

My Dad, A True Hero

Personal

by Colter Baron

On December 5, 2013, Sandoval County Deputy Sergeant Robert Baron responded to a series of accidents on I-25 north of Albuquerque. It was the first snowstorm of the season and travel conditions were treacherous. He was working an accident where a driver had slid off the road and rolled their car. As Sergeant Baron was walking back to his patrol vehicle, another driver lost control, slid off the road and struck him, throwing him about 15 feet into the air. He landed on his back. Sergeant Baron had three intracranial bleeds and never regained consciousness. He was pronounced dead thirty hours later. Sergeant Baron was my dad.

My dad was always committed to helping others. He was always very generous with his time and with his resources, volunteering in the National Parks, with Scouts, community groups, church and other organizations. He was the son of a Beverly Hills firefighter and always wanted to carry on the family tradition of service to the community. He worked as an Emergency Medical Technician, a firefighter, a Search and Rescue team member and dog handler, a Ranger with the National Park Service and a Deputy Sheriff. He had saved several people's lives during his career and was even awarded a Distinguished Act Award for his part in saving the life of an off duty police officer who had suffered a heart attack. My dad was a regular blood donor since college and would give every time he became eligible. He felt that this was an easy thing for him to do and it could help many people. When his brother was dying of Lupus, he offered to donate a kidney to save his brother's life but, unfortunately, it was too late. While he was always designated as an organ donor on his driver's license, this experience made it even more important to him to donate his organs if it was possible.

I was only ten years old when my father's accident occurred. I was at school when friends of my family picked me up and took me to the hospital. When we got there, my mom met me

and told me what had happened to dad. At that point, we were still praying for a miracle that my dad would recover. Unfortunately, that would not be the case. My mom explained that the doctors could take parts of dad's body, like his heart, kidneys and liver, and use them to save other people's lives. I didn't really understand what this meant at the time, but mom said it was really important to dad. He always said that he wanted to let other people have more time with their loved ones and to have a better quality of life. Mom explained that it wouldn't hurt dad because he wasn't in his body any longer and was already living with Jesus. The machines were just keeping his parts working temporarily. Mom wanted to make sure I understood how important this was and that dad would be a hero to the families of the people whose lives he saved. He was already a hero to me.

I've never had the opportunity to meet any of the people that my dad saved. Whoever got his heart got a really strong one and it should serve him well for a long time! I am thankful that these people have had more time with their families and friends. It must be hard for them when they think about the cost to another family. John 15:13 says "There is no greater love than this than to lay down one's life for one's friends." While I understand what this means, I think there really is a greater love. In his career and in his death, my dad gave his life for people he never knew and that is the ultimate act of love.

I have a great amount of respect for my dad and the life of service that he led. I hope to have as much, or greater, an impact on the world through my work and life. One thing for sure, was that it was a no brainer when I got my driver's license to check the box and opt in to become an organ donor. I may even consider being a living donor at some point. It would be an honor

and a privilege to be a hero to someone else and it would be a really cool tribute to my dad's legacy.