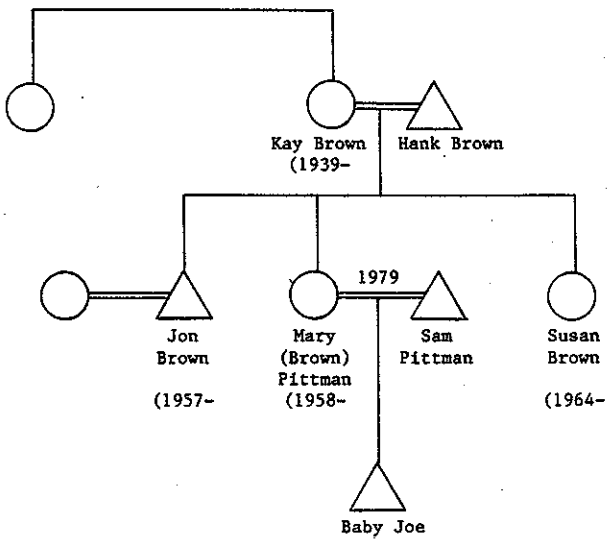
CASE #5: BROWN FAMILY



Persons Interviewed: Kay Brown
Jon Brown
Mary (Brown) Pittman
Susan Brown

In May 1976, Kay Brown, then a thirty-seven-year-old mother of three, was waiting at a red light with three vehicles ahead of her, when a car approached from the rear and struck her 1964 Mustang. Kay relates that the other driver, a woman in her forties, admitted to not paying attention and going too fast. There was no obvious damage to either car, but the impact was so strong that Kay later noticed it bent the frame of the Mustang, which belonged to Kay's eighteen-year-old daughter.

Kay called the police, who issued a ticket to the other driver and asked Kay if she wanted to be taken to the hospital. Although she knew she had hit her head on the windshield and noticed the right side of her neck was swollen, she told them her doctor's office was "just around the corner." She drove to his office, where X-rays were taken. The X-rays revealed no physical damage, and Kay proceeded to report to her insurance agent and then went home to rest.

Within a few days she began to feel pains in her lower back. She went to her doctor several times, but he could find nothing wrong. She finally complained that the pain was so bad she was contemplating suicide. Furthermore: "My left leg kept going out, and I kept falling down--numbness, migraine headaches with it." Her doctor recommended she go into the hospital for traction and therapy. Two weeks of this treatment resulted in no improvement, so a

myelogram was performed on her back and two disks were found to be shattered. Since then Kay has continuously been in and out of hospitals and doctors' offices, trying to regain her health. Her operations include the following:

1. In December 1976, Kay had her first operation following her accident. A lumbar laminectomy was performed to repair nerve damage and to remove the broken pieces of bone in her lower back. Her neurosurgeon wanted the nerve damage to heal before sending her to an orthopedic surgeon for further work. She relates: "I had to learn to walk with a cane, how to throw most of the weight to the other side, to baby the left side to heal for a while." Severe discomfort continued, and Kay says she welcomed the time for the second operation because: "All I know is it hurt so bad that I wanted to rip my back out."

2. For her second back operation, Kay was in the hospital from Thanksgiving until three days before Christmas 1977. She relates:

> They didn't tell me all that was going to be involved . . . . I did not ask him, 'Are you going to use plastic parts? What are you going to rebuild the spine with?' . . . . And he never volunteered . . . . They did not tell me how they were going to rebuild the spine was by taking three-fourths of the bone from my right hip in the back. So when I woke up . . . all I could think of was 'What did you guys do to my hip? . . . How long is this gonna hurt?' He [the doctor] says, 'Anywhere from six months to a year' . . . . I never realized the pain that went with the removal of a bone.

Complications resulted from an infection in the hip which had to be drained several times and which prevented the placement of a planned body cast. Kay had been worried about how she would manage in a body cast when she was home alone during the day, and was glad it couldn't be used.

3. Kay began to have pains in her abdominal area, and a gynecologist performed a D & C and also tied her tubes, since a pregnancy would be inadvisable with her back problems. This was done in early summer of 1978.

4. Her left side continued to be extremely painful, and several months later she had an operation to remove her left tube and ovary. Kay is sure her abdominal problems were also caused by the accident and says her doctor agrees--that he thought the accident "threw her up and that seat belt cut in; it twisted and mangled that tube and ovary." She says he described her left tube and ovary as "like a dish rag that somebody had wrung out--it was twisted completely."

5. By late September 1978, Kay again had problems: dizziness and a black stool, nausea, and severe pain in the abdomen. Her doctor said she was bleeding internally and an immediate operation to remove the uterus would have to be performed. At the hospital the anesthesiologist was reluctant to put her under because she had recently had so many operations, and Kay says the two doctors had quite an argument within her hearing range concerning the problem. And after the operation was performed, her doctor told her: "We lost you but we got you back."

6. In September 1980, another back problem developed. Kay relates:

> I'd been told you can't lift, you can't bend, you can't do this or that. And I have flowers up front and I was picking the seeds out of the salvia plants for the following year, and I went to get up--'Hank, I can't get up!' He goes, 'Oh, come on,' I says, 'I can't get up!' He was doing a brake job on the car and he come over and put his arms under me and pulled me up . . . . I wasn't bending; I wasn't stooping; I was sitting on the ground--just reaching with my arms taking the seeds out.

X-rays were taken and therapy administered for about two months. Kay says her doctor told her that she had "stripped her back," that when people have a fusion in their lower back they tend to use their upper back for everything and this had caused strain. The therapy did not help and a myelogram revealed possible arthritis in two of the neck disks. Surgery was performed, and her doctor told her, "I went to scrape it with the scalpel and the two disks crumpled completely." Consequently, bone was again taken from her hip to rebuild the spine, an operation which caused her much pain during a long recovery period. While in the hospital she also developed an ear infection which took months to heal, and Kay says her ears still bother her in cold weather.

Thus, Mrs. Brown has had six operations plus many additional hospital visits for myelograms and other tests, as well as innumerable trips to various doctors' offices in the past four years. She feels all her physical problems are caused by her automobile accident: the back problems from the whiplash effect, and her abdominal problems from the seat belt impact.

An interview with her twenty-four-year-old son, Jon, revealed that Kay had had some previous neck trouble as a result of lifting a heavy weight in a factory job she held about nine years ago. This same son was seriously injured in a hit-and-run accident shortly afterward. He had been struck by a truck while walking home when he was fifteen, and had been in critical condition for several days. Kay says she quit her factory job at that time in order to stay home and take care of him. By the time of Kay's accident, about four years later, Jon was well recovered and Kay had been going to school to get her high school diploma and was planning to go on for nurses training. In the meantime she also earned about $2,000 a year by babysitting for a neighbor's children while the mother worked. Jon thought his mother's car accident had ruined any possibility that his mother could work again, although he himself was somewhat doubtful if she would be working anyway due to her previous injury. Although Jon and his mother seem to have differing views on why Mrs. Brown originally quit her factory job of nine years ago, Jon does agree that his mother's accident precludes her working in the present:

> This accident just complicated things . . . . It's just it made it impossible for her to go back. There might have been a chance. So now there's no way she could go back [to work].

Neither Jon's wife nor other family members seemed to share Jon's reluctance to affirm that Kay Brown would definitely be working if the car accident had not happened. Mary, one of the daughters, states:

> She was going back to school. She had just gotten her diploma. Cause when she was younger, she never finished high school . . . . Then she was going to go to college, so that really ruined her plans. They tell her she can't sit a long time in class and this and that. She wanted to go back and be an R.N. But it affected her whole future . . . . She wanted to go to school so she would have a nicer job. Now she can't work at all . . . . She was going to work in a hospital. Being that all her kids are older now, she'd probably have worked full time.

Kay feels that her accident has caused them financial hardships, partly because she cannot work, but also for other reasons. They are a white working-class family; her husband works for General Motors, but has periodically been laid off, and his annual income for the past few years has been about $15,000-$16,000. His insurance, Blue Cross, has paid most of the hospital and doctor bills, but it doesn't pay everything. For example:

> Blue Cross does not cover for office calls, which so far this year [March] I've got two hundred dollars, just in office calls alone.

Blue Cross pays all but $2.49 on a prescription, but Kay says she gets ten at a time every time she visits a doctor, and that her payments for prescriptions can come to several hundred dollars a year. She estimates that the extra yearly medical costs for her average about $500. And Kay still owes several medical professionals for past services and is paying them off in small monthly installments.

The driver of the other car in Kay's accident had $20,000 liability insurance, and Kay expresses bitterness toward her:

> All I could get was policy limit. The attorney got eight thousand for his fee. I ended up with twelve thousand. Big whoopee. She hasn't had to suffer any pain. She hasn't had to suffer the inconvenience of being in the hospital, surgery, the depression. And that's something that ranges pretty high around here. I don't even want to hear her name.

Kay says her own insurance company paid only seventy-five dollars as a result of the accident.

Kay is angry that she has not been able to get disability payments. Her attorney has assured her that when it is all straightened out, she will get payments back to January 1976. But Kay worries about the outcome and wants it settled. She also wants it settled now so that the attorney will not continue to be able to claim one-third of what she feels should be payments to her alone.

The family's stringent financial situation has not only caused some problems in everyday life, it has also affected the future plans of some of the children. Sixteen-year-old Susan, the youngest child, goes to a Seventh Day Adventist school, but the tuition has become prohibitive, and Susan wonders if

she can continue there. And Mary states:

> I was going to go to school [college]. She had always been working, whereas now she's not supposed to work at all. So now that affects their financial status. So, otherwise, I may have gone to school if they could have afforded it.

One of the obvious effects of Kay's accident on the other family members is that they have had to take over most of the household work. Kay is a thin, petite, and energetic woman, and her children relate that before the accident they would often come home from school and find the whole house rearranged. Now Kay not only cannot move the furniture, she cannot do many of the routine household tasks. And during her recovery from her many operations, she herself needed a great deal of personal help. Her daughter Mary, who was eighteen at the time of the first operation, took over most of this work and also cared for her younger sister who was twelve at the time. (Kay says that since there were no under-age children, her insurance would not pay for a housekeeper.) Mary continued to do most of the housework until she married two years ago and moved out of her parents' household. However, she still helps her mother, going over at least once a week for an evening or weekend cleaning session:

> Like one day I didn't go to work. I vacuumed, scrubbed floors . . . . I try to do the hard things--that would be hard for her to do. But me working and trying to keep my house is hard, too.

During her mother's last operation, Mary spent a week at the family home, going to work and returning in the evening to cook and do housework. Mary becomes angry at her younger sister for not helping out more, and says there are problems between her mother and her sister over this issue also:

> They don't get along very well. For one thing, my Mom compares her to me . . . . So like now that I moved out, and my mother says why won't you help like Mary--and this and that, and she resents that. So she doesn't help at all. And that makes me very angry because she knows my Mom can't do it, but my Mom will just keep trying . . . . If she knows something has to be done, she'll say, 'I'll do it later,' which irritates my Mom, so my Mom will try to do it . . . . She'll wait till the last minute to do them, and my Mom wants to get things done now, get them over with, like I did. So she compares us too much. So they don't get along so well.

Susan verifies this picture and says her mother is harder to get along with since her many operations. She says of her mother:

> Yes, she's been real edgy and that, and I got that to contend with . . . . We get into fights every once in a while. I try not to, but it's hard . . . . The last real good one was when we were cleaning upstairs and I got smacked.

Susan knows this is because of her mother's depression and pain:

> She can't really talk to anybody about it . . . . And when she does complain, she tries not to say it, and you know it hurts bad . . . . You can see in the expression on her face . . . . That's when we start fighting or something. That's when I can tell that she has a bad headache--when she's kind of snappy. Sometimes she'll sit in her blanket that we got her for Christmas and she'll fall asleep and you can't wake her up. She sleeps real sound [from medication] . . . . It hurts to see her--you know, sometimes I won't do it [housework] and then seeing her do it--and aferwhile you see her sitting there almost crying 'cause it hurts. You know you really should have done it. I feel guilty, you know. It kind of rides your conscience and stuff.

Kay doesn't feel it is fair that her younger daughter has to do so much work, but gets frustrated because she cannot do it herself, and Susan is usually the only one around whom Kay can expect to help with cooking and housework. Kay's husband does not help at all around the house and never has, which was never a problem when Kay was energetically in charge. The children all verified that their father does nothing and they resent that all the work falls on them. Susan says:

> He don't even--I always clean the back yard, where the dogs are. My Dad don't help out there, either. He don't do anything actually. He doesn't even cook.

Susan worries that her parents might get a divorce, and Kay herself expresses the same fear. She states:

> My husband and I fight all the time now--pressure . . . . Because I hurt. And he gets to the point where he says, 'I'm sick of hearing about your hurting.' . . . . And it used to be a very good marriage, very, very good. Where now he--he's gone most of the time.

And Mary, the older daughter, comments:

> Yeah, my father gets fed up with it after awhile. I mean, you can hear someone say, 'I don't feel good, my back hurts, I ache, and this and that,' but after awhile you feel like saying, 'Okay, I heard it before; there's nothing I can do.' My Dad gets fed up with it; he just kind of walks away. I guess maybe he feels helpless.

All the family members interviewed agreed that the emotional atmosphere in the Brown home is more strained, and all agree, including Kay, that she is tense, worried, and "flies off the handle more:"

> I fight with everybody now. My kids will say something and I don't like it and I tell 'em to butt out . . . . It's a lot of pressure that you're under.

Jon also comments:

> The doctors put her on medication and things like that. So that, I think, made her a lot more moody. It changed her personality--her outlook.

Mary also feels there have been marked emotional changes in her mother:

> Depression a lot--getting frustrated or fed up with herself 'cause she knows there is so much to do and she can't do it all herself. She gets tired--so worn down so easy.

And Kay tries to explain:

> The depression that goes along with this is like--you wonder--if I go over there to spray the plants and bend down, if my back's gonna go out again. Or is it gonna pinch something? Am I gonna get another migraine out of the deal?

There are mornings when she has to drag her leg until she can get it moving because she has lost strength in it:

> And you get muscle spasms. Like I never know when it's gonna go out and I'm gonna be on the floor . . . . I cannot stand that long. I cannot sit that long. You can't bend. You can't stoop. You can't lift. You want to move furniture, you got to wait for your husband or your kids to get here to do it.

Kay also feels that her injuries have limited her closeness to her children because her activities are so limited. She still tries to help with her daughter's baseball team and is a kind of unofficial coach, but she used to be very athletic and involved with her children's activities. She relates the following about family reunions:

> They'd have races, I had to always get in the race, because, you know, these young kids weren't gonna beat me! Because I used to be on the track team as a young girl. You know, it was always, 'We gotta beat Aunt Kay! She's getting old, we gotta beat her.' Well, they couldn't! And now I hafta sit and watch. I used to dance and roller skate. I mean, I danced on skates.

