

Weekend



WEEKEND CREDIT EGRAM

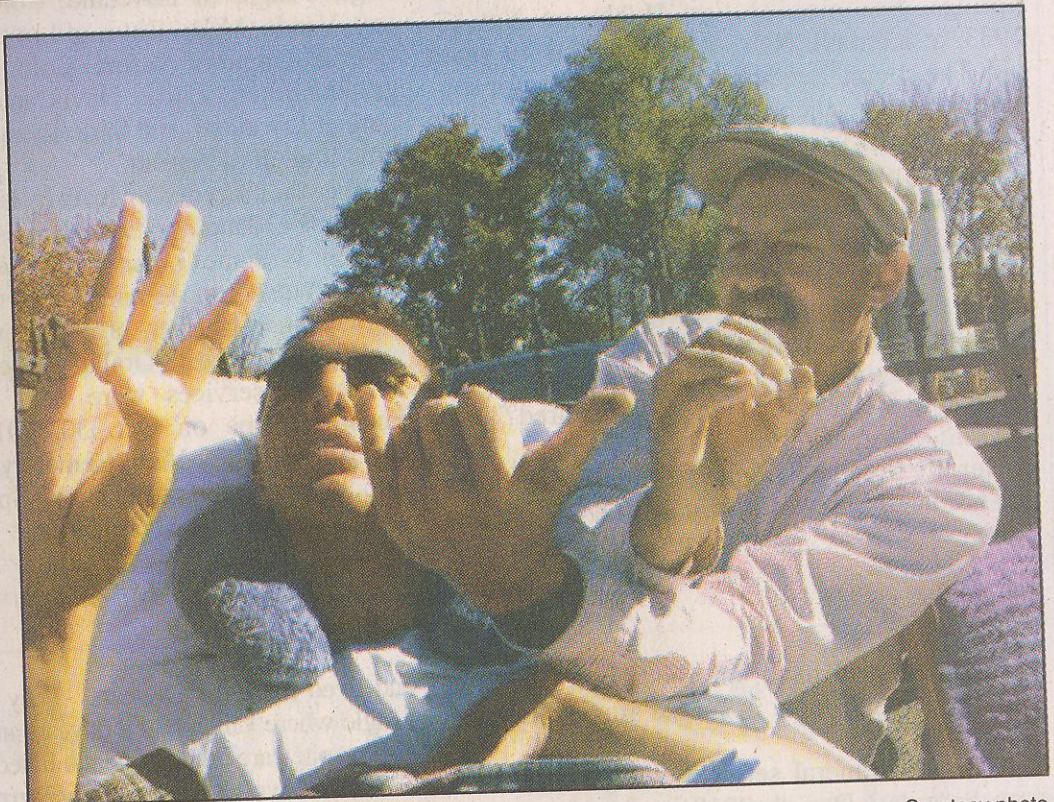
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“It was at that point that our God said ‘OK, now I’m going to show you who I am.’”

Garrett Ross (left) makes the “W..Y..O” formation with his hands while his father Scott Ross, helps. Garrett was learning commands in early November, just three months after the crash.



Courtesy photo

Credit a work from above

Garrett Ross recovering after doctors feared the worst

By John Miller

Staff Writer

After three months of lying comatose, doctors advised his parents that he would never come out of it.

Garrett Ross had fallen asleep while driving from Laramie to Yoder, his truck flipping over on

the side of a remote road. Although he had no broken bones or other internal injuries, he suffered severe brain trauma and had never woke up after the accident.

His parents, Scott and Cindy Ross, had dutifully prayed for their son’s life, Cindy never leaving

his side at Kindred Hospital in Denver. But they also didn’t want him to simply exist in this vegetative state, kept alive by machines. They prepared themselves to pull the plug.

While saying their final goodbyes that night, Cindy held and kissed her

son as she had from the time he was born up until this moment. She asked him to give her a kiss.

And Garrett puckered his lips.

“It was at that point that our God said ‘OK, now I’m going to show

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Credit: Recovering after c

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you who I am," Scott Ross said.



The Ross' story is one of tragedy, courage and redemption that began on a typical summer night on Aug. 5.

Garrett, a 22-year-old University of Wyoming senior, had been at the Albany County Fair with friends that night and was driving back to Yoder to be present for his sister Kaitlin's 21st birthday. Garrett was traveling on a road connecting Hillsdale with Highway 85 at about midnight when he fell asleep in the vicinity of a set of correction corners.

His pickup plowed into a telephone pole, which crushed the cab of the truck. Scott estimates Garrett was there for nearly three hours before a passerby found him and called for help.

Meanwhile, Scott and Cindy were awaiting their son's arrival. Garrett had called Cindy as he was leaving Laramie, and when he wasn't home when they figured he would be, she started to worry.

"She knew something was wrong," Scott said. "She didn't go to bed that night. She was on the phone, calling the police, calling here and there. She actually got in her car

and drove around and looked for him."

At 5:30 a.m. the Ross' got the call. Garrett was taken to a hospital in Cheyenne for 18 days. Tubes were placed in his head for the first week to alleviate his brain from swelling. He was transferred to Kindred, a long-term acute care (LTAC) hospital specializing in a large variety of complicated medical conditions. He still hadn't woken up, and the Kindred staff was looking for signs that his brain was still functioning.

