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After Two Year Legal Battle, Drunk Driver Victim Released From Hospital

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Photo by Jamie Cotton

By Alicia McNally, LAW WEEK COLORADO

DENVER — After **winning an \$18.5 million verdict last month** for life-changing injuries sustained from getting hit by a drunk driver in Jan. 2008, Paul Savage is finally being released from Craig Hospital.

“Right now, both myself and my wife really want to take some time to ourselves,” Savage said. “Right now I’m just trying to get over and get better. I’m looking forward to getting back out there and taking it as it comes.”

Two years ago, Savage, 46, was changing the oil on his wife’s car when a Jeep swerved into the driveway, hit him and landed in the front bay window of their Victorian home. Savage suffered catastrophic orthopedic and urological injuries resulting in more than 30 surgeries and will require supervised medical care for the rest of his life.

“Our love will always be the same, but the way we express it will never be the same,” Pam Savage said in her testimony during the bench trial, referring to her husband’s inhibited sexual function as a result of the accident.

The driver, Kevin Ruzkowski, and two other passengers were drunk and high on marijuana when the accident happened. According to witnesses of the accident, they had swerved into a ditch about a mile away from the Savages’ home.

Jim Chalot, the attorney who represented the Savages, originally took on the case pro bono to help them get their automobile insurance claims. However, the litigation took a turn when Mendakota Insurance Company, who insured the car that hit Savage, rejected the initial offer to settle on behalf of the owners of the Jeep. At that time, Savage had already incurred more than \$1.2 million in medical bills. Chalot says he is “dead certain” that the Savages will collect the \$18.5 million judgment.

“We will fight until our last gasp for that family because think of the alternatives—not only will their lives be changed because of Paul’s disability, but they’ll become financially destitute,” Chalot said.