Susan comments:

> We could communicate a lot better, and we used to do a lot of things together. She can't ride in cars too long. We used to go on trips before. Now we can't do that.

Jon feels that his mother's accident was probably hardest on his little sister, Susan. He says:

> They don't really go places with her like they did with us--on picnics or sledding or whatever . . . she can't ride in a car for more than two or three hours. So that would limit right there what they could do.

And he thinks Susan has probably been frightened by her mother's frequent operations:

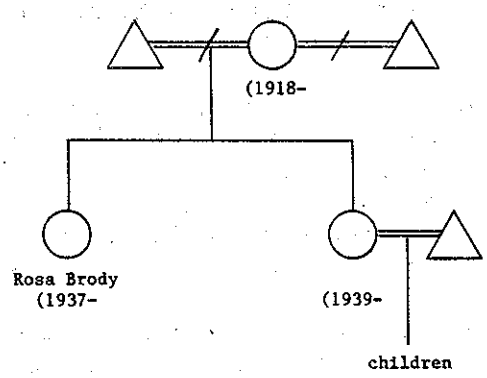
> I think it might have affected her probably the most out of the whole family. For a little kid to have their mother in the hospital for surgery--most little kids don't hear about things like that . . . . I think that could have scared her quite a few times, 'cause she was crying a few times when my Mom would be in the hospital.

As a result, the whole family has fears of the future. Jon wonders "if my Mom will be okay," and if she will be around to see his forthcoming child. Mary struggles with her work load of a job, a year-old son, and her own housework plus much of her mother's. Susan worries about the fights between her parents, between herself and her mother, and both resent and feel guilt about her share of the household work and her mother's explosive reaction when the work isn't done. Hank, the husband, seeks relief by staying away from home as much as possible. And Kay reiterates that she gets depressed:

> Very, very depressed--where you sit and look at a bottle of sleeping pills and you wonder should you be dumb enough to take them or not. And then you think, if you commit suicide, where is your chance for eternal life? Sometimes you just--where is it gonna end? When is it gonna stop? How much more before I actually end up going--or am I going to end up going nuts? And being put in a loony farm?

So an accident that, at the time, seemed to cause so little damage, has, in the long run, exacted great social cost.

CASE #6: BRODY FAMILY



Person Interviewed: Rosa Brody

> It was a very bad winter night, and I wanted to go out with my friends . . . . My mother told us, 'This weather is too bad! You should not go out!' But I went, anyway . . . . My friend driving came to an intersection, and the light turned red, but . . . she put her foot on the brakes, although there was ice . . . . The car didn't stop . . . it just made the car slide more . . . and it slid into a tree, and it turned, so that the side where I sat hit the tree.

Thus Rosa Brody describes the accident which left her permanently handicapped at the age of twenty-two. It happened on January 19, 1959, at the corner of Roosevelt and Cooper in a dimly lit neighborhood of old apartment houses and small parks in northwestern Okera. Rosa and three young women were en route home after having had a few drinks and something to eat. She thinks the driver may have been under the influence of alcohol. Rosa sat in the front passenger seat of the 1959 Mercury and suffered the brunt of the crash:

> The women in the back had only scratches . . . . The driver had her arm broken and her leg bruised, but I had both my legs broken and a hole in my head and a hole in my arm.

Rosa was unconscious when the police arrived. An ambulance conveyed the driver and her to Okera Receiving Hospital, where:

> . . . they called my mother, but . . . the first time . . . my mother didn't answer, because it was late at night, and she was sleeping . . . . The driver's mother came to the hospital, because the driver was conscious, and she called her mother first. So when she came, she called my mother

. . . . Someone that lived upstairs came down and answered the telephone.

Rosa's mother found her on a stretcher in a hall of the hospital's emergency wing. She wanted to have Rosa moved to Mercy Hospital, where Rosa could be treated by her own physician. When contacted, however, he advised against a transfer, because of the seriousness of Rosa's condition: "They really thought I had died."

Rosa was born in Panama and came to the United States with her mother and younger sister at the age of seven. Rosa went to business school, earned a diploma, and worked briefly as a receptionist in a real estate office. She had a similar position in a public relations firm in downtown Okera when her accident occurred.

Rosa's hospital bills were largely covered by her medical insurance from work. However, the driver of the car had no insurance, and Rosa did not consider suing her friend. Furthermore, the car hit a tree, not another car. Rosa quips: "You can't sue the city!" She received no financial settlement to compensate for the tremendous mental anguish and severe physical injuries she suffered as a result of the accident. Her mother quit her housecleaning jobs to care for her. The two existed on Rosa's mother's savings, pin money from her sewing at home, and Rosa's social security allotment as a handicapped person. The state provided the rehabilitative services described below during Rosa's long and difficult recuperation.

Upon admission to Receiving Hospital following the accident, Rosa was put under intensive care. Her mother tells her that:

> They put me in a room . . . . They put a guard, because there were other patients there before I left. One particular patient had . . . tubes in her and . . . the I.V. in her veins . . . . Someone [would] come in and play with the apparatus . . . . My mother one day . . . came to visit me . . . . This guy was standing there looking very solemn, and she approached the bed, and he turned . . . and said, 'Get away from here!'

Rosa was unconscious for about two weeks. She recalls:

> When I regained consciousness, I wouldn't speak, because of fear, or something . . . . At the time of the impact, I must have screamed . . . and then wouldn't say anything else after that . . . . She [Rosa's mother] used some . . . psychological approach to get me to say something. And the first thing I screamed was 'Ice cream!' I wanted ice cream.

Her mother joyously had a nurse fetch some for her. At the same time, Rosa realized:

> I had a cast up to my ribs . . . with a stick across the middle, so you wouldn't move your legs. And, ah, it felt nice . . . except that I couldn't move.

Her left leg was fractured once near the ankle, but her right leg "had five or six fractures, every bone in the leg. Some pieces of bone came through my skin." She adds:

> I have many scars . . . But after the cast was removed . . . that is when I had pain. Oh, I had so much pain--I thought that pain would never stop . . . . They had to put my right leg back into [another] cast, because . . . some of the fractures did not heal.

The first cast was on for six months. Rosa was discharged from Receiving before its removal to the care of her mother. X-rays taken after the cast was removed showed that the left leg had healed, but the right one had not. Rosa remained in the hospital a week before the second cast was put on, because:

> First they had to treat my skin. [It] looked like autumn leaves . . . dried up and scaly. I looked like an alligator. And so they had to treat my skin [with] oil compresses . . . until my skin regained some . . . moisture.

The second cast was on for four months. Rosa vividly describes her feeling of utter helplessness in the hospital. She disliked:

> Just lying there and not being able to do anything, not being able to know if I'd be cared for . . . . I would have to wait . . . for somebody to bring me this or bring me that, just having to ask for a pan to go to the bathroom, to ask for everything . . . . Sometimes I couldn't even see where I was.

Especially annoying was a preacher who visited the woman who shared Rosa's hospital room. When the woman left, the preacher turned to Rosa, who is a devout Catholic:

> When I was lying there . . I didn't like it when people came around and preached to me . . . They would pray . . . . I thought it was going too far . . . . I don't like that to be forced on me . . . . [He was] taking my head in his hand.

Rosa feels the hospital personnel were more sympathetic to her plight during her first stay than during her second. She was in much greater pain the second time. She remembers:

> I didn't want to do anything . . . eat . . . drink . . . . Some of those nurses and aides couldn't understand . . . why I wasn't cheerful or . . . cooperative. I heard one say, 'She didn't eat her food again. And she seems to be spoiled. Maybe she wants somebody to feed her.' And then another one said, 'Well, maybe that's the way she is at home.' I felt pain, and I didn't care what someone said. I'm not Jesus Christ! I can't stand the suffering!

Rosa was an outpatient at Receiving Hospital for six months after her second cast was removed:

> Twice . . . three times a week . . . the ambulance would come and take me on the stretcher to . . . the hospital for physical therapy. And then the physical therapist would put me into this big whirlpool . . . that was the best part. The part that I had to get out and he had to stretch my limbs, oh, such pain! I would scream, 'Aye, aye, aye!' And then somebody would say, 'Miss Brody, what aria is that opera?' Despite the pain, it was funny.

Meanwhile she was referred to the Rehabilitation Center for follow-up treatment:

> There was a long waiting list . . . finally my mother had to go . . . and take this letter . . . to the office at Rehab, and then they put you on a waiting list . . . . Then they call you.

Rosa was admitted to the Center in April 1962, and she lived there until December of that year. She explains:

> They have bars, and they have mats that you can get on, on the floor, and exercise, and pullies for shoulder muscles. When I was in Rehab . . . and they had been doing all this pulling and stretching muscles and strengthening my abdominal muscles . . . and then I could stand up, so one morning the doctor came, and the physical therapist was standing there and everybody . . . and this was my big moment! Okay, Rosa, start walking! I couldn't walk! I couldn't put my foot ahead of me! . . . . So then another doctor said, 'I bet she could walk backwards.' I did! I walked backwards so easy . . . then somebody said, 'All we have to do now is cut the head off and turn it around!'

Rosa was released one month later, when she learned how to walk forward. Her legs must be supported by steel braces whenever she ambulates on her own. She still cannot even stand up without them: "My ankles bend under, and my knee goes in." She often chooses to get around on one of her two wheelchairs instead of trying to walk.

Rosa's therapy was continued through a homebound program. She moved in with her mother once more. The Visiting Nurses Association dispatched someone twice a week to stretch her muscles. The state sent an occupational therapist to teach Rosa various crafts, and she fiddled around with ceramics for a time. Then a social worker:

> suggested that I go back to school . . . the last time I had been to school, I majored in accounting, and since I've had this brain damage, no more accounting . . . . I couldn't take . . . all those figures . . . . She said, 'You would make a very good teacher.'

Rosa enrolled at Okera City University in the fall of 1973. Going part time and occasionally dropping out for a term, Rosa earned a B.A. in December 1980. She first majored in Spanish, but did not enjoy the literature courses: "I

can't remember what Paco says to Jane in chapter two." So she switched to sociology "because I prefer human services, because . . . like in education, you still get to work with people . . . . I like to work with people . . . I like to talk."

Today Rosa wants a job more than anything else. As she puts it, "I have to look for a job. I need money." She lives in a subsidized university apartment equipped for a physically handicapped person and receives a $200 Social Security check per month. She worries about proposed cuts in Social Security and Medicare. She must economize. As she says:

> Well, you eat cheese . . . . That's a source of protein . . . . . I don't eat very much. I just eat properly. It's cheaper to prepare your own food . . . . Food that is already prepared [like TV dinners] . . . costs more.

Rosa's mother helps out, but: "She told me when I graduated, she won't be bringing me any more groceries or Sunday dinners." Rosa has earned money by tutoring university students having difficulty with their Spanish courses. But tutoring is not steady, because her pupils show up only when baffled by an assignment. In the summer of 1980 Rosa taught Spanish in a federally funded summer school program for inner city children in community churches: "It was fun . . . . Because it was in a church setting . . . children who are exposed to that atmosphere, the religious, tend to get a little more obedient and . . . quiet." She feels this was a very successful work experience. Unfortunately, however, funding for the program has been discontinued. Rosa fears her handicaps are impediments to her securing permanent full-time employment:

> I worry that when I . . . go to apply for a job, they will take a look at me and see, handicapped! That doesn't give me a chance to . . . show what I can do . . . or say what I'm about.

She says many an employer rejects handicapped people with the statement that they are "not experienced in this field," to cover up a prejudice against them. Yet handicapped persons are reliable and conscientious employees, because: "We aim to please, and then we try . . . much harder" than people without obvious disabilities. Rosa has applied for several jobs, but without success. An interviewer asked Rosa if she could drive, a requirement for the position to be filled. Rosa cannot drive. Therefore, she notes: "I want a job where I can just take a bus and go . . . and sit there in the same building" all day. Yet Rosa does not apply for receptionist positions, as they usually involve typing skills. She types too slowly to qualify, because of her uncooperative left hand.

Despite recent federal legislation on behalf of handicappers, Rosa feels public attitudes toward disabled persons vary tremendously. She is indeed grateful that new shopping centers, most restaurants and cinemas, the Okera art and science museums and main library, and university buildings are accessible to people in wheelchairs. Furthermore, even buildings lacking ramps can be conquered with the aid of an imaginative and considerate staff:

> I went to a small library once, and couldn't get in . . . . The custodian came out, and he put a plank by the step, and so it was made something like a ramp. I could use my wheelchair and get up there.

Nevertheless, many people who should know better are not at all accommodating. Rosa once volunteered to help out in the ticket booth of a privately financed ethnic agency during one of its fund-raising events, because she believes strongly in its goals. She was rebuffed by a member of its professional staff:

> She was so discouraging. I asked if it were accessible to wheelchairs, and she said, 'No, it is not!' And then she says, 'This is a very old building, and we don't have any funds to . . . construct a ramp. Maybe you shouldn't bother.'

Rosa criticizes the treatment handicapped people get from the personnel of many social welfare agencies:

> Sometimes . . . they feel that we shouldn't come there . . . to seek help . . . . Most people don't go unless they really need [to] . . . . Because, who wants to go through all that embarrassment? Sometimes they talk to you as if you were five years old . . . and you may be fifty-five . . . . I've sat there and listened to some of them . . . talk to people who come to seek financial assistance, and they . . . act as if it [the money] is coming from their own pockets . . . . You sit and wait and wait . . . . You see the one outside talking to a friend . . . . [They are] not really busy, but then they can't wait on you! They just don't want to! They really make you feel as if you're imposing on their time or you're inconveniencing them.

Of course there are exceptions: "Some of them are really nice." Rosa's most mordant comments, however, are lavished upon the bus drivers of the Okera Public Transit System:

> Some of those drivers . . . are so impolite . . . . I had to write letters one time about one . . . . I took it [her letter] to Mellon Hall, to Rehab, and the secretary typed it for me. I sent one to Mayor Blaine . . . to the News Hawk on Channel 6, to Senator Scott . . . on the transportation committee . . . . And I got letters back, too . . . because . . . all these drivers would pass me up. But this one stopped . . . let me on the bus . . . . Maybe he had a fight with his wife or something, but why take it out on me? He let me on and then let me get into this little slot where the wheelchairs sit . . . . As he walked away, he said, 'These people!' You know, people in wheelchairs. 'I don't know why they ride buses . . . . They know we have to stop and let them on, but I think it is so unfair, because they detain us . . . . We have just a certain amount of time to

> get from one place to another . . . . And they have other buses that they can ride for free.' . . . . I wouldn't say anything, because I . . . was still on the bus . . . . He made me feel this big!

