A little about me:

I’m a 45 year old single mom of 3 adult children, 18,22 and 23 years old. My two youngest are in college and live at home. My ex-husband was the father of my kids and he passed away in 2004. Prior to that he had suffered with drug and alcohol addiction and was never around so I basically raised the children myself.

I joined the Air Force when I was 19 and served one active duty enlistment. I was stationed in Germany and served in support of the first Gulf War, Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. It was during this time that I married my ex-husband ( high school sweetheart) and started my family. After I was discharged in 1991 I was a stay at home mom for several years. As my marriage problems ensued I tried finding work but I was not able to (I was living in California at the time). I moved to Bastrop TX because I have family in the Austin area. I initially was staying with my children in a battered women’s shelter but after 6 weeks I had found a job and got an apartment. It was very difficult supporting my family on my low wages but eventually I got a job at Capital Metro and things got better. I had medical insurance and was making a good wage and had opportunity for advancement. I was eventually promoted and was able to purchase a home in 2002.It was during this time that I started getting into road biking. I’ve done the Houston to Austin MS150 3 time as well as the San Antonio to Corpus Christi MS150 along with various other smaller charity rides.

After the terrorist attacks on September 11th 2001, I felt compelled to join the Air Force Reserve and serve my country once again. About a year after I joined I started having a lot of hip pain when I ran. X-rays showed I had moderate arthritis in my left hip. I was in my thirties and the doctors were puzzled to why I had arthritis. I was able to continue in the Air Force Reserve and my arthritis was monitored by the medical wing. I quit riding around 2005 due to pain in my hip. In the summer of 2007 my squadron leadership asked me if I would volunteer to serve on the deployment team going to Iraq in January 2008, I said yes. I left for Iraq 2 days after Christmas in 2007, arrived in Iraq on New Year’s Day 2008. Being away from my kids and serving in a war zone was one of the hardest things I have ever done but I would do it again without hesitation. That deployment was an amazing experience, I learned a lot about myself and I formed many close friendships.

My arthritis continued to worsen and by April 2010 I needed a hip replacement. I had the hip replacement and this caused the Air Force to do a medical review board to determine if I could remain in the military. I requested a waiver and fought very hard to be able to continue my service and I was successful. I was granted a permanent waiver exempting me from running and instead doing the 2 mile walk. I started riding again and I was doing really well.

December 17th 2013 I went out for my normal ride in my neighborhood. About halfway through my ride I was hit by a car full of teenagers that made an illegal left turn and t-boned me. I suffered multiple cuts and sprains, a severe concussion, twisted ankles, broken nose and broken right clavicle, my dominant arm. (this is the first time I had ever broken a bone in my life.) I was lifeflighted to Brackenridge and released the following day. The girl that hit me initially was not even ticketed but after I hired a lawyer he contacted Bastrop Police department and pointed out all the violations the girl had committed. She was then ticketed for failing to yield while making a left turn as well as being in violation of the provisionary license laws.

My recovery has been much longer than anticipated; I have been off work since the accident and have not been paid since the beginning of February 2014 when my vacation and sick time ran out. My collarbone did not heal in the expected time and was declared a nonunion in April 2014. It was surgically repaired on April 18th. While trying to determine why I was not healing it was discovered that I have a genetic connective tissue disorder called Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, this is why I had a nonunion. (2 of my children have also been diagnosed with the condition) At the end of June my collarbone was still a nonunion so I was given a bone growth stimulator to wear in an effort to get it to heal. My last checkup August 19th showed new calcification so it appears the device is working. I have had a lot of clicking and popping sounds when I raise my affected arm and I just learned that my collarbone is slipping out of my AC joint. I have a very labor intensive job and I cannot return to work until I am able to do all aspects of my position. If I am not cleared to return to work by December 18th 2014 I will be placed on the inactive employee list and lose my medical insurance. As a consequence of my injuries and subsequent diagnosis with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, I am in the process of being discharged from the Air Force Reserve. I will not be able to earn my retirement and more importantly to me, I will not be able to continue to serve my country.

I am very thankful that I survived my accident and that my injuries were not worse. I could have easily died; I was told that my helmet saved my life. I have so much to be grateful for but I am still upset about having my entire life turned upside down due to a teenage girl’s stupidity. I am afraid of losing my insurance and of being sued by the medical providers. As of today my lost wages are at $55,000. The lifeflight was almost $28,000. The insurance policy limit is $100,000 and it will not cover all my lost wages and medical bills (which are still growing). I have no idea when I will be able to return to work but I hope that I will be able to return by the December 18th deadline.