



I am warning you all now to never speed, drink and drive, or take any drugs. I am now paying the price. I had no driving licence, no insurance, no car tax, no MOT - and I was drunk and driving.

*I am warning you all now to take my advice -
you don't want to end up like me,
or worse.*

My Story

By
Melvyn Bussell

Contents

Chapter One	Page 1
Chapter Two - The Crash	Page 4
Chapter Three - Where I Am Now	Page 7
Chapter Four - My Mum	Page 10
Chapter Five - A Lesson	Page 15

I would like to thank the following organisations for their support, which has made it possible to design and print this book and share my story:

*Department of the Environment (DOE)
Community Transport Association (CTA)
The Ely Centre, Enniskillen*

CRASHED LIVES.com

www.melvynbussell.wordpress.com

 **DOE** **Road Safety Grants**
administered by **Community Transport Association**

Chapter One

I am here to tell you a story. It's about me and how my life was turned upside down.

I was born in the Erne Hospital, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland. My brothers, my sister and I lived with our parents in Maguiresbridge for about seven years. Back then we were all good boys. But then I remember Mummy and Daddy arguing a lot until one day Mummy said we were moving to Enniskillen. And all of us were chuffed. Little did we know that we would fall in with a bad crowd when we arrived there.

Now I can only remember little bits and pieces about my childhood. I remember moving to Lisgoole Park. And it was there that I fell in with bad company. I had started to get into trouble when I was at primary school but it became worse when I went to Enniskillen College (it's now called Devenish College). I used to smoke, fight, bully and damage lockers. In third year I would go to the High School Disco every fortnight. My friends and I would get drunk beforehand and would try to start fights when we arrived at the disco. It came to a point when we were thrown out and reported to the headmaster.

When I left school I went to the training centre to learn the building trade, but I packed it in after a week. From there I went to Kell's clothing shop but I only stuck that for a few

months. After working in a few factories around the town I got another job in Cavan with two or three of my friends, but one of them was caught stealing and we were all sacked. I got a job in Lisnaskea at a bakery but, once again, I only stuck it there for a month or two.

I was about eighteen when I started doing drugs. At the time I was working in the building trade and I would spend all my money on drink, drugs and second-hand cars. After a year I bought a white SRI Cavalier. My friends and I would go out, rampaging around the town like we owned it, stealing cars, and I became well known to the police. I was stopped so many times and was taken to court for driving without a licence, car tax, MOT, insurance and for having bald tyres but that didn't stop me from driving. Six months after I bought that car it all came to a bad end.





Chapter Two - The Crash

When I was a teenager I was going out and getting drunk with my friends, sometimes drinking for hours and hours. Back in May 2002 we were all drinking in a pub and we were drinking everything we could lay our hands on - vodkas, pints and shots.

After midnight I staggered out to the car park at the back of the pub where my car was parked. One of the boys took my car keys off me and said, "You're not driving home." I'm not sure how I got the keys back but I did, and despite my friends shouting, "Hey, boy, don't be driving home in that state," I ignored them, jumped into my SRI and took off "flat to the mat".

My home was only two miles away and I knew the road very well. I must have been doing 100 miles per hour when I came to this bad bend where I lost complete control of the car and smashed into a lamp post. I am thankful I didn't have anyone else in the car with me because the whole passenger side was mangled by the crash.

The police saved me and transferred me to the Erne Hospital. After a few hours there I was transferred up to Belfast and I fell into a coma. For six weeks I

was fighting for my life. The doctors told my parents that they didn't know if I would make it. When I was eventually transferred back to the Erne Hospital, I was still very ill and it was quite a few days before I was taken off the life support machine. I couldn't speak, couldn't walk, and my two arms were bent tight up to my chin. I couldn't eat, go to the toilet or do anything for myself.

After nine weeks in the Erne Hospital I was transferred back to Belfast, but this time to Foster Green, a hospital specialising in head injuries. During my time there the Musgrave Hospital operated on one of my arms because it wouldn't straighten out. To this day I still have problems with that arm and, if I fall down, I find it hard to push myself back up.

Finally, after six months in four different hospitals, I was allowed to go home on 20th December 2002. Whilst I was happy to be home, I was also scared because I still could not do anything for myself and my mum had to look after me twenty-four hours a day. One of our downstairs' rooms became my bedroom because I couldn't manage the stairs. I still couldn't speak so had a Light Writer in which

you type what you want to say. This time was very difficult for both my mum and me. It frustrated me that I was so helpless and I would lash out at anyone who was trying to help me.

I wish I hadn't got into my car that night. I wish I hadn't been under the influence of drink and drugs. I wish I hadn't started to drive when I had no driving licence or car insurance. I wish I had worn my seatbelt that night because I wouldn't be partially disabled. Every time I get into a car now, I always put my belt on and tell the driver to stick to the speed limits. Take it from me, wear your seatbelt at all times, obey the speed limits and never ever drink or take drugs and drive. I wish I hadn't.

Just think of the years left in your life and think about how many people have been killed in car crashes, have been left in a wheelchair or left paralysed. Think before you get into a car with alcohol or drugs in your system - because you'll regret it, just as I regret what I did every day.

