

After seeing the news report of the New York City train crash, I felt compelled to write to you about a similar accident I was involved in years ago which may perhaps shed some light on the question, "Why was Ellen Brody, the 49 year old mother of three, on the train tracks to begin with"? An intense shiver ran up and down my spine after hearing and watching this report on yesterday's news and here is why I'm writing.

Approximately 17 years ago on a very rainy spring morning, I took my son to school without a care in the world. As I dropped him off in the parking lot of his high-school, I told him to have a great day and headed for home. Like I said before it was raining fairly hard, so I continued to drive cautiously towards my house, which was located a short distance away. My drive was uneventful, until I approached the railroad tracks around a half mile from my home. I was driving relatively slow, since I felt like the roads were slick from the rain and I was about to approach the railroad tracks. As I neared the tracks, the railroad crossing lights started flashing and the wooden arms were starting to descend downward towards the tracks. The arms were approximately in a 25% down position as I neared the tracks, so I decided to stop rather than go through the railroad intersection. Unfortunately, the driver behind me thought I was going to go through the intersection and slammed into the back of my car. I could understand why he hit me, since it was raining pretty hard and there was probably an oil slick near the tracks which made him slide when he quickly applied his brakes, since traffic often stopped here for approaching trains a few times a day. When his truck rear-ended me, it pushed my car partially under the large wooden arm of the railroad crossing and the front of my car was now positioned slightly on the tracks. I can't begin to tell you the panic and the helplessness that went through my body the moment this happened. I was very confused, shaking uncontrollably, and felt light headed. Within seconds the driver behind me jumped out of his truck & calmly, but firmly asked me to try to restart my car since it had stalled. I remember thinking --- even in my dazed & confused state ... "Should I really be doing this; or should I be getting out of my car as quickly as I can and start running away from it as fast as possible?" I again remembered the man telling me to put the car into reverse, but I don't remember to this day, if I actually put it the car into reverse or if he reached in and did it for me. I do remember him telling me to just step on the gas ever so slightly and by doing this it would get my car off of the tracks. Thank God I trusted him, since it was only a matter of seconds after I backed up the car that the commuter train came roaring down the tracks ... blowing his whistle continuously!!!

I can honestly say I felt like I was in a dream or a nightmare and couldn't wake up. I was scared out of my wits, which was causing me to question my own judgement. It was one of the most frightening experiences I ever had in my life! I know I was in an extremely dazed and confused state because I knew at any given moment the train was going to cream me!! The whole process of being hit by the driver behind me & then backing the car off of the tracks took all of about 30 seconds. I was very lucky the driver behind me took total charge of the situation & instructed me calmly how to get off of the tracks. Reflecting back now to that morning, if it hadn't been for the quick thinking and fast actions of that gentleman, I probably wouldn't be here today. To this day, when I hear a train's whistle it gives me the chills.

So, with this being said I feel whole heartedly that Ellen Brody may have been terribly confused and befuddled about her situation. Everyone's reaction and processing time is different. She may have thought ... just for a split second...that she had enough time to get off the tracks. But unfortunately for Ellen, she didn't have enough time to react and just made the "wrong decision" to go forward. May God bless Ellen, her family and friends, and the others who perished in this terrible tragedy.

Veronica (Ronnie) Haring