Rosa thinks most passengers do not mind the delay while someone in a wheelchair boards a bus. Furthermore, she complains that some drivers on early morning runs stop to have coffee and a doughnut in a restaurant while passengers wait on the bus. She feels bus drivers need a good workshop on how to accommodate handicapped riders courteously. She praises one thoughtful driver: "Whenever he saw me, he would get off the bus and help me to get on . . . up the stairs and . . . wait until I'm seated before he goes driving off." This driver had seen Rosa on her wheelchair and knew she had to wear leg braces whenever she did not utilize it.

Self-sufficiency is Rosa's paramount goal. With her prosthetic devices, properly equipped living quarters, accessible transportation, and a job, she can make it. She routinely does her own cleaning, washing, ironing, cooking, and grocery shopping. Yet Rosa is aware that she will always get into more situations where she must rely on the assistance of a bystander than people without disabilities. She accepts aid gracefully: "When someone would ask me if they can give me assistance . . . I like that." Rosa avoids falling down outside by using her wheelchair most of the time. Inside, however, she wears her leg braces while she does housework, as she must stand and walk every day to exercise her muscles. She often falls:

> I still have . . . very poor balance, and many times I'll fall down . . . . My legs are weak. If I fall in such a way that my one hand can't get me up, . . . I have to pull the telephone . . . and call downstairs, and then somebody comes up and picks me up.
>
> One time I fell in the bathtub . . . . I said I couldn't have anyone help me! So I used the bathtub to hold . . . to pull up . . . I used the side of the bathtub and my wheelchair and the sink to get me up . . . I was slipping, and then I had to get a towel.
>
> One time I was in the hallway. That was the worst fall . . . . I was just sitting there; I couldn't get up . . . And there were no telephones . . . . Then I saw this man walking down the hallway, and I said, 'Get somebody to help me up. I need someone . . . . You cannot do it by yourself.'

The inside door of the two doors to her apartment house is tricky:

> You gotta turn the key, pull the door at the same time. Otherwise the door closes again . . . . So I usually sit there, and when I see somebody walking, I knock . . . on the glass, and then they come and open it . . . . It's easy to sit beside the front door.

Trying to get the evening newspaper from the machine in her apartment building lobby often proves exasperating:

> You put the fifty cents in the thing, you pull down the door, you take your other hand and pull out the paper . . . . If you let the door go, there goes your fifty cents, and no paper. But sometimes I use my body to hold it down, if I'm in the right position . . . . I can't leave that door go, because I don't want to lose my money . . . .

On innumerable occasions when Rosa has been outside in her wheelchair, something has blown out of her hand. A nearby pedestrian invariably fetches it for her.

Rosa rarely associates with other disabled people, and she no longer sees the friends she had when her accident occurred. The driver of the car:

> was in the hospital too . . . . I think she may have felt guilty . . . maybe afraid or something . . . . I don't want to make excuses . . . I have seen her maybe . . . ten times after the accident . . . . She got married . . . and she has children. So she's busy, and she works.

Companionship is provided by a few close friends she made while attending the university and by her relatives. Rosa clearly has no desire to marry, even though:

> My mother . . . is disappointed because I didn't get married. But when I graduated from high school, I guess I would have gotten married then, but I didn't want to, because I thought I had missed a part of life when I was . . . suffering from a stroke a couple of years before that, and then I thought I'd just live a little . . . . I can't get married, I'm too old now.
>
> They [men] give me a headache . . . . When you get married and get the children and you have that big job by yourself, and I have only one hand to do it with, I couldn't . . . give the baby a bath or clean up under the baby or pick up the baby after the baby falls on the floor . . . . Then if I had a husband, he would come over and make a big mess, and I would have to clean it up . . . clean the floor . . . the kitchen . . . make some dinner. Just thinkin' about it makes me ache!

As for children to care about, Rosa says:

> I have . . . a godson . . . and I like to think that I have children. It's safer that way . . . . Some students . . . call me 'mother' and come up here twice a day. I don't know if they say it to me because they are being funny . . . .

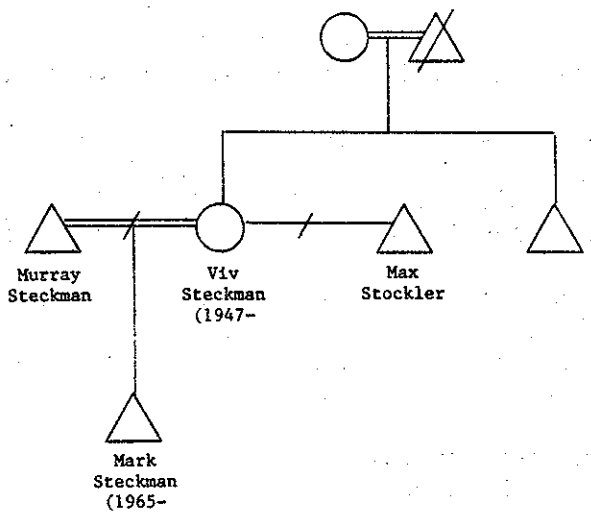
Rosa sees her mother and sister once or twice a month. They usually come through with moral and practical support when she needs it most. If they occasionally fail her, however, Rosa falls back on her own resources and the good

will of strangers. During a recent holiday visit at her mother's home in north Okera, Rosa fell. She decided to retreat to the safety of her own apartment. Her sister was to drive her home before going to work a midnight shift at a local factory. But her sister overslept, and Rosa ended up calling a taxi. The ride cost $7, but Rosa had only $5 in her purse. The taxi driver accepted the $5 and wished her a happy holiday. Rosa is profoundly appreciative of her mother's incalculable support, but she is not comfortable in her mother's home. Its bathroom doorway is too narrow to admit her wheelchair:

> When I lived with my mother, I had to get up at night and put on my braces before I could go to the bathroom . . . . I can't walk without my braces . . . . Here [her apartment] is convenient, because . . . I can get in my wheelchair, and I can go to the bathroom. That's the most convenient thing.

Rosa's accident has affected her sister only minimally. Her sister is occupied with her own family, and her children are still young. It continues to have great impact upon Rosa's mother, whose concern for her daughter's well being has remained unflagging throughout. When Rosa was recuperating in her home, she centered her life on her daughter's care. She purchased a hospital bed and "made everything convenient . . . . She had friends, nurses . . . who worked in hospitals, so they would stop in and help sometimes." She is still ambivalent about Rosa's capacity for independent living: "When I went [home for] Christmas, I didn't want to stay too long, but . . . she didn't want to bring me back either." But independent living is what Rosa clearly desires.

CASE #7: STECKMAN FAMILY



Person Interviewed: Viv Steckman

> I was driving east on Mack, and I had two kids in the car. Neither of them were mine. I was taking them somewhere as a favor. And a car cut in front of me--to make a left turn--and I stopped. And there was a car coming down the street--totally oblivious to the world around him--no idea there was a car stopped two blocks up or anything. And I turned around to tell the kids to hold on and then I turned around and then I heard it.

Thus Vivian Steckman, a young Jewish woman, describes the accident that happened to her in March 1979 when she was thirty-two years old. Mrs. Steckman's car, a two-year-old Monte Carlo, had only $400 worth of damage, but the other vehicle, a brand-new Dasher, was, in her words, "squished." It had to be towed away. The seventeen-year-old driver, who had just received the new car as a birthday present the week before, was unhurt and was primarily worried about getting into trouble. In Viv's car, neither the two children nor their mother were injured. Viv had a bump on her head but felt no serious ill effects. Being the mother of a fourteen-year-old son herself, she was reluctant to call the police since she did not want to get the young driver into legal difficulties. But her friend insisted, and after the police report was taken and the young driver was issued a ticket, Viv dropped her friend and the children off and continued on to her own home.

Two days later Viv began to have shooting pains in her left leg. She did

not associate this with the accident, and, having a previous history of arthritis, went to an arthritis specialist and was treated for this illness for several weeks. The treatments did not help, and approximately six weeks after the accident, she was, in her words, "paralyzed from the waist down."

Because of her severe body pain and paralysis, her doctor realized her trouble was not related to arthritis. Tests were taken which determined that she had a ruptured disk. She was sent to a rehabilitation center and had five weeks of unsuccessful physical therapy. She reports:

> Everything they would do to me there would hurt me, and they were going, 'No, it doesn't hurt. It feels better.' And I was going, 'You're crazy.' And I'd go through this three times a day. And I'd get worse and worse and worse.

After another myelogram, a neurosurgeon advised back surgery, which was done about three and a half months after the accident. Viv reports that the operation did not help, that she lived with constant severe pain and disability, including sometimes being unable to walk.

During the months that followed the operation, Viv's live-in boyfriend took care of most of the housework, cooking, and care of her son. Some of her friends also occasionally helped out:

> When I came home from the hospital, I was flat on my back. I couldn't move. I couldn't do anything. I could just get up and go to the bathroom and that was it . . . . My friends, they'd bring me coloring books and crayons, because you look at a yellow room with yellow walls and a yellow ceiling for four months and you go crazy!

Viv's physical condition was exacerbated by a second accident in which she was jolted from behind when a young driver failed to stop in time and hit a taxi Viv was riding in. The taxi was stopped at a red light. Viv says the ruptured disks were already damaged in the first accident, but the second may have made the condition worse.

Eight months after the first back operation, a second was done.

> After the second operation, I was really excited, because I guess it was the first time I could point the toes of the left leg, the first time that I could stretch. I was really excited. It's really strange, when something happens to you, to a person, that handicaps you, and that thing is resolved, you become so thankful! I mean--it's like--almost like being reborn! Here I thought I'd never be able to walk. I thought I'd never be able to run. I thought I'd never be able to jump. I thought I'd never be able to mountain climb again. And here it was I could point my toes! Well, it turns out I can't do any of those things anyway. I was seeing my neurosurgeon for three weeks after the operation, telling him that I'm having terrible pain in my back, and that I'm still having pain

> in my leg--not as severe as it was. And he told me there's nothing he can do for me. That there's nothing he can do for me anymore--that I am cured. And I said, 'What do you mean cured? I'm not cured!' He said, 'I operated on you. You can walk. You're cured.' I said, 'Are you trying to tell me that this is how it's going to be forever?' And this was before the pain started getting real bad again, and he says, yes, I'm cured, and he said he didn't want to see me anymore for back problems, and there's nothing he can do.

Before the accident, Viv had been a very physically active person. Just being able to walk is not nearly enough for her. She had enjoyed such sports as motorcycle riding, camping, sky-diving, and had just purchased a Great Dane dog and was in training with her. Her best friend also had a Great Dane and the two had planned to go into a dog training business together. As a result of her disability, she has had to give up all of these activities, though she kept her dog.

Viv's important family relationships also fell apart because of her injuries and the resulting psychological stress and tension. She recently lost her live-in boyfriend of nine years:

> I was very, very independent, and to be totally dependent--and by totally dependent, I mean I couldn't even cook a meal . . . . . And in my own head I became smaller and smaller and smaller, and the fights just became outrageous. The night that it happened, he cooked dinner for me and my son. [Pause] You become a bitch--you become a bitch when you lie there and you can't do anything. I became so much of a bitch, he beat me up. I don't know what provoked it that night. I think it was something to the effect of, 'You should have made his steak a little rarer.' You know, my son's. And he said something like, 'I don't see you cooking dinner for him or anything. I don't see you doing <u>anything</u> for him.' [Pause] I did an awful, evil thing. I spit on his steak. On my boyfriend's steak. I--go crazy! And then he just went whomp, whomp, whomp--started beating on me, and that was the end.

As a result, she is now financially destitute, for she has always been supported by the men in her life, her first and second husbands, and for nine years by her boyfriend. She reports:

> I've never worked in my life. My boyfriend supported me. He supported us. I am totally penniless now . . . . I can't collect any type of disability because I've never worked.

She says the only help or advice she has gotten is that she should go on ADC, but she does not want to do that. Thus, she is completely dependent on the largess of her ex-boyfriend, Max, a meat wholesaler who in Viv's words "is not wealthy, but he doesn't do badly." Max cares deeply for Mark, her

son from her first marriage, and even thinks of the boy as his own son. Thus, he brings groceries for the boy and usually pays the household bills, but has no real legal responsibility to either Viv or her son. The son, now sixteen years old, also likes and admires Max, and Viv says the two of them would like to live in the house and have her out. Mark has no sympathy for her disabilities and even suspects they might not be real. Viv says her relationship with her son has become "awful, just awful:"

> My son thinks I'm the laziest bitch that he ever met. He says things like, 'Well, you're well enough to walk Hera [the dog].' In the past two years, I've gone to the show twice. I've gone out to dinner maybe six times. He goes, 'Well, you're well enough to do that, but you can't clean the house. You can't do this. You can't do that. Why don't <u>you</u> walk to the store? Why don't you do this? Why don't you do that? Why don't you go to work?' It's awful! I'm nothing in his eyes . . . . He's sixteen, he's mature enough where he should realize what's going on in life. But all he says is, 'She's lazy. She had the operation. She should be better now.' . . . . My son would rather live with him [Max] than with me. I can do nothing for him. I was very active here in Okera with the kids, at the Okera Hockey Association. I'd always be taking them somewhere and everything. If they needed a mother, I was there . . . . That's one thing my son could always count on--was my participation in his activities with his friends and everything. Not anymore. That's the only thing I always had--was my son . . . . I had him when I was seventeen. I grew up with him. I had a very bad childhood, and my son meant the world to me.

Viv has no other family; she has no contact with her parents or brother because of serious disagreements from many years ago. She does have several close women friends who give her great support. But she says she no longer wants to tell them of her present fears and problems because she doesn't want to hurt them or have them feel sorry for her anymore.

The medical bills for her operation were covered by health insurance. Her coverage, however, has been dropped. "My insurance cancelled me. My health insurance--because my boyfriend wrote them a bad check." Thus she feels she cannot afford to see a doctor now, even though she often feels that she would like to. She still has attacks of severe pain in her back and leg, and says she expects to have paralysis again. Her lawyer has told her that the health insurance company is still responsible for injuries resulting from the accident, but she has never dealt with insurance companies herself before. Her boyfriend had always handled such matters, and she seems hesitant to do so herself.

