

Personalizing the Consequences of Bicycle Crashes- the Gerald Apple Story

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I always wonder what it will take to get the attention of motorists. How can we drive it into people that they shouldn't take risks when operating a two ton hunk of metal at high speed? Maybe stricter traffic laws – lower speed limits, prohibiting cell phone use – would help; or increasing punishments for those who break the laws, especially when doing so causes injury or death.

Certainly those measures should be considered. But we can also continue to share stories. All of us involved in cycling, whether we interact with other cyclists while riding, or on the advocacy side, or in the legal world, have lots of stories to tell. These stories personalize the consequences of taking unnecessary risks when driving.

And to anyone with a conscience, they should be a daily wake-up call.



Gerald Apple

Today my thoughts are with the family of Gerald Apple, especially his wife, Debbie Apple. Gerald worked for 37 years serving his community as a firefighter. He had recently retired from his job at the Guilford County Fire Marshall's office (although still working part time) and took up cycling to improve his health.

One afternoon last fall, Gerald was finishing up his ride and turning left into his driveway. Debbie wasn't home at the time but expected to come home that night to a normal, quiet evening with her husband.

Instead, she came home to a nightmare. A driver coming up behind Gerald crossed the double yellow line to pass Gerald on the left, even though Gerald was already in the left lane, hit him and threw into the air until he landed in a ditch.

Gerald suffered serious brain damage from the crash and never recovered. He was moved from facility to facility as his wife fought with health insurance to pay for his care. Gerald passed away in February of this year. His wife, who is disabled, is left with hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical expenses that health insurance wouldn't cover. But worse than that, she is left without her life partner. Gerald Apple spent his life and career helping others and his life ended too suddenly and tragically.

There is a fund to help the Apple family: Donations can be sent to: 237 E. Main St., Gibsonville, N.C. 27249, or taken to the Fidelity Bank branch; [a walk/run fundraiser](#) is also planned this weekend in Gibsonville. If you live in the area, it's a way to repay Gerald Apple for his long service to the community.

As part of the bike community, think about what you can do to help prevent the next tragedy. If you have a compelling story to share, tell us. Be a missionary to your friends, family, co-workers about safe and cautious driving. Spread the message that the person on a bicycle is someone's husband, wife, father, mother and/or child. Our actions affect the community as a whole – I know you know that; now let's make sure everyone else does.

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