

Introduction:

My mother spent much of the past 20 years working at the Saint John Regional Hospital as a Patient Service Worker in the Environmental Services Department. She was very passionate about her job, and invested personally in the quality of her work; cleaning patients' rooms and treating patients how she would have liked to be treated if the roles had been reversed. She loved people and loved getting to know the patients – many of the patients and even their families kept in touch with my mother years after their time spent at the hospital. Her main area was working the Oncology section of the hospital and being the person she was – it was a regular occurrence to catch her crying, upset or sad at the news of a patient that had lost their battle and passed away.

Mom wanted the hospital to be the best place it could be for the employees as well as she was heavily involved in her union CUPE Local 813. She held many positions and invested countless hours of days, evenings, and weekends working for the members, the union and its business to make the workplace the best it could be for the employees and the employer.

She was a bright light, always smiling and the first person to enjoy life with a good laugh. She was always the first person to extend a helping hand to anybody she knew. She was full of adventure with a passion for animals, camping, travel, and gardening and no matter what she did – she always did it having as much fun as possible and tried everything in her power to make sure everyone felt special and had a great time as well.

My mother always wanted the best for all of her loved ones. She always gave more of herself than she could often afford to give financially or physically. The day she was taken from us, she was returning to a family reunion/camping trip at her daughter's property in St. Martins where she drove almost 100km to Quispamsis get supplies such as tent pegs, mini sips, and campfire snacks for her grandchildren.

Today (April 5th) would have been my Mother's 62nd birthday and today I would normally be celebrating her birthday at her favorite restaurant, having a surprise party or a get together with family and friends celebrating happy times, creating new memories and showing her how much I loved her. Instead, I am filled with emptiness and left reliving old memories, while hugging nothing more than a memory instead of my mother.

My Emotional Impact of the Loss of My Mother (Donna Kennie).

- For the first 6-12 months after the crash, I continuously replayed what must have taken place in my mind in slow motion, the damage, the injuries, how Mom died, wondering what went through her mind? Was it painful? Did she suffer? What did Jordan see/experience? I put myself in her shoes imagining the fear she must have felt. My mind continuously raced and I couldn't get this slow motion video out of my head no matter how hard I tried. Even though it doesn't happen continuously anymore it still happens on regular bases. My attention span during this period was next to nil – at home – at work – day or night.
- Now while driving I find myself watching oncoming traffic for even the slightest movement that might indicate the vehicle is going to cross the center line. I am filled with an unshakable paranoia.
- Not long after the crash, my sisters and I went to Loyalist Towing and viewed my mother's car for the first time. We got to see the destructive devastation up close and personal – while seeing her side of the car basically gone and seeing the passenger side where Jordan was sitting and wondering how he survived and where there was even room for him to be in the vehicle was overwhelming. We rummaged through the vehicle looking for anything that may have belonged to my mother grasping at anything that might be a keepsake of hers - hanging onto any thread that might get us a little closer to

our mother. It was a disturbing sight to see her final resting place – it wasn't how I thought my mother's final resting place would have been like – such violence, such destruction....such force!

- I cannot see a Pontiac Sunfire without picturing it tore to shreds and picturing where my mother and Jordan were sitting and then picturing how the 1-ton truck must have tore through my mother and her car.
- At the crash site – I've visited it and studied the black marks on the road; I've sifted through dirt, glass, plastic and metal scraps of my mother's car.
- I have felt the pain of my mother's absence at many milestone's over the past year.
 - Natalie and I got married in the Dominican Republic something my mother was SO excited about attending in the spring of 2010 – she attended via ashes and a framed photograph.
 - Christmas – our first xmas we didn't even get a tree or decorate – as we regularly had mom come and stay with us at Christmas and it didn't seem right celebrating with her not there.
 - Mother's Day – now is a black day on our household calendar and it's tough on my wife as she still has her mother in her life and my situation leaves a dark cloud on their day together.
 - Birthdays, Vacations, Graduations, births of grandchildren, and a tons of other special occasions have gone by without her and sharing those experiences with her.
- Over the first few months after her death – instead of focusing on grieving the task of handling her estate, cleaning out her apartment, gathering documentation, closure of accounts, settling of debt, becoming the administrator of her estate, lawyers, insurance claims, physician's statement of death, taxes, countless hours of paperwork, counseling for my son, the court case, etc. – all became the priority over grieving and had to take place in the midst of grieving.