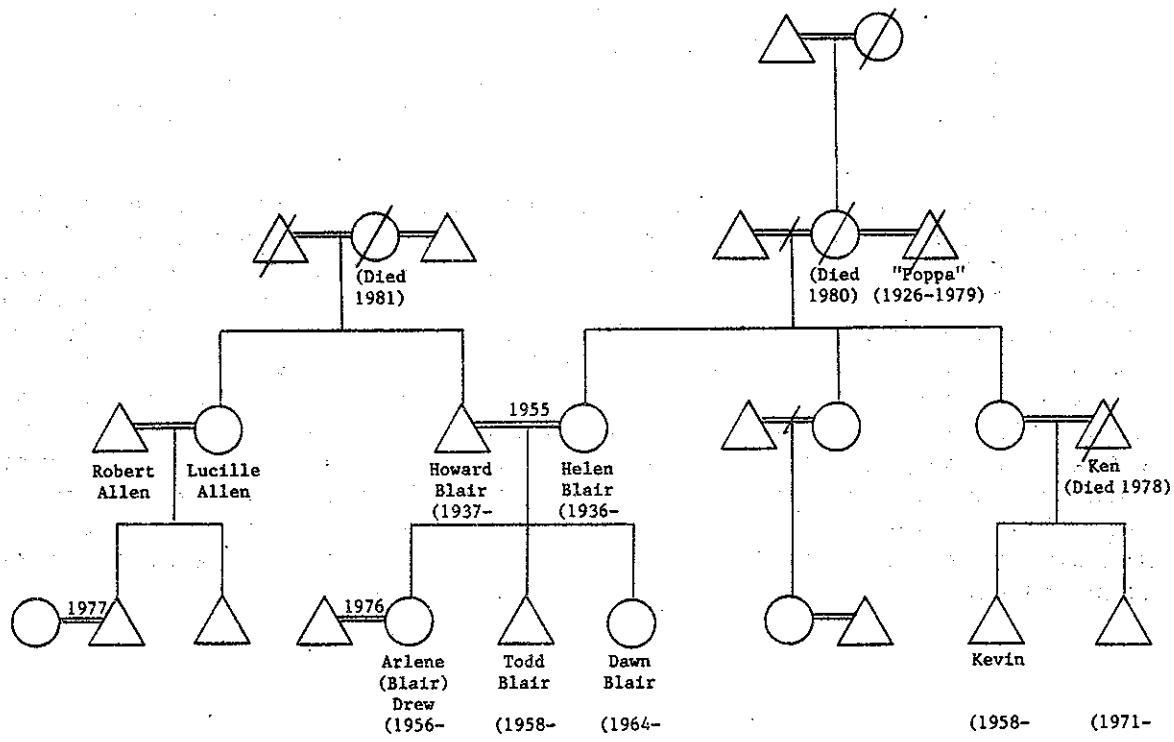
Viv currently has a lawsuit against the other driver's insurance company, a case which she began two months after her accident. She has asked her lawyer to speed up the case since she now has no money and no means of support: "I begged him to settle the case . . . . I don't care what I get, but I want

it now." And she is depressed about her chances of finding happiness in her life again:

> I've got some really bad problems . . . . I mean psychological problems from the accident . . . . I won't sleep with a man. My boyfriend, when he was living here--he's never seen my scar. I'm afraid to go out with a man. I drive down the street and I always hear that noise. I feel totally worthless. I can't do anything for anyone. I can't even take care of my dog.

Viv's depression stems from her inability to participate in her former active life, her fears of economic destitution, and the breakdown of her important family relationships. Her security has vanished. She cannot work because of her disabilities, she is eligible for no compensation or disability payment programs because she has never worked, and she has no family who can or will support her. The strain of her physical pain and handicaps and her inability to perform her former roles of housewife and supportive mother, along with her resulting bitter and more temperamental personality, have antagonized both her boyfriend and her son. The family is now in constant conflict, and hostile interactions and hatred have followed Viv Steckman's automobile accident of two years ago. Her sense of isolation, rejection, loneliness, and loss are far more intense now than they were at the time her injuries occurred or during the immediate aftermath.

CASE #8: BLAIR FAMILY



Family Members Interviewed: Helen Blair
Howard Blair, with Helen present
Todd Blair
Dawn Blair

Other Persons Interviewed: Hope Wozniak, Helen's friend
Josephine Hayes, Helen's friend
Gabriel Moran, the Blair's lawyer

Helen Blair, a teller at Hillsdale Bank and Trust, left work shortly after 8:00 p.m. on Friday, September 2, 1977. Howard, her husband and a furniture salesman at Hartleys, had been waiting for her at home since 5:00 p.m. Their twelve-year-old daughter, Dawn, had picked up in the living room earlier but did not feel like cooking dinner--her usual Friday chores. It was hot, and she wanted to visit a girlfriend, so she asked her father if he and her mother could eat out that evening. He assented and told Dawn to be home by 10:00 p.m. Helen continues the story:

> I . . . got home . . . Betty, . . . lives across the street from us--her husband was working that night . . . . The three of us decided we'd go for pizza . . . . So we left. I don't know anything else that happened except [what] was told to me.

The three adults evidently got into the Blairs' 1974 Chevrolet Monte Carlo just before 9:00 p.m. Howard was driving, Helen was in the front bucket seat next to him, and Betty sat in back. No one wore seat belts. The front windows were rolled down to catch the cool evening breeze. Howard turned onto Washington Line, a four lane thoroughfare, and cruised at about 37 mph in the left westbound lane.

Meanwhile a second set of events that culminated in the accident which befell the Blairs and their neighbor that night was unfolding elsewhere. In the hour before their departure, a twenty-year-old youth rammed his car into another vehicle on Unruh Street, which crosses Washington Line, and raced away. The angered woman driving the smashed vehicle notified the local police, telling them the make and license number of the offender's automobile. A city policeman in an unmarked car spotted the youth's auto and initiated a high speed chase. The chasee raced through quiet residential streets with the policeman in hot pursuit and swung onto Washington Line right in front of Howard. Howard wheeled to the right, narrowly missing him. Betty later told Helen that Howard caught sight of the police car and yelled, "Watch out!" Then it was all over. The police car careened out of Unruh Street at 55 mph without halting at the stop sign and slammed into the right front door of the Blairs' car. The impact spun the victim's automobile around repeatedly and catapulted Howard into the street. Helen is convinced that their twirling Chevrolet smacked the police car a second time, because the doors of the former were jammed shut, and Howard could not have been thrown through either open window without receiving more cuts and bruises than he actually sustained. She feels the driver's door popped open to eject Howard on the first impact and crammed shut on the second.

Helen's theory, as well as the force of the collision, are implicit in photographs of both vehicles taken two weeks later in a municipal junk yard. Prints of the Blairs' Chevrolet interior show the driver's bucket seat facing the left front door, a partially uprooted steering wheel oriented parallel to the floor, the dashboard hanging loose and vertically pleated in places, and thousands of glass fragments glittering on the seats. Pictures of the police car exterior show a four-door, heavy duty vehicle with reinforced fenders damaged mostly on the driver's side.

Someone living on Unruh Street called the police station to report the accident. Officers backing up the one involved in the hot pursuit arrived within minutes. The policeman who caused the accident, Helen claims:

> Was pretty mad, according to the witnesses . . . . He didn't ask the witnesses to call an ambulance--these two people went up to him. He didn't ask for anything; all he said was regarding the chasee: 'I'll get the son-of-a-bitch if it's the last thing I do!'

He suffered a couple of fractured ribs and a deep laceration on his forehead, for his head banged into his radar screen on impact. Betty's pelvis was cracked, and her eyes were singed, but she wasn't blinded. She was conscious as the back-up officers removed her from the car. According to what Betty told Helen later, "They asked her if we were the people the other officer was chasing!" Betty said, "No." Then they stood her up, and she blacked out

as her legs gave way under her. The first ambulance to arrive at the scene took her and the injured policeman to West Hillsdale Hospital. Unconscious, Helen was still wedged in the car, and Howard lay motionless in the street. A second ambulance soon came to convey the Blairs to the same hospital. The rescue team had great difficulty extricating Helen from the wreckage.

The officer and Betty were kept under observation at the hospital over the weekend and released on Monday, Labor Day. Helen and Howard were both comatose on their arrival and obviously were severely injured. The hospital staff set about contacting all victims' next of kin. The three Blair children were scattered. Twenty-one-year-old Arlene, the oldest, married and living away from home, was reached late that night. Todd, nineteen years old, had gone camping up north somewhere with his buddy and did not learn of his parents' accident until the early morning hours. Dawn, the baby of the family, found out first. The news crushed her. She recalls:

> I came home at 9:30 . . . . Nobody was there . . . . I went next door outside, and the girl whose mother was in it too came over, and she was very upset and crying and told me, and I went hysterical. I really didn't know what to do . . . call my grandmother? And my next door neighbor says, 'No, no, no! We don't want to upset her.' I go over across the street to my [other] girlfriend's house, and I says, 'Leslie, my ma and dad had an accident. What should I do?' She says, 'Well, just calm down.' I could just scream! Nobody would help me . . . . Finally, I called my cousin Kevin down the street, and he tried to start his car, and it wouldn't start.

Arlene called then. She already had informed two of Todd's friends, who drove up soon afterwards. Dawn continues:

> They weren't gonna let me go to the hospital . . . . They had seen it . . . I was throwing a little fit . . . . Finally they let me go, and I was just . . . shaking like a leaf . . . . I had two of them in the back seat with me. They were just holding me down . . . . I knew something was wrong . . . . I just made them tell me . . . . He [Kevin] says that a cop had hit them, and I was just yelling vulgarities.

The emergency rooms were full of people asking about each victim's condition. Dawn remembers: "A lot of us were there . . . my girlfriend . . . whose mother was in the accident . . . two of her friends, my cousin, both of my grandparents, my aunt, and a friend," as well as her older sister and Todd's chums. A nurse started to lead the Blair kin to the room where Howard and Helen lay. Dawn balked. She notes: "One of the nurses was very rude to me . . . . My sister . . . says, 'She wants to leave because she doesn't think she can handle it.'" The nurse snapped back that Dawn might as well stay at her parents' side, since she already was at the hospital. Dawn left the room nonetheless, with the nurse glaring after her. She was taken to her friend Leslie's home about 3:30 a.m., and she found solace and understanding there. Confused and scared, she yearned to be guided and comforted by her big brother.

Todd describes how he finally came to the hospital:

> My cousin, Kevin, was at the hospital, and he knew we had gone camping, but exactly where he didn't know . . . . He kept calling around . . . until . . . he . . . got a hold of us . . . . I would imagine it was 3:00 a.m. . . . . We were sleeping, and they woke us up . . . . I heard my name called outside the tent, and it was one of the people who worked . . . at the campgrounds. They were great, really. They fed us coffee to wake us up and gave us the shortest route on the map to get home. We packed everything up . . . in . . . seconds . . . . We finally got home early in the morning . . . 8 o'clock. We went straight to the hospital . . . . My cousin . . . was the first one I saw; he had waited all night until I got there . . . . I was calm, scared, 'What should I do?'

Todd was stunned when he saw his parents. In his words:

> I went up and saw my mother first, who didn't see me, because her eyes were burned. Her face was all puffy . . . . I didn't know it was her when we first walked in . . . . She just couldn't see . . . a bit dazed from the drugs. It was awful, really. I suppose the night before, when some of my relatives went in to see my father and my mother . . . some of them fainted.
>
> I just froze and looked at him [Howard]. His whole one side was just out, protruding out.

The doctors told Todd that his mother had a 20 percent chance of survival and refused to speculate on his father's chances. Todd telephoned Hope Wozniak, one of his mother's closest friends, to inform her of his parents' horrible accident. She notified Josephine Hayes, another friend. Josephine recalls:

> It was about 10:00 or 10:30 in the morning. She picked me up, and we went down to the hospital and stayed with . . . Dawn and Todd, helped out with some of the small children that were there . . . .

Josephine adds:

> I remember him [Todd] just breaking down and crying . . . . To see a child that age . . . . He was . . . able to express his feelings and yet still stand with . . . authority . . . . It was very devastating to him. He's just taken right over.

Hope and Josephine were able to see Helen three days later, when she was no longer in intensive care. Helen's condition had stabilized, but her appearance was shocking. Hope describes her first impressions of Helen in the hospital:

> Her head was swollen, and her hair was just matted to her

> head, and her eyes were bulging out. They were red and just horrible looking. Her whole face had . . . burns all over it, and her arms, everywhere . . . had tiny cuts, just millions of them all over, and she looked awful. I just stayed there for a minute and left, because I thought I was going to faint.

Dawn did not actually see her mother until about two weeks after the accident, and Helen's appearance had changed but little. Dawn recalls:

> Her face was swollen up bad, and her hands. She had black marks all over her face, it just covered her face; and her eyes naturally are a deep brown . . . she had a patch over one eye and a film over the other, and when she opened it, it looked like a light blue . . . . I just had to leave the room, because I started to feel sick . . . . It hurt to see her like that, all drugged up and not being able to see.

Helen regained consciousness a week after the accident. She was in full command of her mental faculties. To this day, however, she has a memory gap spanning the hour before the accident to her awakening in the hospital. She relates:

> I don't even remember leaving the house . . . . My doctors claim that I do know all of it. I was knocked out . . . comatose for a while . . . but that I buried it, because I couldn't handle it.

HELEN'S INJURIES

The accident inflicted massive physical injuries upon Helen. They were as follows: (1) a crushed pelvis, (2) a broken nose and fractured left facial bones, (3) torn ligaments and muscles in her shoulders, hands, and legs, (4) burns on her face and to her eyes, and (5) broken blood vessels and myriad small glass cuts all over her limbs and face. They caused her agonizing pain and inconvenience during the months after the accident. They still are a source of chronic aches and discomfort and impede her performance of many normal everyday activities. Helen elaborates:

> The physical pain is really incredible . . . from a crushed pelvis . . . . Most of the pain [now] is in the lower back . . . . The bones have healed with deformity . . . . If I walk and not overdo it, it's okay . . . . There may be some arthritis setting in . . . . Some days it doesn't hurt . . . . Some days it hurts so bad I literally drag my right leg. And sometimes it hurts so bad I just roll around and cry a lot . . . . It really gets to hurting sometimes so bad I'd just like to lay down and die . . . . Any time I try to do the housework, I pay for it dearly . . . .
>
> The total left side of my face was . . . reconstructed--you

> can't tell it . . . . They had to put a steel pin stretched from way over here by my ear . . . across my face, and out the other side of my nose, which they took out without any kind of medication, and it was extraordinarily painful . . . . Oh, hurt! It really hurt like crazy! I still have a lot of trouble with the shoulder, too, because of all the stuff that was torn up there . . . . When the pain gets really bad, about the only thing that will help it is strong stuff like Darvaset or Darvon . . . . I don't want to take it . . . . I've been down to Ridgewood Hospital . . . with my chest pains. They'd think it's my heart at first . . . . Ultimately, it's just those muscles . . . tore up so bad 'till they too in a sense are deformed in that they do not function like they should . . . . They knot up faster . . . . I can't lift anything heavy.
>
> I still have it, the bruising on the inside of my legs . . . . The bruise on my right leg, it's enormous . . . the indentation, and there's a knot . . . . They wanted to take it out about two years ago, and I wouldn't let them.
>
> [By October 1977] I could see shadows and figures, but I couldn't see your facial features . . . . [By mid-January 1978] I could see out of my right eye pretty good . . . . My face was burned . . . . At least 90 percent of the scars have healed on their own. Some of them look like little wrinkles, if you stretched it out . . . . Now, I'm allergic to make-up. It makes my face itch, and my eyes have no normal make-up . . . . I'm supposed to apply the eye drops every three hours.

