

CAMPUS HAPPENINGS

A New Beginning

By KIA HUFF
Contributing Editor

"I went to sleep and woke up a month later. It was not the same...What will I do now?" said Guy Parks, as he woke up in a hospital in an unfamiliar city.

A year and two months ago, on December 1, 1991 Guy, Candice Blakley, Andriena Thompson and Lywana Woods, all students at Winston-Salem State University, were on a trip, which started in New Jersey. The drive back to school came to a crashing halt on a major highway in Winchester, Virginia. Guy remembers the night of the wreck was very cold and rainy, perfect sleeping weather for him. It's been said if a person is asleep during a car accident, he is not hurt as badly as someone who has time to brace himself before the impact. Guy does not know if that statement is true in case. He slept through the collision of the compact car and a tractor trailer truck. Guy is thankful for being asleep and not knowing what was happening.

"When I think about it (the accident) a year later I'm reminded that I am blessed not because I slept through the accident, but because I woke up." Candice Blakley was asleep, too. She died instantly. She participated in several campus activities, including The Scarlet Lace Dancers.

Andriena Thompson had a broken jaw. She returned to school, but for unknown reasons, she left before the semester ended and has not returned. Lywana Woods, the driver, had a broken leg, a collapsed lung and a head injury. The next semester, after the accident, Lywana returned to school.

When Guy woke up in the hospital in Winchester, Virginia, he had no idea what happened to him. "I am supposed to be in school. What is going on? Why am I in the hospital," said Guy. He recalls the first thing he wanted to know was what happened and how did he get into this situation?

Lightly touching each injury, Guy said, "I found out my third finger on my right hand was broken, my left leg and head was damaged." From his head, he slowly moved his swollen hand down to his disfigured eye. "This is my worst one," he said as he slowly shook his head from side to side as if in disbelief, even after a year has past. He lost all vision in his right eye and part of it in his left eye. "Now, I am legally blind," he said.

Guy's career goals were to be an actor, film director and news anchor. He wonders how he can do any of these things now. He said, "Stevie Wonder can't see a little bit and he's doing just fine. Without a doubt, it is not easy for me, but I will do the best I can."

In August 1992, Guy returned to WSSU, expecting things to be like they were when he left. To Guy's surprise, things had changed. He had changed. He remembers people approaching him with big hugs and wet kisses all over his face. "Some of the voices sounded familiar and others were strange. They began to make me feel strange. I almost felt like this was my first time coming to school," said Guy. As he looked at the people, all he saw was blurry images, no faces, no bodies. Not knowing what to say, he stood and smiled calmly as they welcomed him back.

The support of friends and family has helped Guy start to rebuild his life. He says he has received many phone calls. Most of the callers want to know "How are You? Do you need anything?" Guy says, "I received phone calls like that from seven in the morning until after midnight during my recovery." He says the calls were greatly appreciated, but sometimes the one thing he needed the most was some rest.

Although, rest was very important to Guy in the early stages of his recovery, after lying on his back for a month, he was more than ready to start physical therapy. One day he was so excited about getting

out of bed and walking around, he decided to give himself physical therapy. Within minutes of trying to walk in his hospital room, he said "I quickly sat my butt down because I became dizzy after standing up."

Guy remembers one of the things that kept him in high spirits, after the accident, was knowing he could share his experiences with a close friend. "I thought the worst was over. For weeks I thought I would talk with Candice after we recovered. I thought she was in therapy like I was," Guy said.

One day on the way to the rehabilitation center, Guy started a conversation with his father. At first, nothing was unusual. Then something sounded different about his father's voice. "My father said Candice didn't make it."

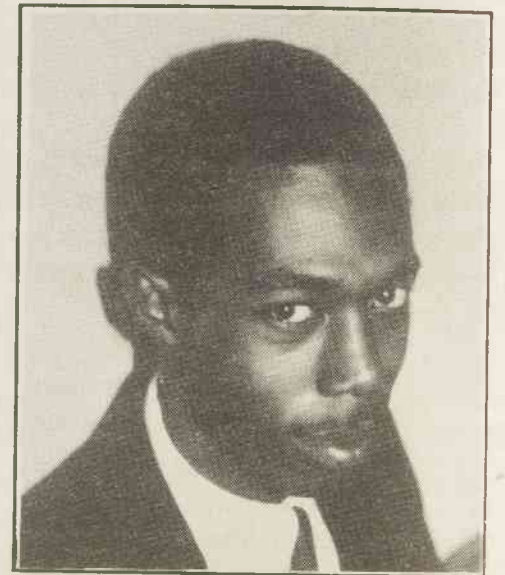
After a long pause he finished his statement, "She is dead." Candice and Guy had shared a very special friendship. After the therapy session was over, Guy said he lay on his bed overcome by sadness, as tears ran down his face, over the loss of his friend. "Before that moment on my bed, I had been in silence. I did not show my grief on the outside. Deep down in my heart and soul, I was hurting because I loved her... I still do," he said. With this new blow, his parents constantly worried about him, mentally and physically. They know how much Candice meant to him.

Guy knew he had all the missing pieces from that night in December of last year, after spending a month in the hospital, seven months in rehabilitation and finding out about his friend's death. Now, he had to put them together in a way that would help him adjust to his new life.

"My family, friends and fraternity brothers helped me from day one," Guy said. He knows just how much it means to have people who will do anything to help you. "It means more to me than my words can ever express," said Guy.

"I'm going to make it," said Guy, as he started to laugh. "I have got to

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Guy Parks

laugh because I'm already making it and I thank God." When Guy began to talk about returning to school, he says his doctors were concerned about him doing too much too soon. They told him to wait another semester, Guy's reply was "I can not wait." Since he has been in school this semester, he says "Things have been fine overall." With the help of Ms. Althea Jones, Director of The Counseling Center and Ms. Maurice Johnson, Director of Academic Advisement, Guy made the Dean's List his first semester back.

For the university's homecoming, he decided to step with his brothers of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity. The doctors thought he might re-injure his leg and suggested he wait. Once again, Guy did not agree. The night of the step show, the crowd screamed, "Guy! Guy! Guy!" as he led the step team across the stage. "I stepped so hard until after it was over all I could do was sit down and thank the Lord," said Guy.

While the doctors are amazed by Guy's speedy recovery, people still worry about him. Darren Myers, one of Guy's fraternity brothers, recalls days when Guy sits in his room and does nothing at all. "I have known Guy for four years, and it is hard to explain the differences in Guy, but he's my brother and I'm glad he is back," he said.

"Some of Guy's friends say it is a relief to have him back at school