

Citizen First-Responders speak about their experience of the Simeons tragedy

Written by Administrator

Saturday, 21 June 2014 16:46 -

Tiny Town, USA – I just had a conversation with citizen first-responders Allen and Crystal Forest, Ithacans who now live in Lansing.

They were kind enough to drop by my home office to discuss what they experienced in the frantic moments directly following yesterday's horror at State and Aurora, when an out-of-control tractor trailer torpedoed into Simeons Restaurant, turning a lovely pre-happy hour Friday into a scene reminiscent of 9/11 and robbing the life of a young woman, who is believed to have been pregnant.

Their perspectives on the scene and that of other citizen first-responders is stunning -- and curiously absent from anything currently posted in the media. This is not a full account of our conversation – that will have to come later.

Know this: While almost everyone was fleeing from the scene, several brave people went toward it to help save lives. Two of these men, brothers in fact, were uniquely qualified to respond to such an emergency. One of them, Allen Forest, a former oil field worker, is certified in CPR and carries an emergency first aid kit in his car. Mr. Forest was in the Big Time Barber Shop when the truck hit and rocked the shop from half a block away. Mr. Forest's brother, Kyle Henderson, a motor equipment operator with the Tompkins County Highway Department, was present, as well as Joe Knight, the shop's owner. According to Mr. Forest, his brother Kyle immediately identified the cause of the enormous crash and tremor and rushed to the scene. Mr. Forest and his wife, Crystal, also rushed to the scene, as well as Mr. Knight, whose son works in the kitchen at Simeons and was due to go on shift within an hour of the crash.

We will continue to provide basic information about this tragedy as reported to me by non-professional pedestrians, people who reacted swiftly and bravely. Mr. Forest, his wife Crystal, Kyle Henderson and Mr. Knight, are to be commended for their courageous actions in the face of life-threatening dangers. These people are fellow Ithacans, and while I am as saddened by the horror, I am also immensely proud of these folks. This is not a knock on uniformed first-responders who worked through the night and into day in a yeoman's effort to prevent further loss of life and property. But theirs is not the whole story.

If there is more information on injuries and, possibly, other fatalities, the people of this city deserve to know.

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We await more information on what exactly happened with this vehicle and why the driver allegedly abandoned the scene. Because according to Mr. Forest, there was no one in the truck when he entered the building and no sign of a driver who should have remained within the area at least, until authorities arrived. Also, we need to know the exact speed that vehicle was moving, whether it was in low gear as it properly should have been and if the driver was capable of handling a vehicle of that size. Because at some point, it has to be said: there may be a case of not just reckless driving, but vehicular homicide and I'm glad the driver eventually came into police custody. Thank you to all the invisibles who did their best to aid the injured.

When I can spare the proper time and attention, I will relate the conversation I had with the Forest's today. Hopefully that will be prior to midnight tonight.

– Franklin Crawford, tinytowntimes.com administrator