

At sixteen-years-old, I finally earned my driver's license. It is something every adolescent teen dreams of— the freedom, added confidence, and beginning of adulthood. To earn my license, I had to complete an online course called Aceable. It reviewed Texas driving laws, driver safety, and every road sign imaginable. While I did pay attention to the course and pass the test, it is challenging for someone young to truly understand the consequences of their actions and the need to give the road their full undivided attention. Safe driving is crucial to maintaining a safe community, especially for teenagers.

Every year, I create a documentary film to submit to the UIL contest. More than that, my films are meant to inspire and share an important message. This year, my film covered the story of a woman who was in a drunk driving accident. In 1970, Cindy Grimes gave birth at 19-years-old to a little girl named Michelle. After being released from the hospital, she, her husband, and the newborn baby were invited to her grandmother's house for a big supper with all of her family. They took pictures with the newborn, had dinner, and waved goodbye at the end of the night. Cindy sat in the passenger seat. Her husband drove while her mother sat in the back with the five-day-old baby. On the way home that night, a drunk driver caused a fatal collision. The car erupted into flames. The drunk driver ran away. Cindy and her family were stuck. Luckily, a passing car stopped to help the family out of the engulfed car. Her husband got out first. Then her mother, who was badly injured. Cindy was helped out last. The baby couldn't be found. She never cried, and Cindy never saw her again. The drunk driver had just five beers.

Later, Cindy's mother passed due to her injuries in the accident. At nineteen, Cindy lost both her mother and her newborn within the span of minutes. All because of a man's choice to drink five beers and drive. Cindy suffered from extreme burns among other internal injuries. She was in the hospital for months, recovering. The drunk driver was released from jail before Cindy

even learned to walk again. Now, Cindy is in her 70s. She speaks to DWI education programs and shares her story. In creating my film, I am also sharing her story.

Cindy doesn't seek sympathy. Cindy is brave. Cindy advocates for others, and Cindy is strong-willed and shares a powerful message. Drinking and driving is not okay. Safe driving includes not only your well-being but the well-being of others too. Drinking and driving dismisses the safety of others as well as your own. To keep my community safe, I'm sharing Cindy's message. It is important to stop at stop signs and watch your surroundings. It is also important to take away the keys if your friend is under the influence. Call someone if you are under the influence. It only takes five beers.

You can watch Cindy's full story here:

<https://youtu.be/UblqWapwcX0?si=E-OiSLCc6Fwa8AB5>