Helen evidently gets tiny blood clots occasionally and must be given medicine to dissolve them. As for the glass cuts, Hope Wozniak noticed that even in the hospital: "Each day you could see the healing, and the little cuts going away." Helen's own injuries have been debilitating but not incapacitating. Ironically Howard's injuries have wrought a far more profound and devastating change in her life than her own.

HOWARD'S INJURIES

Dawn's description of her father when she first viewed him in the hospital offers glimmers of the great trauma the accident dealt to his total being:

> . . . I looked at him, and he looked like he was just sleeping on one side . . . . When you walked on the other side, he had a very bad bruise by his eye . . . . All those machines hooked up to him, and the nose feeder . . . . I started crying, and I just . . . had to leave . . . . No more the same dad . . . . I really didn't know what was going to happen.

Howard Blair suffered severe physical damage to his left shoulder: his clavicle and humerus were fractured, and his shoulder muscles were torn. He also had a couple of broken ribs, which were not discovered until a year and a half later, when Howard was receiving medical treatment in another state. All this was insignificant, compared to, in Helen's words, his:

> Irreversible brain damage . . . . The brain stem and the left side of the brain . . . . Because he was paralyzed on the right side . . . totally . . . . The right arm was drawn up where the hand was like on the shoulder, stuck up under his chin . . . . It's incredible that his hand could draw up in such deformity without breaking.

Howard began to have brief moments of clarity after three weeks. He came out of his daze slowly thereafter, but he had total amnesia. He did not know who he was or recognize any members of his family. He had to learn how to walk, speak, read, write his name, and take care of his personal hygiene all over again. He was frustrated, uncomprehending, and intractable in the hospital. Helen recalls:

> He was . . . very difficult to handle . . . . He did not have enough control on his legs to walk unattended. So consequently they had to keep him strapped to the bed . . . . In order for the straps not to have to be on constantly, we hired round-the-clock, private duty nurses, ... He didn't know who he was, he was cussing, he was hitting people if he got frustrated, he would take his clothes off, he would urinate on furniture, or people, or whatever--totally uninhibited.

Dawn adds: "A slur of words . . . just like a little kid when he learns to talk." Helen continues:

> It is very difficult to find competent people who can handle a brain-damaged person. They are either afraid of them, intimidated . . . . The Lord sent us two fantastic people, the lady especially. And she would sit there and talk to him about relationships of families, show him pictures [from the Blair photo albums] . . . . He didn't know who they were.

Josephine Hayes confirms Helen's description of Howard's bewilderment:

> Not remembering anything . . . absolutely nothing. We'd bring in pictures of his children and his wife . . . and he really didn't know. When his son would come in to see him . . . we would . . . tell him . . . 'Howard, this is Todd. Todd is your son.' It was a long time before he was able to grasp that . . . . When Helen would come in after a while, when we were able to take him in a wheelchair to go down to the lounge, there would be a pretty girl . . . . We would say, 'No, you can't talk to these girls--your wife is here.' He really had no concept of what a wife was.

The accident simply wiped out Howard Blair's basic human skills and his social identity.

HELEN'S CONVALESCENCE

Helen was discharged from West Hillsdale Hospital on September 29, 1977. Howard remained on its rehabilitation floor until December 1977, when he was released to her care. They both were pushed out of the hospital prematurely, in everyone's opinion except that of the hospital board members who made the decision. Helen describes how far her recovery had progressed when she was shipped home:

> They sent me home in an ambulance flat on my back. The night before they're still giving me pain shots . . . . They said I was no longer in critical care . . . not in any immediate danger of dying . . . . I'm home blind as a bat, in a wheelchair . . . . After I was home I still couldn't get up and around . . . . I was still from bed to wheelchair to porta-John.

Todd recalls her unrelenting agony during her first weeks at home:

> The very first time they let my mother come home from the hospital, which I felt was obviously too soon . . . she was in constant pain. I got about an hour's sleep every night, because I would stay up listening for her. And on the hour every hour she would either yell, scream. Either it was a bad dream, or I had to go to her room . . . move her on her side, or move her back on her back . . . she had to use the bathroom.

Dawn comments upon her mother's grim stoicism throughout her recovery: "She wouldn't complain, and that sometimes would make me mad . . . . Sometimes she'd whimper." Because of the kinds of injuries Helen sustained, she had to be lifted in a special way by two people. Homebound care was provided to Helen by a nurse and nurse's aide for about a month. The aide would have remained another six weeks, had Todd been working; but Todd preferred to stay home, so the aide could not be retained. Helen complains:

> They supposed so much. They felt that since my son was home, he could do it. He explained to them that Dawn went to school, and she had to leave at 7:30 a.m., so that left only him here.

Every day, therefore, Todd had to find an additional helper. In Helen's opinion, the medical follow-up for her at home was most inadequate, but the timely support of friends and relatives (discussed below) compensated somewhat. Helen's pain did not abate in the month following her release from West Hillsdale; indeed, it was particularly acute when she sat in her wheelchair. Her doctor discovered that the end of her vertebral column was cracked, so she was admitted to Ridgewood Hospital in Okera Heights in late October. After a successful operation, Helen again returned home.

Emotional stress complicated Helen's convalescence. She was enraged that the accident had been caused by a careless and seemingly uncaring policeman. Even worse, however, was Howard's developing pattern of harassing her. While in West Hillsdale, Helen initially feared that Howard was dead. Finally convinced that he was alive, she was reluctant to see him until her appearance improved. When they first met in the nurses' lounge, she was horrified that he really did not recognize her. However, by the time Helen left the hospital, Howard accepted her as his spouse, but he interpreted her departure from the hospital as desertion and hounded her at home by telephone. Hope Wozniak explains:

> Howard would call her . . . and holler at her for having them [friends] there: 'You can get me out, you don't want me there!' One night Dawn called me and said, 'Hope, get over here right away!' . . . . I went . . . . Helen was huddled up in the corner of the couch, just shaking and just in a ball crying, and the phone was hanging in the kitchen . . . . Howard was still screaming and hollering and still on the phone, and I said, 'Howard Blair, I don't care if you are sick . . . Knock this off!' And I gave it to him, and for ten minutes he remembered . . . . You have to do it every time with him.

Howard telephoned Helen several times a day until he came home.

Helen clearly was unable to cope with Howard when he was released from West Hillsdale Hospital just before Christmas 1977. His doctor intended to transfer him directly to Okera University Hospital Rehabilitation Center. This facility, however, was full, so Howard's name was entered on its waiting list. Meanwhile, his doctor placed him in Ridgewood Hospital. The two people who watched Howard around the clock at West Hillsdale resigned, so Helen had to hire new people. At West Hillsdale, Howard had been given no medication save an occasional aspirin. At Ridgewood, Melaril, Thorazine, Valium, and one other drug were prescribed for him. Helen was neither consulted nor informed of this change and was infuriated when she learned of it:

> Thorazine, I was told by my R.N. friend . . . will . . . either knock a patient out or drive him absolutely bananas, and it didn't knock Howard out . . . He got even more--he wasn't violent in the sense that if you made him angry he would lash out at you . . . . He was drugged to the point that he would fall asleep and get up and try to find himself a way out . . . . He was convinced, I'm told by my friend, that he was in the hospital because I put him there, and I ordered the drugs to make him stay there.

The final straw came in the first week of January 1978:

> I went down there [to Ridgewood, about eight miles from the Blair home] in a blinding snow storm in my car . . . the nurses called and said, 'We can't do anything with him.' They let me in the side door, it was so late, to sit with

> him, me and my little cane using his wheelchair to stabilize myself, up and down the halls, biting my tongue . . . staying away from the elevators, because then he would want to go home . . . three hours! . . . . Then I fell into the chair; he fell asleep . . . . I couldn't be admitted, I had so many things to do . . . . Somebody [a friend] came down and relieved me.

Helen brought Howard home on January 16, 1978. On January 24, 1978, Helen, Howard, and Dawn moved to Georgia. Howard's kinfolk lived near Atlanta, and he was accepted into a rehabilitation center in that city.

HOWARD'S CONVALESCENCE AND REHABILITATION:

Helen's decision to move to Georgia was sudden. She explains:

> We just left it [their house in Hillsdale] sitting there . . . . Todd stayed; he couldn't leave right away, because . . . there were bills to pay . . . . The question of do I take Dawn, do I leave her . . . . I decided ultimately to take her with me . . . . She's just gonna have to adjust . . . . She didn't want to leave, she wanted her friends . . . . She was born on Aslop Street . . . . We always lived over there . . . . She had a lot of trouble . . . then she settled in down there.
>
> We packed up and left . . . . I called Howard's sister [in Georgia]. A friend of mine, another friend of my son's . . . flew up here, because there's no way I could take him myself. I could hardly take myself . . . . We had to have somebody come . . . to ride there with us.

They lived with Howard's sister until May, when they moved into a house near Atlanta. The Blairs had purchased it in the early summer of 1977, were making mortgage payments on it, and rented it for income. Their tenants graciously moved out after sufficient notice. Howard was an inpatient at the rehabilitation center for one month and an outpatient for another month. Todd joined his family before they left his aunt's home. He thinks she spoiled Howard. As he puts it:

> Pacify [him], I couldn't believe. See, some of the things he would say would be out of context, so awful, and there would be chuckles and laughs just to make sure he'd be calm, he wouldn't throw a fit, and feel comfortable . . . . We were conditioning him to be the way he is. I would say things to my mother about it, and she was so hurt, nervous, and in bad shape, and all she wanted was calm and peace.

Dawn remembers that when her father was allowed to spend Thanksgiving Day, 1977 at home in Hillsdale, his right fist still was tucked up under his chin, he could not walk without assistance, and he had difficulty speaking. In Georgia, consistent physical therapy limbered up his right arm, which slowly

came down. Howard, however, now refuses to exercise his arm. Todd sighs:

> I gave him therapy for months and months and months. I got it down. The hand . . . is spastic. I know that he can do better . . . . It just takes a lot of work, some sweat . . . . You just can't . . . think about it, and do it once in three weeks.

Helen adds: "He never refers to pain. He complains of being stiff . . . . He's very sensitive to cold." Howard walks alone with a slightly jerky gait. He speaks softly, slowly, and clearly until he begins to stumble over his words. Then he stops, recollects his thoughts, and continues his flow of speech. Howard's right eye is completely closed up. He tells how it feels to be unable to see with one eye:

> Legally I'm blind in this eye. But this eye [the left] takes over partly to help this eye, so I can see you. If you can see someone, you can recognize somebody. According to you, you could see. But . . . if you try and reach something, you can't do it.

By June 1980 Howard mastered personal grooming skills. He declares: "I take a shower, wash my hair, brush my teeth, shave . . . I couldn't do it in the beginning. I couldn't even wash myself." Helen comments:

> He used to violently object to me brushing his teeth . . . . I think he didn't like the idea of somebody doing it for him . . . . Instead of taking a shower, he wants to wash up, which is totally unlike Howard . . . . He can dress himself, which he couldn't do before because of the arm . . . . . I don't think he really knew if he should have clothes on . . . . It took him a long time to find out how to do it.

Howard also has learned to prepare simple meals. "I cook sausage," he notes proudly. A fastidious man, he rinses his used dishes and puts them into the dishwasher. He recently has changed light bulbs, trimmed a shrub, mowed a section of the lawn, and changed the filter in the swimming pool. In the fall of 1980, he began to drive a car. It is impossible to predict how far Howard can progress physically and mentally. As Helen says:

> I've been told several times he wouldn't go any further, but he did. Not remarkably, but . . . little by little . . . . If I am totally honest, maybe there hasn't been any improvement in the last year or so.
>
> [Mentally impaired persons] just don't have the options you and I have. In most places they don't even have the help . . . . You can sit around at home and totally disintegrate, which Howard does . . . . I frankly don't think the medical profession knows a great deal about brain damage.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE QUALITY OF MEDICAL CARE THE BLAIRS RECEIVED

Although skilled physicians, other medical personnel, and modern technology assuredly saved the lives of Helen and Howard in the West Hillsdale emergency and intensive care units, the medical follow-up was frequently inadequate and occasionally irresponsible. Helen complains: "It seemed like every time I turned around, what little professional help I could gather . . . they'd take it away." Helen clearly still needed homebound medical care when it was arbitrarily terminated. Howard could not get into the Okera University Hospital Rehabilitation Center when he was ready, because the demand for its services exceeded its capacity. A convalescent facility in the outlying Okera area refused to admit him, because a nurse at West Hillsdale noted on his record that he was violent. This facility spurns emotionally disturbed applicants. Helen hardly knew where to turn when Howard was released from Ridgewood. She suggests:

> They need to establish a communication system whereby when people are caught up in this kind of thing, they can be told their alternatives, where they might get help . . . . When it happened to us, we ran around like blind mice.

Josephine Hayes agrees:

> When Helen left the hospital, she was told there's nothing more . . . they can do [for her] . . . . When Howard was discharged from the hospital, I could not believe there was not some . . . follow-up. I kept saying, 'Call agencies,' or, 'Call homes.' . . . . She seemed to be asking and yet was getting no feedback . . . . The hospital is saying to you . . . if he's well enough to be released, there's nothing else we can do. It's in your hands . . . with no direction or guidance from anyone.

Conflicting messages sometimes assailed Helen. While still at West Hillsdale, she worried about Howard's condition and wanted to see him when she was well enough to be put in a wheelchair. The first time the nurses seated her on one, they found they lacked written permission from Howard's doctor for a visit and refused to take her. Upset, Helen again wondered if Howard were really dead and if his doctor had lied to her earlier. While Helen was convalescing at home, the West Hillsdale social services department kept calling to tell her Howard was coming home the following week. She would telephone Howard's chief physician, who would reassure her that Howard was not coming home for a long time. Helen groans: "I'd panic, I'm going absolutely insane, wondering." Nurses and doctors occasionally were insulting or abrupt. Todd recalls angrily:

> My mother, still unable to see, was given food . . . . So my aunt would go up to help her. And the head nurse got very upset at my aunt going up . . . and said that she could feed herself.