Devout Christians,

The prayers and love and support from the people in this community is overwhelming.



Scott Ross
Garrett Ross' father

Scott and Cindy never gave up on Garrett's recovery, but at the same time they had to face reality. Scott credits their Christian faith with granting them the courage to let go of their son if necessary.

"I was absolutely crushed," Scott said. "I've built my life on God and Jesus. Even in this tragedy, even in this horrible thought that I may lose my son, I stood on that foundation and I said, 'God, if you're going to take Garrett home now, then good for Garrett. He gets to

go home, he gets to be with you.'"

On Nov. 8, three months after the accident, the Ross' received the doctor's fateful message; only Garrett wasn't finished just yet.

"On that day, the doctors had said 'OK, we're done, we can't do anything else, he's gone, it's over,'" Scott said. "He basically woke up then. I just wept. Rick Teeters was with me and he cried too. He said 'Scotty, that's positive movement.' That was the moment. It was a little tiny thing, but it was huge."

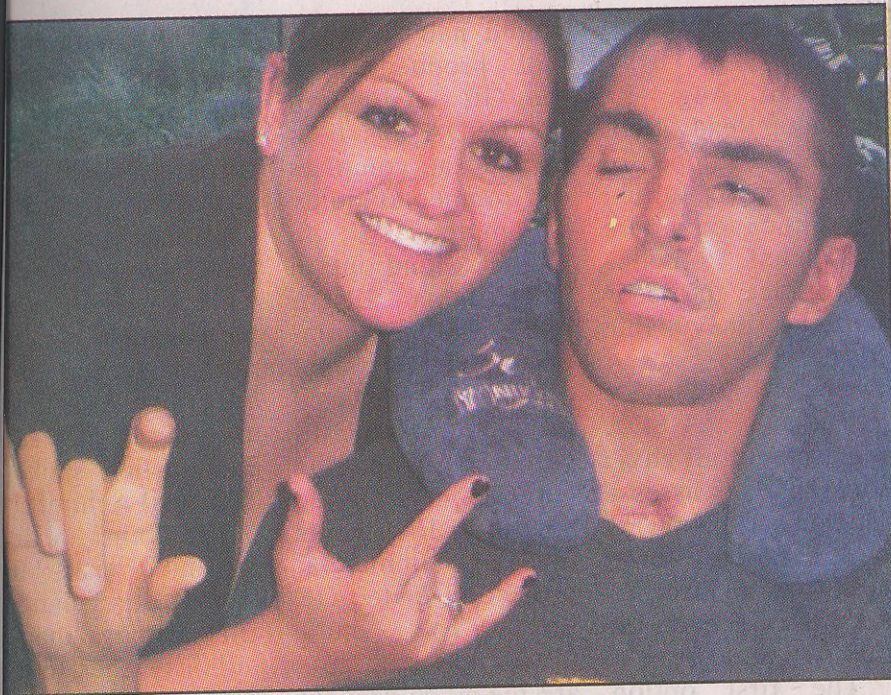
When Garrett was a boy, Cindy had taught him sign language. Since that first pucker of the lips, Garrett has begun communicating using sign language, as well as shaking or nodding his head,

waving and flashing a thumbs up. But he's still not out of the woods. He has since transferred to Craig Hospital in Englewood, which specializes exclusively in severe brain trauma.

"They're working with him intensively to start the process of getting all the connections to go back together in his brain," Scott said. "Just the simple things: swallowing, sitting up, talking, standing up, movements."

Depending on how he responds, Garrett will spend 2-3 months

doctors feared the worst



Courtesy photo

Garrett Ross and his 21-year-old sister Katelin Ross pose for a moment to capture their love for one another. Garrett was injured in a car crash in August on his way back to Yoder to help celebrate his sister's birthday.

at Craig before continuing his recovery at home. The Ross' know that Garrett may never recover to 100 percent, but he is already more than he was in his vegetative state.

"I've been given a new hope and a new outlook," Scott said. "And I feel really strongly that Garrett's going to walk out of there and come home, and he's going to go back to school and finish earning his degree and get on with his life. He's going to get a second chance; he's going to get a do-over."

"From the very beginning when I saw his pickup, God said to me, 'I didn't save him from this accident to do nothing with his life.' What that is, we don't know."



A benefit for Garrett Ross will be held at the Goshen county Fairgrounds Rendezvous Center on Dec. 12, beginning at noon. The Southeast FFA (Future Farmers of America) chapter will serve a donated pulled pork lunch, and the benefit will feature both a 2 p.m. live and a silent auction. Bids for the silent auction end at 3 p.m.

Donation and items for the auctions will be collected at the Goshen County Extension Office at 4522 US Highway 26-85. Garrett served an internship at the office and was an active member of FFA.

Through it all, Scott said the support he has received from his job at the state engineer's office,

every church in town and especially the community has been pivotal in his families ability to cope.

"The prayers and love and support from the people in this community is overwhelming," Scott said.

He said his state health insurance has been great to this point, although the money is not a high priority to him at this time. He estimates Garrett's medical bills to reach close to \$900,000, with additional expenses beyond what insurance will pay.

"When we get there, we'll deal with that," Scott said.

Or, as his wife Cindy said in summation of the entire ordeal:

"We're going to be OK, whatever OK is."