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12/20/2011 - **LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Texas** -- The car came to a stop after ramming into another vehicle at 70 miles-per-hour. Initially the man could not feel anything, and slowly the realization of the extent of his injuries began to set in. He was trapped in a car on a cold December night with a bone sticking out of his jeans and broken knee caps, suddenly the pain crept in and would not cease.

This nightmarish vision could be created for fictional movies or commercials. However, this scene was not fabricated for the screen, but was endured by an Airman.

Tech. Sgt. Edgar Ferreira, 47th Medical Support Squadron NCO in-charge of laboratory services, was stationed at Andrews AFB, Md., four years ago when the accident occurred.

"It happened Dec. 7. I would drive home to see my parents in New Jersey all the time, so I was used to making the trip. All of a sudden, I see head lights coming my way. The impact was so intense that the quarter windows in my car exploded," said Ferreira.

At the time, Ferreira was in peak physical condition, running the mile-and-a-half in less than eight minutes with dreams of pursuing a career as an Air Force pararescueman. This dream would be stripped away from Ferreira by a young woman he did not know.

"My first instinct was God, I hope there were no children in that car, because if there is, they are dead. I remember feeling my face and everything was intact, I had my teeth and then all of a sudden the pain. I am usually someone who prides himself on my pain tolerance, that was not the case that night."

Ferreira's car had come to rest against traffic in the highway and people began running from a nearby gas station to assist him. It became apparent he would have to get out of the car quickly with on-coming traffic and the injuries he sustained. With his car door jammed, Ferreira broke through his driver side window using his elbow and was assisted by two by-standers out of his vehicle.

Blood was spewing from Ferreira's right leg, which had a compound femur fracture. "I thought, I just got back from a deployment healthy and sound and now I am going to die out here on Highway 301, no way. None of the people around me had cell phones and they didn't know where the nearest hospital was. I told two of them to go back to my car and grab some 550 chord I had in there so I could start a tourniquet. My guardian angel must have been looking over me because no more than two minutes later, I heard the fire truck coming."

Firemen told Ferreira that there was not a nearby hospital. With hope shrinking, Ferreira had the surreal experience of notifying the firemen to tell his parents that he loved them if he did not make it. Then the sound of an incoming helicopter renewed hope that he could survive.

"I remember being placed inside the helicopter and it was so cold, I was freezing to death. The guy couldn't start my intravenous so I said 'Give me that, I'll start that crap myself.'"

Ferreira learned that the young woman who had run into him was drunk, on muscle relaxers and was in worse shape than him. She had broken both femurs, numerous ribs, shattered one of her arms and lost all her teeth.

Following emergency surgery, he was left with two screws holding his femur together. After being in great physical shape, three

Photos

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LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Texas— Tech. Sgt. Edgar Ferreira, 47th Medical Support Squadron NCO in-charge of laboratory services, takes care of paperwork in his office here Dec. 19, where a poster of him cycling in Japan serves as a reminder of how far he has come. Ferreira was the victim of a drunk driver Dec. 7, 2007, an event that left him with a compound femur fracture and two broken knee caps which he has made a full recovery from. (U.S. Air Force photo/2nd Lt. James Ramirez)

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weeks later he could not lift his leg at all due to severe atrophy, could not use the bathroom or shower by himself and was forced to self-inject anticoagulant medication into his abdomen every day.

"I was so thankful for my family and command at the time. People in my unit began working 14-hour shifts to cover my absence. My little brother, God-bless him, took care of me while I recovered. It just made me realize how this impacted everything and everybody in my life."

"Being a victim to a drunk driver sucked, you feel completely helpless and you think, 'what did I do to deserve this?' I also felt bad for that lady because she has probably never forgiven herself for what she did, not to mention the severity of her injuries."

Ferreira's next assignment was in Japan where he began cycling competitively. Although his leg does not allow him to run the way he used to, he is back to scoring nearly 100 on his physical fitness tests. "You have to accept the fact that some things will never be the same, but that inspires me to work harder in everything I do."

Ferreira has been stationed at Laughlin since June and now avidly volunteers for Base Airmen Against Drunk Driving, a program for getting Airmen home who have had too much to drink, to ensure no one has to endure what he has gone through.

"There really is no excuse to not use BAADD. We do not charge you for the service, we can get you on base and it is all done anonymously. The decision to drink and drive will affect you, your unit, your family and someone you don't even know. I urge anyone drinking and thinking about driving to not think about yourself, but think of the victim whose life you will change potentially forever."

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