Helen tells of medical insensitivity and arrogance:

> When I thought Howard was dead and they were lying to me, my chief doctor had asked [Howard's] to come in and talk to me . . . . He felt that it would help my recovery if I could be made to believe that Howard was alive, and there was no way at that point in time could they allow me to see Howard, because I couldn't be moved. And I'll never forget when the man came in. He'd tell me in no uncertain terms that he was a busy man, and I went and bothered him . . . . It hurt. I'm sure the man . . . was trying to save his life, and he sure didn't need what he thought was an insignificant thing like telling a wife that the guy's alive . . . . I don't think it's deliberate . . . or [he] intended to be rude or mean or even uncaring.
>
> A psychologist told me . . . perhaps Howard should be checked again for . . . pressure which could be surgically removed . . . . She put me in touch with a specialist . . . supposedly one of the best. She made the appointment, but . . . Howard is very unpredictable, and he got up that morning, and he wouldn't go . . . . It took me a few minutes to get him going, but I could see by the clock that we were going to be five or ten minutes late, so I called and told the girl. And she said, 'Don't bother to come.' If you don't make the first appointment, the doctor's feeling is that he won't see you at all, ever . . . . She [the psychologist] was so upset about this doctor, she called him and said, 'I can't believe he did that!'

But he did. When Helen learned she no longer could have a nurse and an aide at home, she flew into a rage. Her distressed nurse called the doctor, who told Helen bluntly, "I don't know why you're upset. It could be worse. At least you're not dying from liver cancer." Howard's recent consultations with a neurologist exemplify a common doctor-patient relationship. Helen observes: "I don't see that he's doing anything for him. Periodic visits to sit there and do nothing, run him through a little pin pricking." Howard adds slyly: "They hand me a big bill for using their bathroom. All I did was wash my hands." Helen explains that on their first visit, the neurologist conversed with Howard and Helen about an hour. Howard excused himself to go to the bathroom as the discussion drew to a close. When he emerged, the doctor handed him a $90 bill. However, the doctor at the rehabilitation center in Atlanta impressed Helen. He is known as "one of the finest in the business," and he took pains to explain what he was doing with Howard in terms that Helen could understand.

SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS, AND RELATIVES

Friends rallied around Helen and Howard on becoming apprised of their accident. For six days afterwards Dawn stayed with neighbors, instead of alone in her empty house. Todd was too busy checking on his parents' condition at the hospital, placating anxious relatives, paying bills, and later conferring with an attorney to be able to give Dawn all the support she then required. While Helen lay helplessly in her hospital bed, Faith, Josephine, and others

fed her, despite the head nurse's annoyance. They reassured her that Howard was alive and made every effort to bolster her flagging morale. Helen avers:

> The support that was given to us in this community was incredible. There were people coming out from the woodwork . . . . Half of them I didn't even know . . . a friend of a friend of a friend.

When Helen was discharged from the hospital, a neighborhood task force was organized to assist her. Hope Wozniak recalls:

> I made up a list and got shifts of people going . . . . A lot of days I'd get . . . two people to go over so he [Todd] would have a break . . . . All the ladies from scouts and school--everybody took shifts going over . . . food and making desserts and sending them over . . . . The fire station here is great--you can get whatever equipment you want free . . . . We went down there and got a porta-potty and a wheelchair.

Todd affirms: "People have just been terrific . . . looked after me . . . . They'd come over with some food, or whatever. Friends, it was fantastic!" During the week in January 1978 that Howard was at home, just before the family moved to Georgia, Helen remembers appreciatively:

> My son's friends came over to stay with him, because he still couldn't walk on his own; he still had to have a person on either side of him. He still had to have somebody watching him continually, because without warning, he would attempt to get up . . . . Todd's friends took turns sitting all night with him.

Unfortunately, Helen and the neighbor in the Blairs' car at the time of the accident no longer see one another. The Blairs moved to Georgia, and when they returned to Hillsdale in 1979, the schedules of the two women kept them apart. As Helen puts it: "Her free time is not my free time." Helen remains close to Hope, Josephine, and other friends, and she is grateful for the quality of their support.

Hope encountered complications in her own life as a result of her continual aid to Helen and Howard. She confides:

> At first I was over there a lot. I got four kids . . . I could see that I was there too much . . . . With Howard and Helen, too, it was a dependency type thing, so I kind of stopped going as much . . . . Then I was working, and she'd get upset at me . . . . But the more she had to do, the stronger she got.

When Howard imagined Hope was one of his two wives, Hope's husband bridled, and she backed off.

Relatives outside the immediate family reacted to the accident with great

emotion. Their concern sometimes created additional problems for Helen and sometimes eased her problems. Howard's mother was, according to Helen, "totally out of her mind with worry." Helen's mother was similarly upset. Helen states:

> She's sixty-nine, and she doesn't drive . . . . She'd do anything in the world for you. But she's very negative. If you go in with a headache, she's back on you with a tumor by the time you leave.

On the other hand, Helen's stepfather's calm solicitude was touching. Helen elaborates:

> He was definitely a great support to us. He'd come over and fix the meals and, God bless him, he wanted to make sure we weren't strapped for money, so he's going down cashing his pension money . . . . I said, 'Dad, don't you do it . . . . If I need it, I'll let you know.' . . . . I called my lawyer, I says, 'My family should not have to worry about finances. I'm laid up, Howard's laid up!'

Helen has one sister who lives on the west coast and another who lives in Hillsdale. The latter visited and helped out occasionally, but as one of Helen's friends remarks: "They're not real close." Howard's sister, Lucille, and her husband opened their home to the Blairs in Georgia in 1978 and kept Dawn with them after Helen, Howard, and Todd returned to Hillsdale in 1979.

THE BLAIR FAMILY BEFORE THE ACCIDENT

Helen and Howard are both Southerners who moved to Okera with their families while they were still in school. Most of Helen's kin live in rural Tennessee. Her parents divorced, and her mother then married a kindly Catholic man whom Helen and her children adore. Howard has English, Irish, and Dutch ancestors. Helen and Howard were both "raised Baptist," although Howard went to a Methodist Church in Okera. They were married when they were nineteen, fresh out of high school. Helen recalls humorously:

> He was working one band, and I was up the road working another band [singing country music], and we got into a fight the minute we met . . . . But when we married, I quit . . . . I wanted to take care of the house and have kids, and stuff like that . . . . Howard was always a hard-working man.

Thus Howard became the family breadwinner, while Helen kept house, raised their three children, and participated actively in local community affairs. He worked as a salesman from the time Arlene was born and the family moved into their 1,100 square foot brick ranch home on Aslop Street. He was with a sports equipment retail firm for twelve years. He eventually managed one of its stores, was transferred to another when business declined, and finally was laid off in 1975. Howard quickly found a position at Hartleys, in its sports department, but was moved to its furniture department within a month. He earned about

$25,000 per year on the eve of the accident. During the summer of 1977, his supervisor offered him a promotion to the managerial level with a salary of $30,000. Helen was proud of her "self-made man." She went to work as a teller that summer for $130 a week. She explains that in the spring of 1977:

> We were down in Georgia for a wedding, my nephew's . . . . We spotted this house, and Howard says, 'Boy, would I like to have that house . . . . Maybe I could get transferred to Atlanta, and then we could live down there.' . . . . So we bought the house, knowing that I probably would have to go back to work . . . .

Thus Helen and Howard had a sense of building a future together in a mutually satisfying marriage. Helen declares that Howard was:

> A most reserved person, never cussed, never even raised his voice, very easy going, a very loving man, a giving man, always worried about the other guy, always wanting to be fair . . . extraordinarily honest.

Hope Wozniak confirms Helen's portrait of Howard: "He was real outgoing, quiet, a Southern gentleman . . . ." Helen continues:

> Howard's religion was a very quiet thing. Most of the time he wouldn't discuss religion with you. He insisted on grace before meals; he would not ever let anyone . . . take the Lord's name in vain . . . . He would not allow swearing in front of women . . . .

Howard was unable to attend church with his family when he managed the sports equipment outlet, for he had to work on Sundays. At Hartleys, he worked every other Sunday and occasionally accompanied his family to church on alternate Sundays. He spurned alcoholic beverages. Helen's religion is a strong force in her life, so she appreciated Howard's virtues. Dawn says, "I never heard my parents yell at each other."

Helen and Howard center their lives on their children. Helen recalls:

> Our house was always full of people. Howard and I felt that the best way to get a jump on keeping your kids out of trouble was to keep your kids home . . their friends with them . . . . Howard finished off the basement, bought a pool table . . . . You give them recreation at home, they don't have to go looking . . . . We served Pepsi in the basement, and they would shoot pool, and play cards, and play their rock-and-roll.

Howard sometimes would join them. He played steel and lead guitars and moonlighted with a band until about 1971. According to Josephine, Arlene was closest to Helen's mother, Todd to Helen, and Dawn to her father. Todd describes his relationship with his father as "buddy-buddy," adding, "As a young person I didn't see him too much." Dawn was Howard's darling. Helen says:

> She was absolutely the apple of his eye . . . . She was the baby . . . . She would get scared at night to go to bed, and he would go in there with his guitar, and he'd sing.

Howard and Helen were scout leaders, and Helen worked for the parents' organization at her children's elementary school.

Howard had few close friends, but he loved his job, because he constantly met people from all walks of life. He was proud of his wife's community involvement and backed her up when she ran for the school board in 1976, although she lost by a small margin. Helen often campaigned on behalf of candidates for the city council. She was awarded the keys to the city for her voluntary public service.

THE BLAIR FAMILY AFTER THE ACCIDENT

Relationships within the immediate family have changed profoundly since the accident because of Howard's brain damage, amnesia, and personality transformation. Helen laments:

> For all intent and purposes, the personality that was my husband and our children's father died in that accident . . . . Now we're dealing with someone we don't know . . . . I've started to forget what Howard was, and I don't like it . . . . Maybe that's the Lord's way of saying, 'Hey, you can't live with one foot in yesterday.'

Howard has but sporadic memories of his childhood and youth. He muses: "I can't remember the teachers' names, but I can remember their faces." Helen returned to Hillsdale from Georgia with Howard and Todd in the early summer of 1979. She hoped to stimulate her husband's remembrance of his more recent past. She explains:

> I thought . . . put him back in the house we lived in, the neighbors . . . drive him down the streets he used to drive, take him where he used to work--maybe things will start to happen. So we got up here, and he wouldn't live there . . . . Too many people. I think he felt crowded.

In the fall of 1979, the Blairs moved north of Hillsdale into a spacious brick ranch home with an outdoor swimming pool. This was made possible by a large cash settlement they won in court as a result of their injuries in the accident (see below). Helen thought Howard would benefit from the use of the pool, but he went into it only twice during the summer of 1980. He claims: "I have to be hot or sweaty to go into the pool," but Helen knows his reluctance stems from his phobia of germs. She gives supporting evidence:

> I hired people in the South to do [cleaning], but Howard got paranoid, because they didn't have health cards . . . . So he wouldn't let anybody in to do the work. Then his sister came over and did it for a while, and he accepted that all right . . . . When we came up here, my sister did it for

> a while, until she . . . wasn't feeling too good, so she wouldn't do it any more . . . . Howard says he's gonna hire people to do it for me, but I know he won't allow anybody to come in.

Hope Wozniak avows that Howard is "weird" about being with strangers and notes: "The kids' friends don't feel welcome any more . . . . He doesn't want them swimming in the pool, because they might have germs." Dawn sighs: "He takes things to extremes, like cleaniless."

Howard cannot evaluate or act upon information as most people would. He admits: "I'm confused." Todd expands upon his father's current mental abilities:

> He tries to think . . . It's pitiful, really . . . . He's smart enough to know things, but he takes them out of context . . . . We can't talk to him . . . . Something went wrong with the car . . . . My mother called the dealership to complain. My father got very upset . . . thinking they might get somebody to hit him . . . . He watches the news--that's his favorite . . . dwells on the crime rate . . . . He would . . . on . . . a nice day . . . have the doors closed and locked.

Helen adds her observations:

> There are things he's extremely sensitive about. He really didn't want me to come here this morning [for the interview] . . . . He's afraid that I will be misunderstood and that it will come as being critical of the police, and if I make the police mad, they may kill him.
>
> Howard is extremely susceptible to what he reads or sees on television . . . . It's a very touchy situation; you have to be very careful. You almost have to be a professional psychologist to keep the peace . . . . He may react one way to a situation once and then entirely different to the same situation again.

Howard's inability to reason things out blights his relationships with all people, but only members of his family must cope daily with his uncontrollable temper.

Howard's "outrages," as Dawn calls them, have plunged the family into misery. Helen speaks:

> He's hit me, he's hit Todd. He's hit Dawn . . . . His strength was there in his left arm, and if you were unaware, he could lay you out pretty good. He slapped Dawn into the wall one time, cut her up--she had braces on that contributed to the cutting . . . . It's a lashing out type of thing, not premeditated. But it hurts--not so much the blow as the fact that this gentle, kind, loving man can be so directly opposite.

> Usually when he curses he is in an absolute rage . . . never quiet . . . . He used to scare me to death, because when he would get into one of these rages, and he would stand up, and I never knew whether he was going to hit us . . . his right arm would shake terribly . . . . I tried to talk to Howard . . . to let him know that certain conduct is unacceptable to family and society as a whole . . . . We talked about it one time, about his arm shaking and stuff, and he says, 'That scares you, don't it?' 'Yes, it does.' 'Well, I do that on purpose to get your sympathy . . . . See here, I hold it in a certain place, and it will shake,' and he will show me!
>
> I can remember when I would sit up all night long for fear that he'd get up during the night and hurt somebody. I couldn't go to sleep.

Todd offers his impressions:

> It may start out with a simple conversation. He might be irritated over something, and if you don't agree with him, he will shout, he will shake abnormally, he will shake and shake and scream, storm around the house. You have to be there, because it's just terrible. It makes everybody shake . . . .

Howard imagines that people are conspiring against him. Helen states:

> We still have to be careful that Howard doesn't think we're plotting against him. And Howard hasn't said anything, lately, but one time he voiced the concern that he thought that Todd and I were having some kind of sordid affair.

However, she thinks that Howard's behavior is slightly more controlled now, even if his thoughts still run wild. She comments: "He doesn't try to hit much any more, so most of Howard's hurting is on a mental level . . . just mental abuse as opposed to physical abuse." Hope Wozniak notices that Helen's physical aches and pains worsen sharply after one of Howard's outbursts at home. She sympathizes with the whole family: "They get mad . . . at him for doing these things which he can't help or he doesn't know how to control or change . . . To be with it every day, day in and day out." Todd sums up life in the Blair family today:

> We walk around trying to make less static . . . to make things calmer . . . . It isn't normal, really. We try to act as happy as possible around my father . . . . It's just a dead end for us.

