

Methodist Hospitality

W I N T E R 1 9 9 6



critical care:

A YOUNG BOY'S ACCIDENT TESTS METHODIST'S TRAUMA RESPONSE

On Saturday, May 20, 1995, 7-year-old Joshua Jones was outside his home on state road 589, a two-lane highway that connects U.S. Highway 98 with Sumrall. He and his 10-year-old cousin Brittany had crossed the road to swim in a neighbor's pool, but decided to cross back. Brittany saw an oncoming pickup truck, but determined she had enough time and hurried on across. Joshua, however, only saw his cousin crossing and assumed the way was clear. He ran onto the highway without looking.

His mother Becky remembers what she heard.

"My sister and I were in a bedroom on the front side of the house so we were able to hear the driver lock up her brakes and then the sound of the impact," she recalls. "We knew one of our kids had been hit."

Once outside, Becky saw Brittany standing on the right-of-way screaming. She knew then that Joshua had been the one hit.

The driver of the pickup truck had been traveling about 50 to 55 miles an hour when she hit Joshua. The impact threw him up in the air and when he came down he fell in front of the vehicle. Unable to stop, the pickup ran completely over

him, leaving an indentation of tire tracks on his chest. The second impact pushed him off the roadway.

"When we got to him Joshua was about two feet off the road, kind of in the ditch," recalls his mother. "I didn't think he was alive until I got close to him and heard him trying to gasp for air. Then he stopped."

By this time several people had come up to the scene. One man, an off-shore worker who had just completed a first aid/CPR course, checked Joshua's pulse and respiration. Finding none, he immediately began CPR.

Someone among the crowd called 911. The dispatcher immediately rolled a ground ambulance as well as a first alert nurse, a healthcare worker who lives in the area who could get there first and assess the situation.

"The nurse arrived less than ten minutes after we called 911," says Becky. "She checked Joshua and then radioed dispatch and said 'DO NOT send the ground ambulance - dispatch the helicopter.' Four, maybe five minutes after she called I could hear it."

Rescue 7, an EMS helicopter with the Southeast Mississippi Air Ambulance District, had been dispatched to the scene. Upon arrival the medic packaged Joshua for immediate transport, loaded him onto the aircraft and they lifted off for Methodist Hospital. Once during the short ride the medic lost the pulse that was regained after the initial CPR. By the time they touched down on the pad outside Methodist's ER, he had reestablished a weak pulse.

Dr. Joseph Patterson, director of medicine for Emergency Services, assessed Joshua's condition. The near-comatose boy was in shock with bad respiration and a low blood pressure. He could find no breathing sounds on the right side of the chest, indicating severe trauma to the right lung.

An X-ray confirmed a collapsed right lung. Dr. Patterson inserted a drainage tube to relieve a buildup of blood and air in Joshua's chest cavity which pushed against the damaged lung. The action improved Joshua's respiration and blood pressure.

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"I don't think that people realize what we have here in Hattiesburg."

—Becky Jones, Joshua's mother

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Still, his condition remained critical. The impact had caused severe damage to his lungs and heart, as well as a broken leg. Dr. Patterson called Dr. Joe Ed Varner to perform emergency surgery.

Dr. Varner arrived within five minutes. After examining Joshua he came out and spoke with Becky.

"When Dr. Varner came out to talk with me I was immediately eased," remembers Becky. "He seemed so in control and knew exactly what he was doing. He didn't waste any time or words or talk over my head. He broke everything down so I could understand."

Staffers wheeled Joshua to surgery where Dr. Varner repaired his lung and other structures in his damaged chest cavity. After recovery, Joshua was moved to the Intensive Care Unit [ICU] where Dr. Gardner Fletcher, a specialist in critical care, now assumed his care. Like Dr. Varner, he also took time to keep Becky and Joshua's father Ronald [who had just arrived from his work out of town] up to date on Joshua's condition.

"Both Dr. Varner and Dr. Fletcher were honest with us," says Becky. "They assured us they were doing everything possible, but at that point we were just lucky he was still with us. They didn't give us any false hopes."

Becky also began to notice Dr. Fletcher's personal involvement.

"I remember one night early on Dr. Fletcher ran me out and told me to go down to our room [a guest room that Methodist leases to critical patients' families] and get some sleep. He stayed the entire night with Joshua.

"Dr. Fletcher's wife told me later how concerned he was over Joshua. She said he was up many nights poring over pediatric books trying to find something that could help his condition."

After 20 days in a drug-induced coma, Joshua woke up. He remained at Methodist another 29 days, then spent three more in Jackson for other complications. At the time of the accident he weighed 57 pounds, but when he left the hospital he weighed only 26, and that was with a body cast.

A year and a half later, Joshua has bounced back reasonably well given the seriousness of his injuries. His injured leg is about 5 centimeters shorter than the other, but

surgery scheduled soon should correct that problem. He and his family have made great strides to return to normal in the aftermath of a terrible experience.

Nevertheless, the Jones family was comforted throughout the ordeal by both the state of emergency medicine in South Mississippi, and the caring attitude displayed at Methodist.

"I don't think that people realize what we have here in Hattiesburg," says Becky. "We found out that Methodist was perfectly equipped to handle the situation. The nurses were so competent that the doctor could say something and they were gone for it. They even seemed to know what the doctor needed before he could get it out of his mouth."

Both Ronald and Becky were also impressed with an attitude of care that went beyond their expectations.

"Besides the doctors, who were great, there were others who really tried to make our stay comfortable," says Becky. "One of the cleaning ladies and her daughter checked on Joshua everyday and brought him presents and books to read.

Some ladies from the cafeteria also came up and brought him fruit juices. It just amazes me that they would work so hard not out of what they were paid for, but just out of concern."



Given time and the care he received at Methodist Hospital, Joshua and his father are all smiles.

"They saved my son's life."