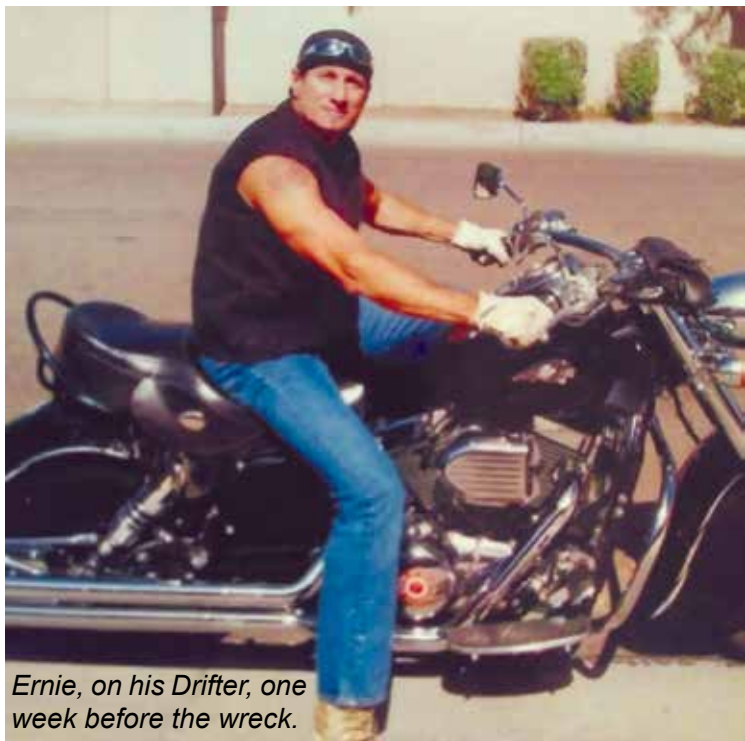


Recounting the Worst Motorcycle Wreck in AZ History



Ernie, on his Drifter, one week before the wreck.

Second in a series of installments

by survivor Ernie Lizarraga

The light turned green and we rode for about a quarter mile. It was just past 11:56a because Phoenix Fire Department E56 [whose station is a block north of Carefree and a block east of the I-17 on North Valley Parkway] had just received a call and came up behind us honking their airhorn with their lights and siren on. We pulled over. Once they went by us we got back into our staggered position and continued for about mile as we approached 27th Drive. We slowed down and stopped behind a Jeep Cherokee that was stopped behind another vehicle for the red light. We were stopped for about 20 seconds when Dayle turns around and yells LOOKOUT!

I was knocked unconscious but learned all the details from attending the trial for the driver of the dump truck, being friends with my coworkers that were the firefighters that responded, befriending one of the first police officers and witness on scene, and going over police reports.

A dump truck right behind us going about 40 to 50 MPH, first missed Will by inches, knocking him down. It then smashed into Steve, Dan, Clyde and me causing us to become stuck underneath the front of it before hitting Terry, Jason, Julie, Todd, and Dayle. I became dislodged and fell to the street right before it hit the Cherokee. This caused the Cherokee to hit a Toyota Tundra in front of it. Then the dump truck exploded into flames from the ruptured gas tanks of the bikes.

The driver of the Tundra felt the jolt then sees the dump truck explode into flames. He gives his car gas to get away but his car won't move. The car behind him has locked bumpers with his so he floors the gas and forces the car locked onto his across the intersection. Just to the right of the burning dump truck is a

Ford F250 that can't go anywhere because the cars in front and behind won't move. After what seems forever the car in front of him turns down 27th Drive so he can follow. By then the paint on the F250 had blistered from the heat. He gets out and runs directly to Todd and helps him get off the street.

The driver of the dump truck jumps out and runs to the parking lot of Walgreens across the street, stops, then runs back into the dump truck. He grabs a small black bag and runs back to the parking lot. Witnesses said this seemed very strange because the dump truck was fully involved in flames.

The following details come from statements written by witnesses and given to the detectives.

Samantha Rangel was driving a black Suburban heading east on Carefree Hwy in the middle lane. 'There was one car ahead of me before the dump truck that started on fire. A motorcycle was run over and a man flew to the left on the pavement. I got out of my vehicle immediately being an ICU RN and assisted. Me & a couple guys opted to move a girl lying on her left Right side/fetal position unconscious on the left side of the dump truck, almost under the truck. We thought the truck was going to "blow". It was crackling. Flames were getting higher. We moved her to the sidewalk. She had a pulse and was breathing on her own, but did not respond and a clearly visible broken leg. The guy I saw thrown to the left of the back of the truck tire was on his left face with pulse & not responding visually but I did later see him move a foot. I tried to get people to help me move him also but everyone was afraid to get too close to the truck sparking & in flames! Once officers came they shielded him with a thick blanket. The man I stayed with had pain all on his right side. He said something hit him on his right side. I kept him C-Spined and unhitched his throat latch but kept his helmet on. He said he was a pharmacist named Terry & he'd never rode with this group before. I took some vital signs & helped stabilize his open Tib/Fib FX & a disfigured right arm. He had good vitals & I used his cell phone to call his wife Kay, to tell her they were taking him to JCL Nth MTN. I heard several tires popping that sounded like gunfire. The truck was not moving and all the bikes were down'.

The girl Samantha moved that was laying in the fetal position was Dayle. I

was the guy laying on his left side and later moved his foot. My back was broken. Any movement could have severed my spinal cord; so I want to thank officer Brandon Epperson for preventing people from moving me and for shielding me from the heat and flames with a blanket. Thanks Brandon.

Justin Bufford wrote, "Driving in far left right lane witnessed a large dump truck struggling to stop for a red light in the middle lane. Just as he was about to rear end the vehicle in front of him he swerved left and struck Apx. 10 motorcycles. Within seconds combust into flames. I attempted to put the fire out with my extinguisher but failed, then helped move two Patients away from the fire as quickly as possible. Then proceed to move bikes away from the fire to prevent further explosions. And put positive pressure on a female motorcyclist head injury in the center lane". The two patients he helped move were Dayle and Jason.

Garrett Lambert wrote "I was in the far right lane heading east and I looked up and saw the diesel truck swerve left and hit multiple bikers. I jumped out of the car I was in and ran towards the fire. My pant leg was grabbed by one of the injured bikers and explained what happened also I prayed with her and told her that everything was to be alright. And about 1 minute later P.D. was here then about 3 minutes later fire department showed up, put out the fire. We were told to hang out and fill out this witness statement". Garrett's leg was grabbed by Julie.

Bernie Campa wrote, "I Bernie Campa was approaching the red light at 27th Dr. an Carefree Hy. An SUV & bikes were sitting at the light when the man in the dump truck veared from the right to the left lane almost taking me out then kept going & plowed through all the bikes taking out all but one biker smashing them into the SUV. I never saw nor heard his brakes, brake lights nor did I hear his airbrakes. It appeared to me that he was not trying to stop". *The one biker the dump truck did not take out was Will.*

To be continued next month in the November 2019 issue of *AZ Rider Motorcycle News*.

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

Betsy & Bruce