The points above are only a few examples and they can only scratch the surface of the pain, the agony, the daily suffering that I continue to endure. The countless sleepless nights – the anger and resentment – I continue to have on a daily basis.

Over the past 20 months - I've either picked up the phone or said to myself (or aloud) a thousand times since her death- "I should give mom a call..." only to catch myself mid-sentence and for brief second in a state of mind where none of this is real – where she is still here – and then it all comes crashing in around me that like an avalanche – the reality! And the reality is she is gone – and never returning.

My Emotional Impact in Regards to the "Survival" of My Son (Jordan Kennie).

I say "survival" because that's what I've watched him do over the past 20 months. Much of the focus over the past 20 months has been given to the death of my mother but my son was also a victim of this needless and completely avoidable crash.

The aftermath of this crime has left me battling internal conflict of emotions; feelings of thankfulness and disturbing sadness, loss, and grief at the same time. On the one hand, I'm grieving the tragic loss of my mother – and on the other I'm happy/thankful my son survived such a horrific crash that left the car he was travelling in a twisted/crumpled piece of metal. I continue to have these constant internal battles of emotions while working through my own grief and it has caused an emotional strain on me, my wife, my family, my workplace, and every facet of my life at different times throughout the last 20 months.

- In my head I run through "what if" scenarios; "what if" Jordan had known how to drive a standard? As Jordan had just obtained his driver's license two weeks prior to this crash – I believe his grandmother would have insisted he drive.
- It crushes me as a father to watch my son hurting so badly:
 - Watching him flinch at on coming traffic

- Watching sit alert and on edge when travelling when normally he would have slept in the backseat when traveling long distances.
- Having him lose his confidence as a newly licensed driver.
- Having him describe to me through tears on the gruesome sights of the post accident injuries to his grandmother.
- Taking my son to therapy sessions – working with him work through the sadness, the loss, and the events of the day of the crash.
- Watching him have sleepless nights.
- Watching him prepare for high school graduation without his grandmother.
- Watching him breakdown in tears at random and in my heart I can't even imagine what he's gone through and what he's seen.
- Watching him pick out his first car based on his experience in getting plowed over by a larger vehicle.
- I've witnessed the remains of my mother's car and wondered where and how a 6' 6" boy could have survived – in my opinion - there was no room for him in the wreckage.
- I have increased paranoia over my son driving in his own car and I'm constantly worried about him and how this accident has/will affect his reflexes while driving a vehicle.

From what I've witnessed – it pains me to say that as a result of a stranger's actions/choices – my son was changed forever. I've watched him lose time as a teenager - forced to experience and handle sights, pain and trauma that no teen should ever experience – this kills me inside to watch and has changed me for the worse as well.

Conclusion:

My mother's death is often referred to a loss – People come up to me and say “sorry for your loss!” or “I cannot believe the loss you and your family are experiencing” - I personally feel it was not a LOSS it was a theft – she was stolen from my life. I did not lose her at the mall where all I have to do is find her – I know exactly where she is – her ashes are in an urn that sits in on a shelf in the house of each of her children, both of her sisters and in the bedroom of my son.

I am currently serving a life sentence. Let me repeat that A LIFE SENTENCE for a crime I did not commit; a crime that claimed my mother and injured my son physically but more damaging emotionally.

My mother did not deserve to die in such a violent and traumatic manner due to the decision of a law-breaking stranger to take the lives of so many people into his hands. It's time for action to be taken to put a stop to impaired driving. It's time for society to stand up and demand that our roads be as safe as possible. It's time to set an example.

I have waited almost approximately 600 days for justice to be served. To have accountability! Accountability for having my life turned upside down. Accountably for having my son changed forever by seeing his grandmother's injuries. Accountability for this homicide by impaired vehicle use. Accountability for having a law-breaking stranger break into my life and steal the most valuable item in my life – my mother.

Mom's last words were “what's this guy.....” – I hope after today there is an appropriate ending to this sentence!