Howard's vague awareness of his inadequacies and his attempts to stifle his low estimation of his worth slip out in many of his statements:

> I've always wanted to be the first and the best . . . . I'd like to go to work for the President . . . Oh, I'm cocky. I'm smarter than anybody I talked to . . . . I think I can

> do anything . . . . It's just all a matter of opinion. I think I am important, but that's just my own opinion. Ask her [Helen] if I'm important . . . . I feel it's a man and his household. He's the smartest one . . . 'cuz smartest is based on a person's opinion of things, and her opinion and my opinion may differ . . . . When two people get married and think different things . . . . Just 'cuz you get married, it doesn't mean that you think like the other person . . . . We share opinions. We just don't agree with them.
>
> Part of my brain was wiped out . . . . I can't do what I used to. I used to sell people things . . . . I don't talk well enough to give my opinion across to people . . . . Because now it's up to her to do all the things that used to be, in my opinion, up to me . . . . I don't like it. I mean, she's doing a damn good job, far better than I could do . . . . You know what I would like to do rather than work? I would like just to start managing my own affairs and my family . . . . With this kind of brain I have, you can't do that, because you can't think what you should do or when you should do it. Everything is changed.

Helen gives her perspective on Howard's sense of helplessness:

> He feels less of a man because he can't work . . . very sensitive to his obligation to support, which is what bothers him now . . . . He realizes he gets social security disability checks, he don't want it. He wants to give it back to the government, because things are rough, and he wants to help get rid of that federal deficit.

Todd, however, thinks his father would benefit from reasonable productive activity. In Georgia, Howard handled deliveries for a local florist, a family friend. Todd remarks:

> It wasn't much, but it was a . . . regular routine . . . . I bet he wouldn't flare up as much. He would feel useful, but he thinks he's useful when he spends money . . . by handling the affairs.

Todd feels his father is incapable of handling money reasonably. Gabriel Moran, the Blairs' lawyer, agrees. He states:

> Howard has had some very irrational requirements for money. While the case was pending [late summer of 1979], and he had some insurance money, he . . . had his wife buy a Lincoln Continental. He . . . thought that he wanted a motor home . . . a camper . . . a van . . . an extra house here and there.

But Hope Wozniak thinks Howard could be given a little money to blow now and

then: "He wanted to buy some stock . . . . He should have been able to."

CHANGES IN FAMILY DYNAMICS

Changes in family dynamics since the accident have been far-reaching. Helen's conjugal relationship has deteriorated, and she bears the primary responsibility for dealing with Howard. Todd has given her inestimable support, but he wants to break away from his parents and build his own future. Dawn's normal teenage problems were exacerbated by the psychological turmoil the accident generated within her family, and she has lost all sense of emotional security. Arlene, who now resides on the west coast with her husband, is alienated from her father. Josephine Hayes recalls:

> Right after the accident, Howard . . . didn't want her in the home. She wasn't allowed even to come to the house. Howard had this terrible thing about germs, and I believe she was working in a nursing home, and that carried germs, according to Howard.

Gabriel Moran affirms: "He [Howard] totally disowned her after the accident . . . emotionally disowned her." Josephine updates Arlene's relationship with her family: "Helen hears from Arlene . . . . They talk, and not too often . . . ." For better or worse, the accident affected Arlene least of all the Blair family members.

Dawn

Dawn's ideas about what youth is all about are perhaps idyllic, but they reflect her retrospective views on her own experiences prior to her parents' accident:

> Teenage years of a person's life should be the most carefree . . . . Your parents take care of everything, you get to go out and play . . . from eighteen, nineteen on, you're gonna have to cope with bills and taxes and emotional stress, children.

Afterwards, Dawn initially did not know if her parents would live or die, and if they lived, what permanent disabilities they might sustain. She is deeply troubled by her father's "outrages." She exclaims:

> I just want to yell at him . . . just lash out back at him and see how he likes it . . . . Sometimes I cry, I get so upset . . . . I'll say, 'Look what you're doing!' I'll yell at him to quit yelling . . . . Then he'll get mad at me . . . . My mom keeps saying, 'Be respectful, he's your father.' He's <u>not</u> my father. He's a figure there who's supposed to be my father, but is . . . someone who throws temper tantrums when he pleases, who hurts the people who care about him the most . . . . I just . . . acquired this, not a hate, but a resentment towards him . . . .

Helen understands Dawn's plight:

> It was hard for her to deal with this obscene, illiterate, cussing whatever . . . . She had a lot of trouble . . . because she was afraid of Howard, she didn't know him, she was ashamed of him, didn't want her friends coming over because you would never know what he would say. He might be very nice . . . cuss you out . . . make obscene remarks.

Dawn's relationship with her mother is loving, yet tense. She has great sympathy for her mother's predicament. Dawn muses: "After an outrage I'll go to my mom and hold her and tell her I love her . . . . But there's really not much you can do--you can't kiss it all away." Helen watches over Dawn's moral development and well being. She worries:

> . . . right now she's been working with her brother's group [his band]. Dawn was with a gospel group. Dawn knows she shouldn't be in this rock group, she should be in the gospel group . . . . It really worries her . . . . Well, I don't know, she worries me . . . . Sometimes I tend to rattle on when I shouldn't.

Dawn did not want to go to Georgia with her parents in January 1978, but she was happy to remain there with her Aunt Lucille and Uncle Bob when her parents returned to Hillsdale in the summer of 1979. Dawn enthuses:

> Being in Georgia <u>without</u> my parents was the best thing [that] ever happened to me . . . . When I lived with my aunt and uncle, they took me places . . . to gospel singing, to church, to shopping. . . . . It was so normal . . . I loved it!

Dawn's involvement in religion, in her words:

> Eased the pressure. I was saved before, but when I really got involved in that church . . . . I wasn't sick at all--no colds, no sore throats . . . . I was just physically great all the time. I was happy. I had problems at home when my mom and dad were down there, but nothing I couldn't overcome.

But her peaceful interlude was marred by the deaths of loved relatives:

> In May . . . 1978 . . . my Uncle Ken died in a dunebug accident . . . . The following September my grandpa had his heart attack, and the following May he died. He was fifty-four, and all of us were very, very close to him. All of Todd's and my and my sister's friends always called him, 'Poppa' . . . . my mother's stepfather, he was more of a father than a stepfather . . . . Poppa was like a replacement of dad . . . . When he . . . died . . . I thought . . . 'I'm finished with all the pain that comes with losing somebody--I didn't want to get attached to anybody.

Todd echoes Dawn's love for 'Poppa:' "Stepfather, but he was blood to us!" His wife died the following Easter. In the fall of 1980, Dawn returned to her parents' beautiful new home north of Hillsdale, and to its unhappiness.

Once more the pressures of Helen's and Howard's tragedy weigh heavily upon Dawn. She says sadly:

> I can't be a normal kid at home . . . . Why can't I break down? What can't I cry? Why can't I hide and run? . . . . Then my mom says, 'Well, look what I've been through.' . . . . Why do I have to go through that too? . . . . Hey, I'm seventeen . . . I shouldn't have to be going through all of this . . . . Most of it is bottled up inside me, which is not good.

After Howard's scenes, Dawn sighs:

> My brother and I never hold each other, we just want to be left alone . . . . I'll go in my room and cry a little bit, or leave the house, or go downstairs and listen to the stereo.

Religion is not as comforting as before. Dawn wonders:

> If you love us so much, God, why do we have to experience so much pain? Daddy's come a long way, and I thank God for that, ... But sometimes I lose faith . . . . When he throws these outrages . . . . Why are You putting us through this?

Metropolitan Okera's churches lack the warmth of Georgia's country churches. In Dawn's words, "It's different." Dawn was enrolled as a junior in Hillsdale High, from which Arlene and Todd graduated. There she can enjoy the companionship of her childhood friends. However, Dawn finds little to interest her in school, which creates problems for her at home. As she explains:

> If I come home and tell my mom about a teacher that I don't like and put him down, daddy gets mad, and he doesn't even know the teacher . . . . It's hard for my mom to really listen to my problems . . . . I try to keep my grades up, but she doesn't understand . . . that my grades in school are hurting, because of my sometimes not-caring attitude. I don't care, I'm so upset, sometimes I even leave school.

Dawn avoids staying home. She derives her greatest satisfactions in life from her association with her brother's band, her friends, and her boyfriend. She elaborates:

> I go out every weekend . . . . I can let my frustrations out in my music . . . . My mom started on me about going out every weekend . . . . I just say, 'Mom, I'm grown up now . . . I do my work, and I help you out, and I want to get out.' . . . .

> I'm doing things that I shouldn't be doing . . . . I drink more . . . I'm nervous . . . I need a drink . . . . When I'm out with my friends, I do, because they do, and because it relaxes me . . . . I have a few, and I feel good . . . I play cards with my friends. They are not all on drugs . . . . I can't associate with people who are strung out on drugs . . . .
>
> I have a boyfriend, and we want to get married next summer or the summer after that . . . . I've always wanted to be the little housewife who's going around and dusting everything . . . decorating the house and playing with the dogs . . . .

Dawn's boyfriend is five years older than she is. He is a medical technician and part-time musician in Todd's band. Dawn is reluctant to tell her mother how serious she and her boyfriend are about one another. She worries about how her father would act at her wedding, walking her down the aisle and giving her away. She worries about how he would behave to her husband and children after she was married. She searches for security, which eludes her at present. Hope Wozniak is optimistic about Dawn's future, summing up her situation in these words: "She's been twelve going on twenty ever since she was twelve . . . . She'll leave, and she'll get married and raise her family--she'll be okay."

Todd

Already a high school graduate when his parents' accident occurred, Todd was exploring a career in country rock music. He assembled his own band and sometimes wrote and arranged his own songs. He worked at odd jobs by day to earn his keep, for he still lived at home. He has become a pillar of strength to his mother and a father to Dawn. He observes that when his uncle and grandfather died, he and his cousin Kevin were the only adult males left in the family. Today Todd is frustrated with his father's lack of progress. As he puts it:

> The love is always there . . . never gone . . . . I feel a bit disappointed in him . . . sometimes annoyed at him . . . . We try to give him as much respect as we can, because it's hard on him . . . . But we can't give him too much--he can't handle it.

Todd also grasps Dawn's dilemmas and shows great concern for her welfare:

> Dawn's getting to be a little bit wild . . . a bit hard to control . . . . Dawn wants to stay here [with] her boyfriend . . . and the band . . . First love--she's not even out of school.
>
> When the accident first happened I took over the discipline at age nineteen for a twelve-year-old . . . . Then all of a sudden I felt fiftyish . . . . It affected her probably

too. Because I was the big hand, 'No,' . . . 'Yes.' . . . I was just her brother . . . .

He has no regrets about remaining at home after the accident when he clearly was needed. Now, however, he wants to be free to establish a life of his own. He says:

> It's what I had to do . . . . I didn't mind . . . . Nobody else was going to do it . . . . Now it's getting to be four years, and I'm wondering where I'm gonna go . . . . I started school again . . . . I would like to stabilize myself so I can get out on my own . . . . I don't think you can guide a family until you've really been on your own . . . .

Todd finished a course in medical rescue technology at Hillsdale Community College, but he doesn't like the field. He has switched to general business. Nevertheless, he says firmly: "The main interest is my music." Todd has a girlfriend whom he wants to marry, but he feels he has no right to ask her until he has a steady job.

Until recently Todd could not bring himself to leave home permanently, because he worries about his mother's well being. He states:

> I'm very scared for her . . . . She had one [breakdown] already . . . . If nothing changes him, it will be the same as long as she stays . . . . I don't really know how one person can take as much as she has taken and stay.

Helen is ambivalent about whether or not Todd should remain at home. As she puts it:

> He's at home, and it's hard on him. He's twenty-three years old . . . doesn't want to be home all his life . . . . I want him to . . . have a life of his own, although I'm a little afraid of him leaving . . . . I won't have a man . . . in the house anymore . . . . It's not fair to expect this boy to give up his life at nineteen . . . . He's kinda like his daddy [was] . . . never one to air his problems to the public . . . . Todd and I don't get an opportunity to talk much.

The emotional stress Todd is under takes its toll on him occasionally, as he explains:

> Nerves brings it out . . . physically. I was in Georgia . . . . I was getting really bad chest pains . . . heart or what? So I went and seen about it, and the doctor says it all was nerves. I was very surprised, 'cuz it was a pain.
>
> Sometimes you get this feeling you're gonna blow up . . . . Something's racing inside you . . . .

Todd copes with his depression and anxiety by submerging himself in his music, by writing sad songs "about a fictional person . . . put into a story like manner." Or he takes a walk alone. He is cheered by the few bright moments in his parents' new life together. He muses:

> We have some happy times . . . like on my mother's birthday . . . . She got up, my father made breakfast for her--biscuits . . . She loved it. She just couldn't believe it. He had flowers sent to her, and he was . . . just very positive.

One close friend stood by Todd throughout the Blair family's tribulations. He relates appreciatively:

> When this first happened, he was with me every day . . . . I would have a chance of going out once a week, and he was always there. He was there during the week . . . . All my friends were great, but this particular guy was always there . . . . He came down on visits to Georgia a couple of times.

Helen, Howard, and Dawn Blair moved back to their home in Georgia in the autumn of 1981. Todd remains in the Okera area, as he indicated he would in his interview in the spring of 1981. He said:

> My mother and father are planning on going back to Georgia. I'm not going to go to begin with . . . . If things are real bad, I'll be the first one down there. This gives me a chance.

Helen

Ultimately, it is Helen who must deal with Howard and cope with her tremendous emotional stress. Howard leans heavily upon her. Todd discloses how Howard expresses his fear of losing Helen:

> She went to Tennessee to see relatives. She never had one day when he didn't call her. He gets frightened . . . . He knows a lot of things that he's done was mean, very mean. And he always apologizes.
>
> If my mother were out at the store and he would get hungry, I would be there with him . . . I wouldn't make him anything. I would rather him do it himself. So I would tell him . . . but he would already know, that there was lunch meat in the refrigerator . . . . He might grab a cookie and then pout like a kid would until she got home and then try to make her feel sorry for him starving.

Howard admits: "I've probably given her a harder time than anybody else." He shuns psychological counseling, though family and friends urge him to seek it. He continues to dominate Helen. She contemplates leaving him when she gets

depressed, but something holds her back. She confides:

> I want to run, and yet I can't . . . . I don't want to get so upset I'll leave . . . . I'd hate to think that there was a spark there that died because I couldn't hang on another day . . . . I can't see anybody taking care of him. I'd worry about him being treated right . . . . I'm not going to let them take his pride . . . . I don't have any illusions of some kind of distorted loyalty . . . . I don't want him put away, because he is not that bad. He does not deserve to be in some ill-run institution . . . . If it ever comes to . . . where I can't take care of him any more--and I certainly don't grow younger--I feel . . . the court will have to allow him enough money to hire competent male nurses to come in . . . and keep him in a home environment. I think if Howard is taken out of a home environment, it will utterly destroy him.

Todd knows his mother could never desert his father. He declares: "She could never be totally happy . . . always worrying about how he is." All Helen's friends agree with Todd's appraisal of his mother's psychological bind.

