

## **Injured Boy in Photo Bounces Back Child Responds; - Omaha World-Herald (NE) - November 8, 1990 - page 1**

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When Vicki Draper heard the squeal of tires on Halloween morning, a mother's instincts told her something was terribly wrong.

She dashed one block from her apartment at 3208 Willis Ave. to Lake Street. There she found her 7 - year - old son, Benjamin, lying on the pavement, a pickup truck stopped next to the unconscious boy, its driver, Christine Herek, in tears.

Mrs. Draper did the only thing she knew. She knelt beside Benjamin and prayed. The scene was captured in a color photograph that ran on Page 1 of The World - Herald Oct. 31.

"I was telling God to be with him. There was nothing I could do for him then and there," said Mrs. Draper, a member of Greater New Hope Missionary Baptist Church. "I trust God. You can't make it in this world without Him."Going Back to School

Her prayers - and those of dozens of strangers who sent cards and gifts - were answered. Benjamin might return to his first - grade classmates at **Howard Kennedy Elementary School** yet this week. Scrapes on the left side of his face and two stitches at the corner of his left eye are the only evidence of the close call he had eight days ago.

His grandmother, Dorothy Glenn, said she is ready for him to resume school. She has been caring for Benjamin since he was discharged from St. Joseph Hospital on Nov. 2.

"He's jumping around here. It's like nothing ever happened to him," Mrs. Glenn said.

And Benjamin is ready, his mother said.

"He wants to get back to school," Mrs. Draper said.

Benjamin apparently dashed onto Lake Street on his way to school. He was carrying his Halloween ghost costume in a bag.

"He was in a rush to get to school and get in that thing," Mrs. Glenn said.

For grandma, the accident was a nightmare revisited. In 1974, she said, she lost a 3 - year - old granddaughter, Sherelle Denise Daffin, in East St. Louis, Ill., when a driver lost control of her car and ran over the child, who was standing on a sidewalk.

When she was told Benjamin was hurt, she said, she ran out the front door and drove straight to St. Joseph Hospital, praying all the way. Now Friends

"I said, 'Oh, Lord, not another one,' " she said. "That first one, I still haven't lived down."

Mrs. Glenn said she doesn't blame Mrs. Herek, who was not ticketed for any traffic law infraction. In fact, she said, she and Mrs. Herek have become friends.

Mrs. Herek visited Benjamin in the hospital.

"She brought me a toy that glows in the dark and a card that changes colors," Benjamin said. "She told me she was sorry."

It wasn't the only gift he received.

"We got a lot of cards from people whose names we never heard," Mrs. Draper said. "Strangers sent toys, books, coloring books. We thought it was nice that it touched so many people."

Benjamin said he had fun in the hospital.

"They gave me lots of food - hot dogs, hamburgers, french fries, apple juice," he said.

Mrs. Draper said she hopes some good comes out of Benjamin's close call. She wants the city to install a school zone speed limit and a cross walk near 32nd and Lake Streets.

"Something needs to be done there - anything," she said. "There's too many little kids in that area."Riding to School

Benjamin said he learned from his experience.

"I'll go down to the light (at 30th and Lake Streets) and cross with the guard," he said.

He won't have to do that right away, Mrs. Draper said.

"I'll ride him to school," she said. "My nerves can't take that right now, at least while it's cold. Maybe I'll be brave enough to let him walk when its warmer."

Mrs. Glenn, left, Benjamin and Mrs. Draper . . . From now on, he'll cross street with crossing guard.

The emotion of the Oct. 31 accident was captured in this photo . . . Mrs. Draper weeps as she kneels over an injured Benjamin and Ms. Herek, right, waits in tears for rescue workers.

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