Chapter Three - Where I Am Now

It is now ten years since the crash. My walking and my speech have improved but I still have to speak slowly, one word at a time, for people to understand me. My right arm is still damaged and won't straighten out fully. I can't play any sports - rugby, football - nor can I go running. I can't whistle and I can't get a job. But I do have my own house and I can look after myself. I'm proud that I can do that.

After a lot of physiotherapy and hard work, I am able to walk again, but I have to take my time when I am walking and take care to look where I am going because if I fall, it is very difficult to get up again. Gradually I am getting stronger - and now I can walk the 2 miles into the town. I usually go for a walk into the town every day. Luckily I have a gym in my house with a running machine and a cross-trainer that I use three or four times a week.

Three days a week I go to the Ely Centre where I can use computers and play pool. They accept me as I am there. On Fridays I go up to Drumcoo to go swimming and work in the garden. Drumcoo is a centre for people with brain injuries, sight problems and hearing problems. I am learning new skills to enable me to go



back to work, maybe gardening or maybe working with computers. I also love dance music and would like to DJ somewhere. I have mixed my own music but just haven't played it in front of a crowd yet. At Drumcoo they teach me how to cope out with the public and how to deal with my frustrations. Although my body is broken, my mind is still active and sometimes I feel like I am eighteen again. I'd love to wake up one morning as my old self but I know this will never happen. I believe in the Lord and I pray every night that he will help me and guide me.

In November 2008 the Calvert Trust took a group of us on an Outward Bound course in the North of England. There were so many opportunities open to us there - abseiling, go-karting, mountain biking, swimming and many more. I'd love to go again. I'd also love to go travelling on my own or with a friend, perhaps to Australia where my brother, Gary, lives. I could go to the beach and learn to surf there. Maybe I will go next summer.

I am learning to drive again but I have learnt from my mistakes and will never go back down that road again. Also I started a computer course in the South West College. It has helped with my computer skills and my typing. There are gradual ups and downs every day but I'm improving.

Chapter Four - My Mum

During the seven months I was in hospital, Mum was by my side every day. She was exhausted travelling up and down to the hospital and she can't remember what life was like before the crash. She felt like she was living in a bubble and it was difficult for her to see other people carrying on their lives as normal. All her energy was focused on my recovery.

Eventually, as my condition improved, I was allowed home for weekend visits. Mum remembers these visits as a big ordeal. It was hard work physically getting me into the house and adapting to the fact that I was like a baby and couldn't do anything for myself. Finally the day arrived when I returned home for good. My family was really excited and everyone was waiting outside for me to arrive. When I came out of the ambulance, Mum grabbed me in a big hug and burst into tears. It was a very emotional day for us all, but especially for my mum.





Melvyn and his Mum with DOE Minister Alex Attwood at the launch of the Crashed Lives TV ad, January 2012.



It was such hard work for Mum at that time. She had to do everything for me – feeding me, washing me, even helping me go to the toilet. The house was turned upside down with rooms full of equipment and medical supplies. The living room became my bedroom so everyone had to meet together in the kitchen. Mum felt lots of different emotions. She was overcome with the responsibility of caring for me twenty-four hours a day, while worrying about my future. She was just heartbroken at what the crash had done to me. It must have been so hard for Mum because there was no escape from me and my needs. All I can say is thank you to my mum – nobody else would have put up with me as I was a difficult patient. I love my Mummy with all my heart and soul, even though I might not show it all the time. And I can tell you one thing – if I hadn't had Mummy by my side, I don't know what I would have done.

Over time I started to recover physically and became more independent. I began to be able to climb the stairs and so could use my bedroom upstairs again.

The living room became the living room again and there was more space. But it was still very hard because I couldn't go out and I used to take that frustration out on Mum; we'd argue about silly things. After three years, in 2006, I moved into my own wee house. I think this was a relief for both of us; we both needed distance and a chance for a life of our own. Living together had not been easy for Mummy or me.

Since I am a very sociable person and wanted to make friends, and because I was living on my own, I started going out to pubs. But I would get into a lot of trouble because people could not understand me. They thought I was drunk because of the way I walk and talk, so I would be barred from the pubs in town. This then was very hard for my mum because she had to deal with the consequences and she would worry every time I went out. I may have been twenty-two but she was still responsible for me.

Sadly these problems have not gone away. Mum still worries and I am still misunderstood. Yet Mum is pleased that I can look after my own house; this takes some of the pressure off her. We go shopping together and she cooks my dinner every day. But her biggest worry is who will look after me when she is gone – how will I cope?

Chapter Five - A Lesson

Since my crash quite a few of my friends and family members have been in car crashes. Tragically, most of them were killed. There is one thing I would like each of you to take away from my book - please learn from my story and do not make the mistakes I did. The night I drove my car while drunk not only changed my life but changed my mum's life forever. We have to live with what happened; there is no turning back. My mum is the closest person in the world to me and if she ever goes away, I don't know what I'll do. I am so lucky to have my mum by my side and I'd like to thank her for everything she's done for me and for all the support she's given. Mum, I love you to bits. I am so sorry for what I did, and I am trying my best to live with the consequences.

I am warning you all now to never speed, drink and drive, or take any drugs. I am now paying the price. I had no driving licence, no insurance, no car tax, no MOT - and I was drunk and driving. I am warning you all now to take my advice - you don't want to end up like me, or worse.

I hope you all get the message.

Melvin

