

April More Voices: Accidents

Category: Accidents

written by Paul Gross | March 31, 2022

Dear *Pulse* readers,

When I was a college sophomore, my mother called me in tears to tell me that one of my Canadian cousins had died in a car accident. A bright, vivacious university student, Orienne had been dozing in the back seat of a Volkswagen beetle driven by a friend, who'd apparently lost control of the car. It swerved off the road and rolled over, killing her.

No one else in the car was injured.

The enormity of this event still stops me in my tracks.

This wasn't the first time our family had experienced such a tragedy. A few years prior, one of my Belgian cousins, Bob, fifteen at the time, had been killed by a truck while riding his bicycle.

It gets worse.

Two years after Orienne's death, Bob's sister Christiane died in a car crash on her twenty-second birthday.

Years later, Orienne's nephew—her brother's son—died in a car accident when he was twenty-one.

And then, closer to home, my own brother lost his older son, my nephew, in a car accident the summer after his freshman year of college.

It takes my breath away to recount this dreadful sequence. Five crashes. Five deaths. And all so young.

It's no surprise that when I think of accidents, I think of cars, and that every time I get behind the wheel, I consciously register that I am about to do something potentially fatal.

If people ask whether I feel safe walking the streets of the Bronx or riding the subway in New York, I can only reflect that those are less risky than getting behind the wheel of a car.

Another kind of accident comes to mind: A personable young man who lived across the street from us was shot and killed by his friend, an off-duty police officer, who was showing him how his laser pistol worked.

Guns.

Another deep breath.

One last incident: My mother, who at the time was about ninety years old and

suffering from Alzheimer's, headed down the basement stairs in my home to investigate a noise. (There was a noise coming from the basement: One of our daughters was listening to music with friends.)

We heard a crash and found my mother crumpled up and groaning on the cement floor. Oh, my lord.

As it turned out, she was bruised but otherwise fine. No broken hip, no skull fracture.

A minor miracle...one that I so wish had also been granted to my nephews and cousins.

April's *More Voices* theme is Accidents. Use the [More Voices Submission Form](#) to send us your lived experience of surviving, seeing or dealing with accidents.

For more details, visit [More Voices FAQs](#). And have a look at last month's theme: [Courage](#).

Remember, your health-related story should be 40-400 words. And no poetry, please.

We look forward to hearing from you.

With warm regards,

Paul Gross
Editor