

**My name is Kelly. I grew up with my parents, younger sister, and brother always around me. We all three went to the same Catholic grammar school and high school. We all played the same sports and some teams our parents coached or my sister Paige, since we are 2 years apart, would be on the same team as me. I had begun working in high school and through part of college. If I was not playing sports I was working. Life was always busy for my family going from one game to the next.**

I thought life would always be like this, but my siblings and I would just get older and do the exact same thing with our children. However, this idea I've had for our future is no longer possible because of my own impaired judgment back on September 5, 2009. I crashed my car, which I had shared with my sister, very early that morning into a taxi cab. The severity of the crash led the taxi cab driver, my sister Paige, and myself into intensive care for several weeks. I was only 19 at the time of the crash.

The night of the crash I was excited to get off of work and to see all of my friends that were coming home from their schools for the Labor Day weekend. I was picked up by a friend around nine at night and we headed toward Chicago to meet up with others at a friend's apartment. My friend who drove decided she was going to stay the night; as for myself, I had work early the next morning and I decided it would be best for me to call a cab for a ride home. I remember I did not want to drink very much that night because of work the next day, but with the few drinks I had I only remember up to roughly around midnight. At around 2am I had called my younger sister, Paige who was 17, for a ride home from Lincoln Park.

Why I had called my sister I still do not know why. My plan was to take a cab. I always ask myself why I changed my mind. She had to get out of bed to come and get me in an area of Chicago she was not at all familiar with. At some point we became lost and with my impaired thinking, we had switched seats for me to get us home. At 3:25am we were found going south on Lakeshore drive in the northbound lanes and had hit a taxi cab.

The paramedics had to perform CPR on myself at the scene, but Paige was awake and able to give worried bystanders our home number so they could call our parents. We were rushed to the hospital, as well as the cab driver. My parents arrived to find my sister still awake apologizing for everything and not telling them she was leaving the house to get me. If anyone was to apologize to them was myself, for underage drinking, thinking it was smart to have my younger sister come all the way downtown, and then to drive under the influence. I had suffered a broken femur, fibula, crushed foot, torn ACL, PCL, and LCL. Also I had a cracked sternum, rib, and bleeding in the brain. Paige had a broken femur, both tibias and fibulas, broken toes, and 85% bruised heart and lungs. Also, Paige suffered a shattered pelvis, internal bleeding, lacerations on her kidneys, and a cut on her face. We were both placed into an induced coma to stabilize our bodies.

I returned home after a few weeks still in pain and in a wheelchair while Paige stayed in the hospital for her surgeries. In early October things with Paige's progress seemed to be going in the right direction, but there was just something not right. After some tests it came back that

her brain had shrunken 65%. This meant she would stay in the exact same state she was currently in and was not able to communicate or comprehend anything. I did not want to believe this. As much as I wanted Paige to prove the doctors wrong again and fight through it she was not able to and peacefully past on October 29, 2009.

Her wake was held at our church and there was a constant line of people from beginning to end. As I sat there I wanted to say sorry to each person that was telling me how sorry they were. I was at fault for Paige's death and all of our family, her friends, teammates, teachers, and coworkers were now without that always happy, smart, fantastic artist, and the toughest softball catcher girl there was.

For the next 8 months I was in and out of court. Each time I sat there not knowing if that was the day I could be taken away, wondering if the cab driver was healing ok, and how much I wished Paige would really be in school with her friends. During that time all I could do was go through the motions of a normal day and act strong, but in reality I was missing a key person that I have always had in my life and that I thought would never leave. As for my family they have been beyond belief supportive of me throughout all of this, but I feel I do not deserve any of this because I took an innocent life, my sisters, who was just trying to be nice and to pick me up from a night out. It is not fair to her nor is it fair for my family. Paige was bound to do countless great things.

I was finally charged with Aggravated DUI with two and a half years of probation along with community service and working with AAIM in hopes I can prevent future stories like mine.

Kelly D.