

Distracted Driving

Distracted driving has affected, not just me, but my whole family. On November 5th, 1998, my aunt, my sister and my grandma were involved in an accident related to distracted driving. After a trip to the mall, my sister was playing with a toy that she had just bought. She dropped the toy and began to cry. Everyone in the car, including my aunt, who was driving, was looking around for the lost toy. In the blink of an eye, an 18-wheeler cut in front of the car. My aunt lost control of the car. This sent the car across the median into oncoming traffic where they hit the guardrail. The impact was so hard that the seatbelt cut through my sister's car seat and she ended up stuck up on the passenger seat. Unfortunately, my grandma was not wearing her seatbelt, and this resulted in her suffering a traumatic brain injury. She was in a vegetative state for the next nine years. My grandma was unable to speak, walk, eat or do any normal everyday activities.

Although I was not alive for the grief of the accident, I still wanted to meet my grandma. After being in a coma for nine years, she was still unable to function. My aunt took me to see her and I remember exactly how she looked, lifeless. She could not say anything, only make noises. She could not see me, but I know she could tell that I was in the room. I felt so sad that she had to live that way. Watching my family feed, bathe, brush her teeth, hair and everything else was very disheartening to me. I asked my aunt, "Why can't she do things on her own?" and "Why can't she talk to me?"

I know when most people think of distracted driving, they think of texting or talking on the phone while driving. Distracted driving can take on many different forms. For example, eating, doing makeup or reading can all be other forms of distracted driving. My scenario is one that you won't hear of too often, but distracted driving played a major role in this accident.

On that day, I lost my grandma, who I never got a chance to get to know. I often wonder what my life would have been like if I could have spent time with my her. She was the center of our family and in the blink of an eye, she was gone. It has taken a toll on my family. We had to live through many life changes and experiences with the one person who we needed the most. Our family has fallen apart and I feel that if she were still here, our family would be a lot closer. It is also hard when you see kids hanging out with their grandma's who spoil them, but that is the last thing I would want if she was here.

I think it is important for people to realize that there are many things that can distract you while you are driving. We always hear about texting, but it is important, as a driver, to maintain control inside and outside of your vehicle at all times. If you are in a car full of people, it is important that they know the rules and expectations for the trip. It is also important that you, as a driver are always aware of your surroundings without letting it distract you. It is a lot easier to pull over in bad situations than it is to risk many lives, as well as yours. One thing I learned in driver's education is that you should always expect the worst. Always be aware and ready for a deer to jump out in front of the car, especially in West Virginia. When I drive, I always assume that everyone is a terrible driver, so I am completely focused on nothing but the road. It helps me be the most cautious driver I can be.

I am writing this essay not just because of the potential to receive a scholarship, but also because I feel I can help someone else who may have lost someone they love due to a distracted driving situation. I also believe that people need to realize that there are many things that can cause you to be distracted while driving. We all are very aware of texting and talking on the phone, but it is important to be aware of the various reasons that exist that could pull your attention away from the road. This is very dangerous and is becoming more and more common.

When you go to reach for your cellphone, eat a sandwich or anything else, always remember what could happen.

“A mere five letter could change someone’s life forever.” -Travis Burhart