

We, along with so many others, were horrified to hear the news on March 25, 2010 that a dump truck had run over a group of 8 motorcyclists as they were sitting at a stoplight on Cave Creek Road. Four were killed. Between the wreck itself and the ensuing flames it was hard to believe that anyone lived through it ... but thankfully, there were survivors.

The most severe of those injuries were sustained by [then] Phoenix Fire Captain Ernie Lizarraga. His story is one of extraordinary courage and perseverance. But he can tell it better himself.

Ernie's Story

What happened on March 25, 2010 changed my life forever. Eight friends and I went for a motorcycle ride. Our first stop was lunch at the Roadrunner Restaurant in New River. After lunch, we all got on our bikes and headed to Bartlett Lake. Shortly after we all stopped at a red light at Carefree Highway and 27th Drive, Dr. Dayle who was riding just ahead of me, turned around and yelled "look out"! The next thing I remember was waking up from a coma in St. Joseph Hospital six weeks later. I was not able to see out of my right eye and not able to move my right arm or leg. I had been in a horrific accident and 4 of my friends did not survive March 25th 2010.

That was the beginning of my new life, I was very sad and at the same time very

grateful because I was given the gift of life and I decided to thank God for what he had given me and I would make every bit of it count. So, one of the first things I did was work on breathing correctly. Because of the accident all the ribs on my right side had been fractured and my right lung had collapsed, so just breathing was difficult. Every few hours I blew into a breathing exerciser to strengthen all the ribs and lung. Just being able to force air into the machine was hard work, but every few hours I worked at it to thank God for the gift he had given me. As the weeks went by I slowly got better at breathing and moving my right leg and foot which had also been fractured and metal rods had been inserted in the leg to replace the bones.

I had suffered many injuries and I was determined to overcome each one. But, some of the injuries would never improve, like the loss of eyesight in my right eye or the brachial plexus injury on my right side. The brachial plexus is a nerve junction box and it was destroyed. So, I was forced to learn how to get around with one eye and switch from being a right hander to being a left hander.

There are all kinds of other types of challenges that face survivors. For example, I also had to overcome the issue of the State of Arizona taking away a driver's license if a person is ever in a coma. Clearly, nobody wants to be a burden on their family, friends or the community and the same holds true for me. Every problem small or large must be

overcome.

All of the challenges that I faced were going to be a lot of hard work. I started working while I was in the hospital and have not stopped working yet. Physical, mental, emotional, and all types of other challenges face those of us who are survivors. There has been and will be a lot of pain in my recovery. I'm sure the same holds true for all survivors.

So, each problem, issue, or challenge has to be worked on. It will be painful. Some can be overcome in a few weeks or days and some it will take years. I received a lot of love and encouragement from my friends and family. They helped me move on and fight to have my life back. But with everything, keep in mind, "If there's a will, there is a way".

Don't ever give up!

Your Friend,

Ernie

After 5 years, Ernie was determined to 'Finish the Ride' that he and his friends embarked on, what must feel like so long ago. So on March 21, 2015, Ernie, along with 225 fellow riders... gathered at Paradise Community College. Ernie rides with the Wind & Fire FDMC and pilots a beautiful custom trike. The group rode the same route of 5 years prior. Stops included Roadrunner Restaurant for lunch, the memorial site at Carefree Hwy &

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Ernie's 'Finish The Ride'

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27th Dr. to pay respect to the Fallen 4, and then to Bartlett Lake which was the destination for the March 2010 ride. The final stop for the day was the Bike Week Bash at Buddy Stubbs H-D in Phoenix.

The money raised this day went to Fire Fighter Union Local 493. From there it will go to the young children of Megan Lange. (She is the Phoenix FD dispatcher who was killed by a drunk driver in a wrong-way crash back in January). There were also raffle prizes and a 50/50; which was donated back to the cause. About \$2000 was raised, with bandannas from the ride still available for purchase. If interested, contact Lori at lklauber@cox.net.

Wind & Fire MC Phoenix Chapter

113 sent this note, "Thanks to Law Tigers, Walgreen's on Carefree Highway, Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy of Arizona, Manuel's Mexican Food on Cave Creek, Connelly's, Road Runner, R&L Embroidery, Renegade Classics, Ram Jet Racing, and Joseph Leal who awesomely played Amazing Grace on a Native American Flute at the memorial site. We would also like to thank all of our riders. It was a pretty emotional day for everyone. We would also like to thank Daisy Mountain Fire Department and Phoenix Fire Department for their efforts in helping the survivors of this horrific accident."

This year is the 25th Anniversary of Camp Courage, a camp for children who are burn survivors. Their annual Burn Camp Benefit Ride takes place in June.

Wind & Fire FDMC donated ball caps to the campers and counselors that have the message 'Never Give Up' on the back of them.

Kudos to Wind & Fire MC for all the good they do on behalf of burn survivors. Learn more about this organization via their webpage <http://windandfirephoenix.com/>

Thank you to Ernie Lizarraga, for choosing to share your story. It is truly inspirational. The more people who are feeling overwhelmed in their life who can hear it, the better. Thanks also to Lori Klauber, Wind & Fire MC Secretary/Treasurer for her input toward this report.

Betsy

