

A Time to be Saved

-The David Waters Story-

David with his wife Jeannette & children Kristin & Nick along with their dog Thor

David Waters served twenty-eight honorable years as a fire fighter for the Springfield Fire Department. He was the "On-Shift Safety Officer" who continually preached safety to his workers. Then, April 9, 2005 came and the man who dedicated his life to saving lives needed to be saved.

It was a beautiful spring day and David was studying for a promotional exam for work. He decided to take a short break and hopped on his motorcycle to visit a friend who lived a few blocks away. As he began down his driveway, he heard his daughter, Kristin, ask if she could go. He yelled over the rumbling of his bike, "No, you aren't ready. You don't have your helmet on. I'll be right back."

It was the perfect day for a motorcycle ride. Dressed in blue jeans, boots and a T-shirt, David took off not knowing that this would be his last motorcycle ride ever. It would also mark the end of his career as a fire fighter.

He rode to the entrance of his friend's subdivision, turned his right turn signal on and slowed to make the turn. That is when he saw a black SUV speeding behind him. It was not slowing down. In an instant-all he could see was black in his mirrors and the next moment, he was lying on his back in

the middle of the busy intersection. The SUV had hit him and he was thrown from his motorcycle. His first thought was, "That was close", then he heard an ominous, "BANG, BANG, BANG." He looked up and saw his motorcycle tumbling towards him-he could not move. Thankfully, it tumbled out of his path. People quickly rushed to his aid. A witness called his wife, Jeannette and 911. Jeannette and the children came running and sirens blared. It was a familiar sound for David, only, it was his time to be saved.

The Springfield Fire Department was the first to arrive on the scene. David saw his co-workers in a way that he had never seen them before-from the angle of the victim. They were assured, capable, professionals responding to a call to save a life. They were so intensely focused on the job at hand that, at first, they did not realize they had come to the aid of their co-worker and friend. David watched as his friend, Merle, diligently cut off his pants while beginning life saving procedures. David said, "Hey, Merle, it's me. It's me, David." Merle, a Vietnam veteran, looked up, recognized David and went back to work frantically trying to save his friend's life. Merle said later that he hadn't seen a leg injury as severe as David's since the war.

David knew his leg was broken and that he was losing a lot of blood, but did not know the full extent of the damage until later. He was transported to the hospital accompanied by Jeannette. Doctors could not administer pain medication due to the extensive blood loss. His friends from the fire department donated blood in the hopes that David's leg could be saved. However, after twelve hours of examining and cleaning his shattered leg, doctors determined it could not be saved. His leg was removed the next day.

He spent six days in the hospital and was fitted for a prosthetic leg the following August. He was walking again by September. Nearly six months passed before a sense of normalcy returned in his life. Still David kept his sense of humor. He joked that he went on a "crash diet and lost fifteen pounds." He knew he was lucky that his leg was the only thing lost that day.

He retired from the fire department, left his motorcycle riding days behind and healed with support from friends and family. Today, he dedicates his time to buying, renovating and selling classic cars, working out and enjoying the finer things in life-like family. His retirement came abruptly though and he misses riding in the "big red fire truck." He said, "It still seems unbelievable that I went from rescuing people to being a civilian in one day. It put life into perspective. It is easier to let go of the things that are not important now and appreciate the good in life."

David avoided many crashes in his thirty years of motorcycle riding, but he said, "Evil Knievel could not have avoided that one." He doesn't disapprove of his children riding motorcycles though. "There are times when unavoidable accidents happen. You just have to protect yourself by wearing the proper gear-even if it is for a short ride-and always be aware of your surroundings." These are words to live by for everyone. Motorcycles can be difficult to see, so riders must always take every precaution possible in case the unavoidable crash occurs. 🚒

By Kristen Chiaro, Editor-in-Chief

