

In late March to the first week in June, I was transferred from Meadowbrook to South Valley Ranch in Gilroy (California). I was now able to stay with my parents, but left their house at seven-thirty a.m., and returned at five-thirty p.m. I had therapy five days a week, and this was primarily one-on-one training for both the mental and physical damage that had been done. I relearned to jump rope, walk for longer periods of time, and started running again for physical therapy.

As far as the brain damage goes, I now live according to notebooks and calendars. There is a calendar open and hanging in my bedroom. Everything of any importance has to be written down in my notebook, or on the calendar, or else it will be forgotten.

After I graduated from South Valley Ranch, the first week in June, I met with my new counselor at West Valley College (a local two-year college) in August of 1992 for help in planning my classes for fall of 1992. I first took guitar lessons to help loosen up stiff and uncoordinated fingers that had been paralyzed. Spring semester of 93, I took typing to help manipulate my left hand again. Swimming was scheduled for both semesters to help get my strength back up to where it used to be.

Today, I go to bed when I am tired in order to handle tomorrow's challenges. All of my friends have since moved on with their lives.

Kellie survived. She survived because of several factors: She was in as near-perfect condition as any human being could be, not just physically, but mentally, spiritually and chiropractically. She survived because a lot of people prayed for her: parents, relatives, friends near and far, her chiropractor ... a lot of people.

One day early on in her treatment, I stopped by the convalescent home to visit Kellie. As I was walking up the concrete steps to the front doors, I saw Kellie through the glass in the large doors, being pushed in a wheelchair by her mother. I'll always remember the sight of the wheelchair with the racks attached to hold up the various intravenous bags, which rocked back and forth as her mom pushed her up and down the hall. Kellie's mother smiled at me as I opened the doors.

Kellie opened her eyes, looked at me, and for the first time, recognized someone without being told repeatedly who they were. She said, "Hi Doctor Rollis. I was in an accident."

I said, "Yes, Kellie. I know." Her eyes rolled back and she passed out for a few seconds, and her eyes fluttered a few times and then opened again.

"Hi Doctor Rollis. I was in an accident." She said again, and then slipped back into unconsciousness.

I looked at Kellie's mother. She had a smile on her face and she began to cry. Kellie did not recognize her father or her mother or her brother Jimmy without repeated explanation. This was a big turning point and breakthrough in her care.

Kellie could now begin the long, arduous journey to find the Kellie that was nearly lost.

I had access to files from the surgeons, neurologists, orthopedic specialists, rehabilitation services, and the psychiatrist. I had access to stacks of MRIs, X-rays and brain scans.

The family insisted that I be a part of Kellie's recovery team. The family consulted me on all procedures, medications and physical therapy aspects. The family wanted chiropractic care. And later, when Kellie was beginning to be more and more capable of making her own decisions, she herself wanted to continue chiropractic care.

My major concern was not to do anything to impede or reverse her slow-but-steady gains. I adjusted her. I primarily was interested in the swollen medulla oblongata. I would hold C1 lateral masses between my thumb and middle finger and slide it laterally in minute increments. Some days, it would slide with a little slack, and I adjusted accordingly to my motion palpation findings. Some days, the swelling of the medulla oblongata didn't allow any movement, so I couldn't adjust C1. Visit after visit, Kellie got stronger and stronger, and as such, I adjusted more and more: her sacroiliacs, her left knee, her spine and, ever so carefully, her neck.

She returned to college. At first, she took one class, and then two and then more and more. Now she can handle the class load of a full-time student. She has completed her Associate of Arts requirements and wants to get a degree in biology. She's lectured at high schools and junior high schools for Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD), telling her story.

She continues to improve. She has a standing schedule for checkups, or if she starts to limp. She is still lean, pretty, intelligent, freckled and very positive, but she does not like drunk drivers.

I've learned a lot by knowing Kellie. I've expanded my life by knowing Kellie. I've become a better chiropractor by knowing Kellie.

There is much to be said about positive attitude, exercise, spiritual grace, prayer, and chiropractic.

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