

## Our Big Smash Up

By Sarah Hancox

"I can't breathe!!" I gasped. I was suspended in the air by my seat belt kicking out my legs.

We had been driving down State Highway 56 on a nice and sunny Monday morning at 100 km/h when all of a sudden this black car turned in front of us. We did not even have time to break or swerve; we just drove right into the side of it! When our van collided with the car the impact threw our van up so high in the air that a fully grown man could have walked underneath it. It rolled upside down, and spun around, all while still airborne. When the van came down it slid on its roof into the ditch. When we had stopped moving, Mum rolled out of the front window. Sam's seat belt had given way some time during the crash and she sat on the side window beneath us trying to catch her breath. I managed to undo my seat belt and fell onto my sister Sam who was underneath me. Now I was sitting on the window beside Sam and that's when I looked around and saw Dad's hand covered in blood and I said in a bit of a whisper to Sam "Look at Dad", and I felt sick.

I heard Mum yell all our names out and we all answered yes, we were ok. A guy from the nearby Reid's Transport trucking company, who had seen the crash, ran over to us and asked if we were ok. He was trying to look in at us through the windows. The windows were jammed shut so he told Sam and I to cover our heads. Sam covered herself and leaned over me and the man smashed the window with a sledge hammer and then pulled me out because I was right underneath the window. My little sister Rebekah was out of the van next and she grabbed my doll and shook off the glass before she was helped out. Then the man who

helped us little ones out, booted in the back window and helped my older brother Ben and older sister Sam out the rear window. We were helped to the other side of the ditch and then this lady came over and told us that we were extremely brave because we weren't even crying. She asked if we needed anything, and Ben asked for a sticking plaster because he had a little scratch on his leg.

We got a ride to hospital in an ambulance and Mum lay on the bed. She had a very sore collar bone and she got really dizzy if she sat up. Both Ben and Rebekah got to have turns to sit up in the front seat with the driver. I felt kind of unsafe in the ambulance because every time the driver put her foot on the accelerator it would lurch forward. None of us were wearing seat belts in the ambulance on the way to hospital, but in the crash we were wearing seat belts and that is probably the only reason we are all in one piece and alive.

At the hospital Mum was taken somewhere as soon as we got in the door. The rest of us were shown the way to the family room in the Palmerston North hospital. Then a lady came in and asked us all a few questions then said "I want her first" meaning she want to deal with Samantha first. We were in the family room for ages before we were taken into this smallish room so the doctor could have a good look at Dad, Ben, Rebekah and I. We were there for a fairly long time. Eventually a nurse came and gave us a couple of sandwiches to share and a couple of biscuits for lunch. Then Dad sent us off to find Sam and tell him where she was, while he had a cast put on his broke wrist. We found Sam on a hospital bed with a tube in her arm. She wasn't there for too long before she was moved to a chair and wheeled into the room where Mum was. We went and told Dad where they were, and then went back to talk with them. Later we were told that Mum

and Sam would have to stay the night and have drips in their arms which they were not happy about because they both don't like needles one bit! They were not allowed any food or drink until the next day and because Sam had not had anything since the crash she felt sick. The next day Dad went to Palmerston North to pick Mum and Sam up but only came home with Sam because they wanted to keep Mum there for one more night, because she had a broken toe, rather bad bruising and a very sore leg. The next day Dad went back to pick Mum up and he took me with him. Once we were in Palmerston North, if any other cars got too close or looked like they would pull out in front Dad would hit the brakes.

On the way home we stopped in at Reid's Transport to thank them for their help.

This accident happened on 20<sup>th</sup> August, and a photo and article were featured on the front page of the Manawatu Standard on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2007. The headline read "Miracle Escape For Family". We think that says it all - nothing but a miracle could have saved us from serious injury or death in this horrific crash.

THE END