

Recounting the Worst Motorcycle Wreck in AZ History



Fifth in a series of installments
by survivor Ernie Lizarraga

Michael Jakscht has been charged ... booked on four counts of Manslaughter, five counts of Aggravated Assault, and seven counts of Endangerment.

Ernie is in the hospital, alive but unconscious.

May 8, 2010 ... Ernie & Lorri's 28th Wedding Anniversary. Ernie gives her the best present he could. He woke up.

"May 8, I open my eyes and right away notice a tube going down my throat and I'm laying in a bed. I try to reach up with my dominate right hand but I can't because it's in a cast, so I pull it out with my left hand and start yelling Lorri's name. A nurse named Frank comes running in and calms me down. Luckily Lorri had been staying in a room down the hall so Frank notifies her. She comes running in and after much hugging she tells me what happened. Then I find out Dayle, Clyde, Steve, and Dan are deceased."

"After 2 very boring months I'm released from the hospital. I'm confined to a wheelchair and need to be pushed because I have no use of my right arm but I'm happy to be going home.

"When I got home I find out firefighters had organized a motorcycle ride back on May 2 called 'Ernie Palooza'. There were 100's of motorcycles, custom T-shirts, and live news coverage. The ride started from my Fire Station 54 at 99th Avenue & Campbell. The ride went up north to Carefree Hwy, east to Cave Creek Road, north thru the town of Cave Creek, and south down Tom Darlington Drive which turns into Scottsdale Road. Then the ride headed south to Desert Ridge Mall to a restaurant called 'The Notorious P.I.G.'. There was a band. Items were donated & auctioned plus proceeds of food sales went to my hospital bills."

Quoted from Lisa Wengert Siqueiros on Facebook, May 5, 2010 ... "What an incredible turnout at Ernie Palooza on Sunday! Thank you to everyone who participated & contributed to make it such a success! 500-700 bikes, 1000 riders, 1000 pancakes served, over 800 BBQ dinners, and \$40,000.00 raised!!!"

Ernie continues... "I'm out of the hospital for about two weeks when I hear noise outside the house. I look outside and see a dump truck dumping off a few tons of gravel on my front drive. There are about 20 cars parked bumper to bumper in front of my house and people are pushing wheel barrels and carrying shovels. My wife & I go outside and find out firefighters from Fire Departments all over the Valley had come to my house to do yard work & spread gravel on my front and back yards. They spend all day. They even drive my fire truck E54 which is about 14 miles away to be parked in front of my house. I just about cried. They reminded me that firefighters are all part of a big family.

"In July, my insurance pays for me to go to the 'Center for Transitional Neuro-Rehabilitation' or CTN, located right across the street from St. Joe's Hospital.

"In February 2011, I was released from CTN and talked with the Fire Department Chief on what I could do. There wasn't really a lot but I could work with the supply clerk and help out in the gym with the recruits since I was a fitness trainer before my accident; but at least I was around firefighters.

"I still couldn't drive because my driver's license had been revoked by the state because of my

brain injury. I started going to a driving school. After the first day they told me I needed to have hand controls installed on my car that were very expensive. The driving school failed to say anything about me not being able to use my right arm, so we went to another school located in Tempe. After working with them I received a driver's license. I felt like a 16-year old getting his license for the first time."

As shared by Ernie Lizarraga, in memory of dear friends gone but never forgotten.

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To be continued next month in the
March 2020 issue of
AZ Rider Motorcycle News

Betsy & Bruce

This year marks 10 years since this life-changing wreck that affected so many people. Ernie will be at the memorial site on March 25th but also realizes that people who would like to pay respects are more likely to be able to on a weekend. So, Ernie is going to Finish the Ride for his friends, Dayle, Steve, Clyde and Dan, on **Saturday March 21**. Kickstands up same time as 10 years ago, at 10:40a from the QT gas station on the northeast corner of Union Hills & Cave Creek Roads.

Ernie detailed the route. "The Ride will go north on Cave Creek Road to Carefree Hwy, west on Carefree Hwy to 7th Street, then north to New River Road and the Roadrunner Restaurant for lunch 'til 12:30. After lunch the ride will go west down New River Road to Carefree Hwy then east on Carefree Hwy to 27th Drive for a stop at the memorial site. The first 911 call came in at 13:00. Stop & give respects; then finish the ride for our brothers and sister to Bartlett Lake by riding east on Carefree to Tom Darlington Road, north to Cave Creek Hwy, east to Bartlett Lake Road." All are welcome to join in for this Remembrance.

