

Connect. Inspire. Challenge.

ANY ROAD

www.lauraklock.com

Laura Klock



LAURA KLOCK
AMA AND SCTA
NATIONAL LAND SPEED
RECORD HOLDER
BONNEVILLE SALT FLATS



Publisher's Note: this month's "Any Road" column is a special tribute to a family friend of Laura's. A friend who's life was tragically cut short at the age of twenty last May. It shows the good that can come out of bad situations. We hope you enjoy the column. Remember, you can always comment on any story in TMM on our Facebook page.

It's an interesting story how "ANY ROAD" came about...one that I'll share at some point, but since that is the title of my presentation, the theme of the talks I give, even the license plates on my car... it seems fitting that I start today with reference to a road in life I recently traveled. I've learned that you can map out, plan and try to control the "roads you will travel," but we're really not in control of any of it. You don't always know when you'll encounter a pothole, a storm, a flat tire, a detour. You can and should hope for things, but you never know where all the awesome fresh smooth pavement and rainbows will show up either! God chooses all of that for us. I've learned to find the courage to travel down ANY ROAD that is put in front of me, because sometimes it's in the detours that the biggest blessings lie!

The other day I was on a road in South Dakota that was leading me to a meeting in a town a couple hours from us. In the last year, something extremely special was placed in the town I was headed to. Since that time, I've been to this town for a few of these same business meetings, but I wasn't ready for anything but the financial meeting I was headed to. Until this trip. It was time. I was going to take a left and go there. Go to a place that I'm not sure anything along the road of life can prepare you for, and I'm also not sure that I'll find the right words to describe. After my meeting, I was going to meet Larry, the man that received Austin's heart in a transplant. Austin was my best friend Janell's youngest son. Austin died in a motorcycle accident.

The road to the death of a child is one that I don't think any of us would choose to travel. I received a call on May 23, 2009 from Janell that her 20 year old son Austin had been in a motorcycle accident,

and it wasn't good. Austin called me his "South Dakota Mom", and Janell is the kind of friend that simply inspires you to be a better friend. The kind that never misses a birthday, or a chance to give you a smile or a word of encouragement, always right when you need it most. She's also the kind of mom that inspires you to be the best mom you can be. I CHERISH her. Janell has 3 sons, and Austin was the youngest. My special connection with Austin was motorcycles. He LOVED them and couldn't wait to get his own. He loved that our daughters, Erika and Karlee, and I all ride, and that we have a motorcycle shop. Austin would send us emails from college asking questions about bikes and gear. Janell and I have been close friends for many years, and wow have WE traveled some interesting roads together! Our kids are like siblings, and this trip wasn't going to be easy for any of us. Austin was in Minnesota, I was in South Dakota, and Janell was in Kentucky. Karlee and I got in the car and we started the 5 hour drive to Minneapolis to meet Janell there. There was no question that we would go down this road by her side, and we didn't have any idea what we would find.

Austin had his helmet on, jacket, gloves - all the right safety gear, and was on a friend's bike just taking a quick ride. He wasn't speeding, wasn't on a dangerous road, and the weather was great. He stopped to have a sandwich and on the way back, lost control of the motorcycle. It could have been the dip in the road, it could have been a number of things, we will never know, but he hit a guard rail and was caught enough to be pulled off the bike and in that moment, the road of life for him and more people than we can ever dream or



imagine, changed.

Austin had shared with his mom Janell that he'd recently taken a class about organ donation, and he was excited about being a donor. So there was no question that this young healthy boy was going to touch the lives of many. He had in life, and now he would keep right on doing that after his death. That ended up being a ray of light in a dark situation for Janell. Austin had a very dynamic personality – he talked alot, always seemed happy, and was really getting into playing guitar along with writing his own songs. He had dreams of heading to Nashville some day. So many dreams and plans that would make you smile as he'd talk about them because nothing was a boundary or barrier for him. He dreamed BIG. Austin's dreams didn't die with him, they are being lived out now by many organ recipients who cherish him, his family, and his dreams.

I walked up to Larry's house and his wife Kelly walked out to greet me first. There were tears even before we hugged. We went inside. Larry came out and we stood embraced in a hug for many many minutes, not sobbing, just crying, just holding onto each other. What can you possibly say in this moment? What word could describe this? Then I asked him "can I listen?". He said, "of course". I laid my ear against Larry's chest and I listened to the heart beat. I listened to LIFE. Life that Larry, who was in stage 4 heart failure previous, could now LIVE because Austin had died. How tragic and happy in the same moment. I was humbled. How could I be so blessed as to hear this heart beating life? I was there when Austin's death was pronounced. Why did you choose me today God to be present in this? The why's don't often get answered, but I sure wasn't going to waste one second. Brian and I sat and talked to Larry and Kelly for almost 2 hours. At first it was a little awkward, none of us had ever been in this type of setting or conversation, and then we shared our stories.

One of the crazy ironies in life is this...when you are on an organ transplant waiting list, and you are praying for a donor, there are moments when you realize that in order for that to happen, that in order for you to live, someone else will die. Stop for a second and just try to wrap your mind around that thought.

Janell has made contact with many of the recipients of Austin's organs. I told her from the beginning that I knew that she would have so many new friends because there was not a chance that if they were willing, she was willing and she wanted to meet each and every one of them. I travel alot and at different times in different states, there have been people around me or in the car with me



when I've received and shared about the calls from Janell...

"I talked to the kidney recipient today!" or "I talked to the lung recipient today!" Because of the way that she's embraced something amazing from something tragic, she is inspiring people all around the world with this story. That is Austin. That is dreaming BIG and making a BIG impact.

Because I represent motorcycles and the motorcycle industry, and that was my special connection with Austin, I wasn't sure what I would walk into when I arrived at the hospital. He died doing something he loved, yet there are many that would ban all motorcycles and never even dream of getting on one by just hearing that someone had an accident, let alone pass away. Riding isn't for everyone, and there is risk involved. If you ask me, or I bet if you asked Austin, we would tell you that you're right, it's not for everyone, we each have that special thing that God has given us that makes us giggle – and it's different for each one of us. I would also tell you that yes, there is more risk involved in riding a bike than in driving a car, so take the safety course, and do it right. But does that mean that something like this will never happen to you? No. It doesn't mean you won't get in a car accident either. We have to LIVE LIFE and Austin was an example of that. I often feel him with me when I'm out riding, I often ride FOR him or dedicate my ride to him because I know he loved it so much. And I didn't walk into anything unforeseen that day. I walked into my best friend's family grieving, but clinging to their faith and believing that God had a reason for this too. Cherishing that they got 20 years with Austin, and embracing every thought of every recipient that could live because Austin died. And they welcomed me in as family.

While I would have never chosen this part of the ride, not in a million years, I can't even explain what I've learned and gained and been blessed with because of it. Don't be afraid to travel down ANY ROAD that is put in front of you.

