

Inside Scott Eastwood's Emotional Apologetic Phone Call to the Father of Ex-Girlfriend Who Died in Car Crash

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Scott Eastwood recently opened up about the tragic death of one of his first loves, Jewel Brangman.

The 26-year-old model was driving in Los Angeles on Sept. 7, 2014, after a day of modeling. A small fender-bender in her rented 2001 Honda Civic caused its defective airbag to inflate with too much force, spewing metal shrapnel into her neck.

Speaking in the September/October issue of GQ Australia, the 30-year-old Suicide Squad star lamented that he had yet to call the woman's father to send his condolences, explaining "I still haven't found the right words."

But on Tuesday night – nearly two years after her death – Eastwood made the emotional call.

Alexander Brangman was there to pick up the phone.



Alexander and Jewel Brangman
COURTESY ALEXANDER BRANGMAN

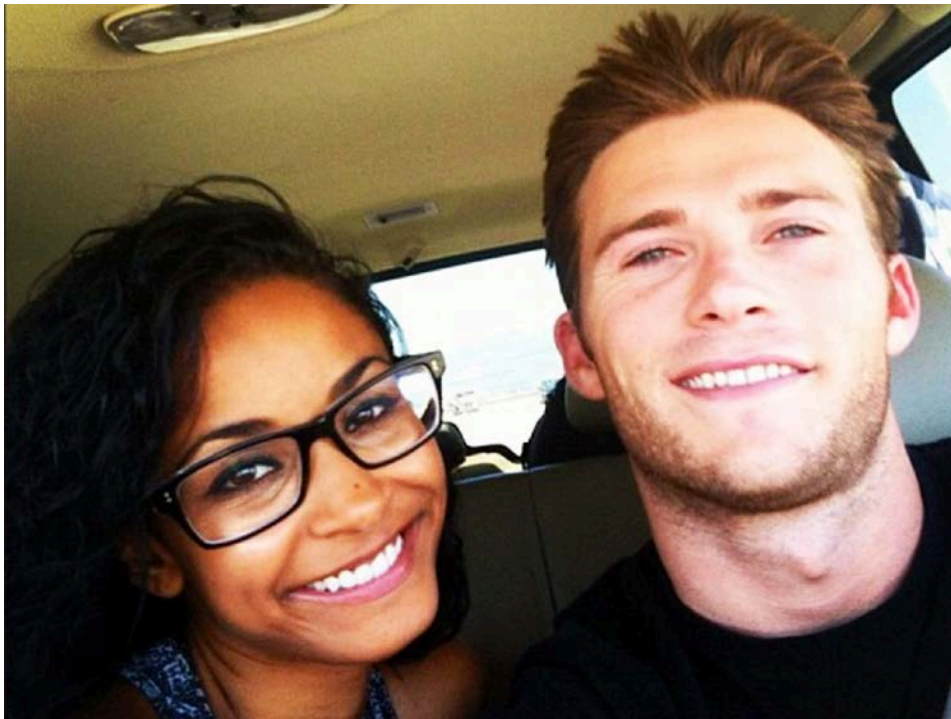
The 61-year-old single father and law professor exclusively opens up to PEOPLE about their touching reunion – which wasn't necessarily easy for either of them.

"Quite frankly, I was hurt by it," Alexander explains, when reflecting back on Eastwood's silence at the time.

"I was disappointed he didn't come to her celebration of life," he adds. "Many people were actually disappointed. Many of her friends flew across the country to pay their respects and condolences. There wasn't even a flower sent."

Alexander says Eastwood was immediately apologetic for his silence in his phone call, offering his condolences for Alexander's loss. "He said 'I didn't reach out because I didn't know what to say,'" Alexander explains. "He was very apologetic."

Alexander took the actor to task, however, for speaking about Jewel's death publicly without his consent. "I don't think he handled the situation properly," he says.



Jewel Brangman and Scott Eastwood
JEWEL ALEXANDRA/INSTAGRAM

But ultimately, Alexander chose to forgive the star, telling PEOPLE, "When things are low, I choose to rise."

He explains: "I was angry – but everybody grieves differently. You know, he's a kid, too. I didn't know what his grieving process is – I'd like to get to know more of what he went through. Because that's a difficult thing."

"Maybe he didn't know how to grieve, and in some ways, I could have helped him," Alexander wonders. "Or could still help him."

A rep for Eastwood hasn't commented.

According to Alexander, he and Eastwood made an agreement to meet together one day in person and discuss things – though neither put a specific date on the calendar. “Maybe some day that'll happen,” Alexander says. “That's to be continued.”

“If we do get together, that could be something interesting. If he wants to confide in me the struggles he's been going through in regards to their relationship and her passing, I'll be more than glad to counsel him,” he offers.



Scott Eastwood and Jewel Brangman
SOURCE: JEWEL ALEXANDRA BRANGMAN/INSTAGRAM

Eastwood and Jewel dated for nearly two years, according to Alexander, after meeting at a local bar/restaurant in the San Diego area.

The two were serious – Jewel spending time with Eastwood's family and even attending a wedding together. “They were very involved,” Alexander describes.

So involved, in fact, that their relationship prompted Alexander to move from upstate New York to San Diego to be closer to his only child and her now longtime boyfriend. “Scott comes from a very wealthy family – I wasn't sure of his reputation,” he admits. “I was being a dad.”

The move wasn't all about Eastwood, of course. “I missed her,” Alexander says. “We were always together. And I wanted to support her financially, as she wanted to take a chance in the entertainment field.”



Alexander and Jewel Brangman
COURTESY ALEXANDER BRANGMAN

An Academic All-American and state-level champion gymnast, Jewel had graduated high school and college with honors – with a master’s degree in communication and journalism from Hofstra University. She planned to get her PhD, but was taking a year off to try for a career in the arts. Alexander raised her as a single dad, with full custody of his daughter after his divorce from her mom. The father and daughter were extremely close.

“It was me and her, tied to the hip,” he remembers. “She was an absolute joy and the best thing that ever happened to me in my life. She introduced the challenge and the joy of fatherhood in my life that I enjoyed embracing. She made it easy.”

“I loved Jewel more than life itself,” he continues. “I couldn’t be prouder of what I brought into the world and more devastated that her time was cut so short.”



Jewel and Alexander Brangman
COURTESY ALEXANDER BRANGMAN

He says he met Eastwood at least once, at a dinner. “Jewel wanted him to meet me,” he explains. “It was cordial – he was polite and complimentary, as well as I was. There wasn’t any animosity.”

According to Alexander, the couple were not dating at the time of her death – breaking up six to nine months prior. “You know how young love can be,” Brangman vaguely says, of the reason behind their split.

After Jewel’s death, Alexander filed a wrongful death lawsuit against Honda, the airbag manufacturer Takata Corp. of Japan, and the car company where she rented her vehicle. The case was settled, Alexander says.

Though details of the settlement are confidential, Alexander says “his life is different now.” He has dedicated the rest of his time to help others from suffering a similar tragedy, working in Washington with advocacy groups on the dangers of defective products and air bags.



Jewel and Alexander Brangman
COURTESY ALEXANDER BRANGMAN

“My main goal is to save lives and be a voice,” he says. “That’s what Jewel was about. She was about helping people. I feel a duty to her – to show the world – the parent she came from and what the world lost in her.”

As for Eastwood, Alexander would love to see him help spread her message in the future, saying “If he wanted to reach out and have a conversation with me where he can possibly be a help in being a voice to help save lives, that would be wonderful.”