The accident transformed the relationship between Howard and Helen from husband-wife to child-mother/nurse. Intimate relations between them have ceased. Helen explains:

> I have a serious deformity . . . . So it wouldn't matter if Howard didn't have any problems . . . . But he gets very frustrated, because he feels like . . . his sex life goes wanted. But he doesn't want to hurt me . . . . I have a lot of trouble with it, because I'm a thing, an object . . . . He does not want to be emotionally involved at all. He will hug me every now and then . . . allow me to kiss him on the cheek . . . . I would try for his benefit.
>
> He'll sit at the table . . . start to pout. I can tell it by the look on his face; quite a few times, I fall right into it. 'What's the matter, Howard?' And it's, 'I'm the only man in the world who is so rich and cannot have any sex.' . . . . I sit down and try to talk to him, and he starts yelling at me and cussing me out . . . . Most women have to have love and then sex. Men need sex. If love is there, that's terrific, and if it's not, that's okay, too . . . . He was always loving before . . . .

Today Helen is the family's major decision-maker, yet this role sits uncomfortably upon her shoulders. Even before the accident, Hope Wozniak explains: "If Howard wanted to do something, she would do whatever, and even if she wanted to do something Howard was against, she could not do it." Helen would ask his permission to have coffee at a friend's home; if he objected, she would not go. Dawn adds:

> She feels . . . that marriage vows were the wife is obedient

> to the husband . . . . I wish she'd just tell my dad where to go, and if he didn't like it, that's just too bad!

Josephine Hayes says, "She's still trying to treat him as if . . . he was the old Howard." Thus, Helen continues to defer to Howard and tries to shield his pride. She rationalizes:

> I really do try to get his opinion . . . . 'What do you want to eat tonight?' Make him make decisions. 'Would you like to watch so and so?' 'I don't know about buying this, Howard--what do you think?' I never just decide . . . I always insist that he's treated with dignity and respect. I didn't buy that house . . . until they agreed to let him sign the papers, because it was important to him.

Helen's friends admire her capable handling of family affairs since the accident but feel her progress in challenging Howard's control over her has been very slow.

Helen usually holds up admirably under the pressures of her post-accident life. She derives strength from religion. As she puts it: "I think that anybody's religious aspects are terribly important to survival . . . . It can make a difference between total defeat and surviving." Understandably, however, she has broken down on occasion. She was hospitalized toward the end of the summer of 1978, for what her doctors called "anniversary depression." It was precipitated by one of Howard's outbursts. Helen recalls:

> I was hospitalized for a week, and I cried, and I couldn't quit crying. I wasn't hysterical. I just cried all the time, and my sister-in-law took me to the doctor, and they gave me a shot to knock me out . . . . But do you know I still conducted my business? I had my son come down and bring my checkbook so I could pay my bills . . . . I had gotten myself down to . . . 87 pounds . . . .

She soon snapped back to her old self.

Helen received counsel from a variety of sources. Her friends have given her emotional support and practical advice throughout, and they have urged her to go to a family counselor. Ministers offered Helen consolation and sympathy in her moments of despair. She relates that the needlessness and pain of the accident:

> Were causing enormous conflicts in me, because I had come to a point where I swore a lot, I hit a lot. And then I'd call my pastor up and tell him to come over here, because . . . I'm getting bad, I'm not being Christian at all about this, and it troubled me deeply . . . . He helped me enormously, because . . . he didn't come over here and say, 'God's gonna get you for swearing,' but he would say, 'The Lord understands, Helen. Just keep fighting it.'

Helen also saw a psychiatrist briefly. She declares: "She was very good, I

liked her a lot, but I really didn't feel that she would help me any more from that point." Hope and Josephine are convinced that family counseling, not psychiatric therapy, is what Helen needs. As Josephine wisely notes: "[The psychiatrist] looked at one problem--one person's problem, and it's not one person's problem . . . . It's a whole . . . and has to be dealt with as a family." Before the Blairs returned to Georgia in the fall of 1981, Helen finally went to the family counseling service her friends recommended. She says, "It really helped."

Little by little Helen has begun to edge away from Howard's control without abandoning him. Josephine describes the process:

> In the beginning she was so afraid . . . . She would not stand up to anything. She would literally shriek--it was like she was afraid of his violence . . . . She didn't want to hurt his feelings . . . . She slowly, very slowly has been able to stand up to him . . . . She came over, and . . . Howard told her she couldn't leave, and she said, 'I'm leaving anyhow,' and she took the keys and walked out of the house . . . . She came in and told a little story about how she did this, and a bunch of us stood up and clapped.
>
> To this very day . . . she still likes it to be Howard's decision, even if it has to be a pretend . . . . She needs someone in authority or with the education or whatever, she needs to know that it is the <u>right</u> thing . . . . She feels so weak, and she's not a weak person at all.

In 1980 Helen took a course in general business at Hillsdale Community College. She says: "I needed it to better understand our finances." It had a therapeutic effect on her. Josephine observes:

> It brought out so much in her . . . that she can do anything . . . . She started doing her hair and make-up. She was so enthusiastic about her studies . . . . I noticed her go into a deep depression right after school let out . . . . She didn't tell Howard . . . . She thought 'I still want to have a legitimate excuse to get out of the house.'

Helen was going to take a full load of courses, but she could not bring herself to leave Howard alone in the house for so many hours. So she took only one course, which met two afternoons a week. However, in the fall of 1981, Helen enrolled full time in the two-year paralegal program at an Atlanta area community college.

LEGAL ASPECTS

Gabriel Moran became the Blair family's lawyer on the recommendation of Howard's supervisor at Hartleys. Mr. Moran is his son-in-law. Todd made the initial contact with the attorney about two weeks after the accident, but Helen dealt with him afterwards. Mr. Moran filed the case in court within a week of

receiving it. The minimal time span to determine the extent of a brain injury is about two years. The Blair suit was settled in two years, less ten days, from the date of the accident.

Mr. Moran spent approximately four hundred billable hours on the case. He visited his clients in the hospital, had a photographer take pictures of them, the accident scene, and the vehicles involved in the crash. He made two trips to Georgia, first in the summer of 1978 and then in the winter of 1979, securing depositions from five doctors there. Fifteen more depositions were taken from employees of the Hillsdale Police Department and county agencies responsible for maintaining roads. He received between $175,000 and $200,000 from the settlement sum for his services, in accordance with state regulations for lawyers' fees in contingency cases.

The original suit was against the City of Hillsdale and the officer who caused the accident, taken as a unit. The municipality then sued the chasee and Hillsdale County. All defendants brought into the case by other defendants shared potential liability. The county was charged with failure to ensure visibility of its stop sign on Unruh Street at Washington Line. The city of Hillsdale had separate insurance carriers for the police department and for the tree obscuring the stop sign. Ironically, the police department and the Blairs were insured by the same company. Five insurance companies contributed to the $900,000 settlement awarded to the Blairs. The amount of each company's contribution did not match its client's degree of responsibility for the accident. The police department, according to Mr. Moran, was underinsured. He elaborates:

> There was never any doubt in the defendants' mind as to the amount of money we would have to put together . . . [or of] the policeman's liability, and that the city would pay the full insurance amount, as was the case with the chasee . . . . They were convinced to contribute about 80 percent of their policy amounts, which we felt, according to their involvement . . . was fairly good, since the companies representing the stop sign and the tree even put more in than the police department.

Disputation did not center on whether or not each company was indeed liable, but upon what percentage of the whole each would pay. The insurance companies, in Mr. Moran's words, "just went through the motions of verifying everything."

The court hearings exasperated Helen. She complains:

> Every time I was in court down there, we had a 10 o'clock appointment. The judge didn't even show up until 10:30. They sat around there dilly dallying around doing nothing, leave the courtroom, come back an hour later . . . . The judge wants to settle it. He's worried about <u>his</u> time.
>
> If a lawyer asks you a question, you not only have to answer it, but you have to decide before you do how it's going to

> be interpreted . . . for or against you. My lawyer told me, . . . 'Just answer their questions . . . . If I don't think you should answer, I'll tell them.'

Helen told Mr. Moran that she would go to jail for contempt of court before she gave any response that would humiliate Howard. Howard was brought before the judge and interrogated briefly. He could not give his age, so he was soon excused. Helen resented the irrelevant and degrading questions put to her: How much money did Howard make? How many husbands did she have? Were all her children legitimate? She fumes: "It really upset me that they were asking those kinds of questions."

Helen surrendered to the $900,000 settlement under duress. She explains:

> I said, 'No, that's not enough . . . $900,000 is nowhere near $4,500,000.' I'm tending Howard, the pressures are enormous, I got bills to pay . . . . I had to have a housekeeper, because I couldn't do the work, and the nurses for Howard, who charge at least forty bucks a shift, and the insurance company would pay for that only after you pay . . . . I finally decided . . . just go ahead and take their $900,000 and leave me alone--give me full medical . . . . They said that if you don't settle, you could be five, ten years in litigation, which I couldn't imagine myself lasting that long even with a reserve fund.

From the date of the accident to the date the settlement checks were tendered, the Blairs lived on their savings and Howard's disability pay from Hartleys. Emotions flared as Helen accepted the insurance payments. She relates:

> It irritated the life out of me to sit there in that little office, and they're all writing out their little checks, and they're saying, 'I really think you made a good deal.' I was so aggravated, I was <u>so</u> aggravated I could have screamed, and I did in the bathroom . . . . About that time Howard was charging up, he said he didn't want any of the money, and he's cussin' and hollerin' . . . . All this time Todd was trying to placate him.

Gabriel Moran continues: "The Blairs were able . . . after the settlement to still have . . . between them some $770,000." Each child was awarded a few thousand dollars for loss of parental companionship. The remainder was split between Howard and Helen, his share being five times hers, because, as Mr. Moran concludes:

> . . . a ratio of ten or twenty to one . . . could be justified . . . considering she had an injury which disabled her for a year or two, and he has an injury which more severely disabled him for the twenty-five year balance of his life.

Today the Blair family derives income from three sources. First, a so-

cial security disability check arrives each month. Second, Howard's disability insurance from Hartleys provides him $1,000 per month for the rest of his life, plus full medical coverage (zero deductible, 100 percent costs) for ailments related to the accident and partial medical coverage ($50 deductible, 80 percent costs) for dependents. Third, the trust fund in which the settlement money was placed provides income. Howard's portion is allocated to him through probate court. Gabriel Moran states:

> When someone is legally incapacitated, there has to be some sort of court approval . . . . He doesn't have the judgment factors that will enable him to handle this money . . . protect it for the rest of his life . . . . The probate court could have supervised Helen, but . . . in discussing this with her, there was no question that it would be better yet to get some independent party that would say, 'No,' to him . . . make it . . . easier on her.

The family is allotted $2,500 per month. Helen and Howard must petition the court for funds in excess of this amount to meet a justified need, such as money for the down payment on the house north of Hillsdale. Helen states:

> They will not allow you to get into the principal, because they figure . . . he's gotta have funds to support him for twenty more years. So the first three years . . . you have to live on income. After that you can go a percentage point into the principal.

Gabriel Moran says that the Blairs have not yet touched the principal, should not have to for the next three or four years, but eventually will have to do so. The Blairs now have more material amenities than ever before. Helen and Howard drive the latest model luxury cars and recently gave Dawn a new Mustang. On moving to Georgia in the autumn of 1981, the Blairs sold their sumptuous house north of Hillsdale. Helen complained of the expenses of maintaining it properly. The mortgage payment was "hefty," taxes were $3,500 a year, and utilities ran $350 a month. The Blairs now reside in Georgia in the four bedroom colonial they purchased in 1977. It is situated on an acre of land, and the property taxes barely exceed $100 per year. Helen still abhors wasting money. The Blairs' new affluence is small compensation for their new health problems and mental anguish. Hope Wozniak reflects: "What they had was a lot. A lot more than money could buy, I'll tell you that!"

The accident which brought such misery to the Blairs could have been avoided. It was the unforeseen consequence of a needless hot pursuit. Prodded by Gabriel Moran, who keeps statistics on accidents resulting from high speed police chases, Helen has become aware of the national scope of this problem and what can be done to minimize it. She has written letters to newspapers, city councilpersons, and legislators on the dangers of hot pursuits and the need for police training in the appropriate use of patrol cars. In January of 1981, Helen, Howard, and Todd spent a week at a N.A.P.D. training school in Texas Mr. Moran told them about. Helen was impressed with the course, which can be brought to any police department at a cost of about $200 per officer enrolled. Proper training of policemen can reduce accidents caused by high speed chases, in which officers as well as innocent civilians may be injured or killed, by forty to sixty percent. Helen wonders:

> It cost more money to replace the cars in these hot pursuits, more money in litigation that it would ever cost them to train folks. Where are their priorities?

The Hillsdale Police Department tried to justify the hot pursuit that caused the Blairs' accident and evade their responsibility for the extent of the victims' injuries. Helen relates angerly:

> I can understand why the department did it, because of the legalities . . . but they first said they didn't hit Howard, the little car they were chasing did. Then they implied that Howard had been drinking . . . . Howard doesn't drink, period! . . . Then they implied that his seat had only one bolt in it; consequently that was the force that moved him from the seat and . . . out.
>
> The officer said he didn't see the stop sign . . . . He had been on the force some ten years and insisted he knew the streets like the back of his hand, so why did he decide to accelerate at an intersection? . . . . He . . . admitted doing 50-55 miles an hour on impact.

Helen expresses frustration over the department's continuing indulgence in hot pursuits:

> There were either four or five policemen involved in another hot pursuit, one of them [was] the officer that hit us . . . reported speeds of 80 miles an hour, northbound on a southbound road, which was bad enough, but then they decided . . . the guy deserved Officer of the Month Award for that, nobody got hurt! . . . . It was another minor situation.

Helen concludes in disgust:

> I've prayed about this for so long, trying not to hate the man but the system that put him there . . . . The guy didn't have no training . . . . They didn't even have a decent <u>policy</u> down there at the station.

Reminders of the needless cause of the accident impinge upon the Blairs' consciousness daily. Television's urban adventure programs glorify high speed chases and daring automobile get-aways. Sirens and flashing lights are common sounds and sights on all major streets and highways. Helen states:

> A lot of police officers and former police officers tell me that they would not get involved in a hot pursuit, no matter <u>what</u> . . . . The young ones . . . live up to a TV image.

She continues:

> When I see flashing lights I am almost frozen . . . or [when] I hear a siren . . . I have a C.B. in my car, and

> I was on my way home, and I had it on . . . . I heard a hot pursuit . . . taking place near Grant Hospital, and I literally froze up. I couldn't get out of my car . . . . Pulled over and sat there and cried like a baby . . . . The Lord pulled me together, and I went home and tried to act like nothing had happened.

Helen survived the accident with her personality intact. Her husband did not.