

Roof Crush Defect In SUV Causes Horrific Brain Injury

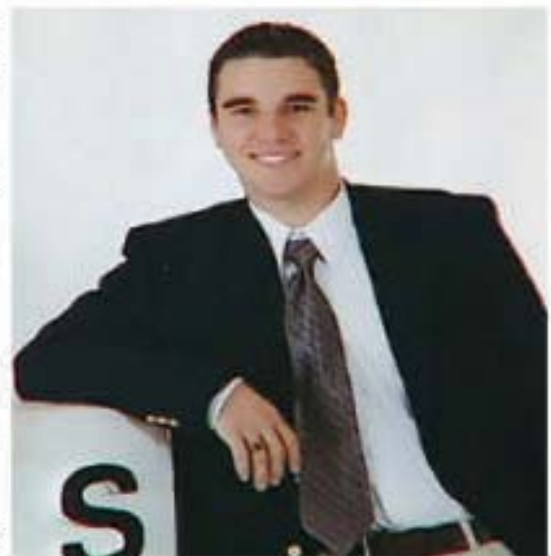
General Motors had long been aware of the problems involving roof crushing during rollovers.



On March 9, 2002, 17 year old high school senior Robert "Chad" Granger was homeward bound after a long day of work for a neighbor's moving company. This exceptionally mature and loving young man was looking forward to the summer of his senior year, college at the University of Florida, and law school. Chad was traveling westbound on Interstate 10 in Jacksonville, Florida, in a 1995 Chevrolet Suburban SUV, a vehicle manufactured by General Motors. He was in the front passenger seat with his seat belt properly fastened. The driver of the Suburban made a lane change to avoid a slow-moving vehicle in front of them. The Suburban swerved left, slightly off the edge of the road, then swerved right, back onto the roadway. According to physical evidence at the scene, the vehicle lost traction and began rolling onto its driver side and then onto its passenger side roof edge. The roof section above Chad's head crashed downward, striking his head and causing serious skull fractures and significant swelling in his brain.



At the time of the crash, Trooper Jim Mason of the Florida Highway Patrol was parked at a rest stop on the eastbound side of Interstate 10. Upon witnessing the accident, Trooper Mason crossed the highway to secure the scene. Upon arrival, he noted Chad was not moving. When Trooper Mason reached inside the vehicle, he felt Chad move and noticed that he was bleeding severely from his head and nose. FHP Trooper Trish England, an expert in CPR, was next on the scene and discovered that the seatbelt was wrapped tightly around Chad's neck. With the assistance of other emergency personnel, Trooper England cut the seatbelt and pulled Chad through the passenger side window. Chad was then stabilized in preparation for medical evacuation and flown by helicopter to Shands Trauma Center in Jacksonville, Florida.



Chad's father, Robert Granger, Sr., his mother, Kay, and his sister, Amber, rushed from their home in Lake City, Florida, to Shands to be with Chad. The doctors informed the family that Chad's brain injuries were very severe and that he might not survive. Chad was put on a respirator to assist his breathing. He required extensive surgery including bilateral and frontal parietal decompressive craniotomies, as well as placement of bilateral ventricular catheters with a shunt to help drain fluid which was causing added pressure. *(Continued on page fifteen.)*

**Confidential
settlement:**

**ROOF CRUSH
CAUSES BRAIN INJURY**

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(Continued from page three.)

Chad suffered a horrific brain injury. Because of the injury, Chad was in a coma for several months. Many of Chad's health care providers believed his condition would never improve. However, with the loving support of his family and friends, and his courageous spirit, Chad was able to come out of his coma. Chad continues to defy the odds. Chad's family and other loved ones have verified that, at times, Chad is able to follow simple, one step commands.

Chad has always been a fighter. Prior to the crash, Chad was a champion wrestler at Columbia County High School. His friends describe him as unpretentious and genuine, a confidante who provided leadership and support to his peers.

Chad was considered by teachers and coaches, civic leaders and high school classmates, to be a role model for his honesty, leadership, integrity and courage, and for his love of life. When the accident happened, the school suffered profound grief requiring counseling for a number of students and personnel. Students at his school rallied to organize carnivals and other fund-raising events to raise money for Chad's medical expenses. And as Chad works hard with his rehabilitation, his friends still visit him to share with him what is happening in their lives.

Robert and Kay Granger retained attorney Stephen A. Smith of Lake City, Florida, to investigate this matter on behalf of their son, Chad. After Mr. Smith's initial investigation, he, along with the Grangers, referred the case to Searcy Denney Scarola Barnhart & Shipley. Attorneys Chris Searcy and Darryl Lewis discovered that Chad's injuries were the direct result of the rollover and roof crush defect prominent in many of General Motors' SUVs. Mr. Searcy and Mr. Lewis filed a product liability lawsuit in Jacksonville, Florida, against General Motors. The suit alleged that Chad received

his horrific injuries because General Motors knowingly designed its vehicle with a weak and defective roof. It further alleged that General Motors knew the roof could not withstand a real-world rollover, and that people like Chad were likely to be killed or receive catastrophic injuries as a result of the roof crushing into the occupant compartment. As litigation was initiated, Mr. Searcy and Mr. Lewis included attorney Howard Coker, of Jacksonville, Florida, as a member of the Granger's legal team.



Chad and his sister Amber in younger years.

Roof crush and rollover product liability cases are known to be some of the most complex and hard-fought cases in our legal system. During litigation, the Granger legal team learned that General Motors had long been aware of the problems involving roof crushing during rollovers of these vehicles. It became apparent that the company's prior knowledge of the defect had existed since the 1960s.

Each successive litigation and discovery process produced more documents detailing that General Motors understood the existence of the defect and the fact that it was causing terrible harm to the driving public.

General Motors retained multiple, high-powered defense law firms from Florida and other states to represent them in the Granger case. General Motors and other manufacturers often spend hundreds of thousands of dollars and, in some instances, millions of dollars to defend cases involving these issues. This case proved no different and was very hard fought. After several months of intense litigation, the judge in Jacksonville set the case for trial. Prior to the trial, Mr. Searcy and Mr. Lewis attempted extensively to mediate this matter. Just weeks before the scheduled start of the trial, and after more than a year of litigation, Mr. Searcy and Mr. Lewis reached a settlement on behalf of the Granger family, the amount of which must remain confidential.

At the present time Chad Granger remains ventilator dependent. But with the wonderful care and love of his sister, Amber, and his parents, he continues his courageous fight. ■