

HARDIN: Second serious injury suffered by Sisters man

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surgery for a broken neck after a fall. It was a long rehabilitation, but the outcome was nothing short of miraculous and Larry was once again enjoying his passions. A high point included racing a hot rod at Sisters Airport and winning. Throughout the rehabilitation period, Larry inspired so many; his faith, optimism and determination were key components to his recovery. Once again however, Larry was about to go through a similar — but more extreme — injury and recovery.

Just two weeks into their plans, Larry and Terry were enjoying the desert. After hiking in Joshua Tree, they returned to their motorhome to sit back and relax. As Larry began to rise, his chair became unbalanced and he was sent backwards with his head and neck striking the metal stairs leading into their RV. Realizing he was unable to move, Terry (a nurse) reached for her cellphone to call 9-1-1. Cell service was limited, but as one of the first of many provisional blessings, the call went out and help was on its way.

Larry was unable to feel anything from his shoulders down. Paramedics quickly responded, and after freeing Larry from the chair, assessing his condition and transporting him down the road to meet a Life Flight helicopter, Larry was on a 20-minute flight to Desert Regional Hospital in Palm Springs. For Terry the drive took 90 minutes, and by the time she arrived another complexity was unfolding. The hospital had received a

gunshot victim and was placed on “lock-down.” Desperate to be by her husband’s side and hear an update on his condition, Terry had to remain in a waiting room until the lock-down was over.

Unable to move or hit a call-button, Larry was placed in ICU. Despite the paralysis, potential surgery, memory loss and uncertainty of what lay ahead, Larry made jokes with staff and kept the mood light. His condition soon necessitated a feeding tube and then a tracheotomy, which made talking very difficult. To take away movement was bad enough, but then to limit Larry’s engaging personality made the days more frustrating. Three weeks after arriving, it was time to move Larry to Vibra Hospital in San Diego to be weaned off of the ventilator. This next step was a requirement for being considered as a patient at Craig Hospital in Denver, a world-renowned hospital specializing in neuro-rehabilitation and research of patients with spinal cord injuries. Craig was where Larry needed to be, and once again, the provisional blessings abounded.

For five weeks, Larry worked hard with the specialists. A clinical liaison from Craig had been scheduled to fly to California for a meeting, but cancelled the trip due to his continued reliance on the ventilator. Anxious for this next step in the rehabilitation process, Larry and his doctor at Vibra made it happen. Just two days later Larry was fully weaned and two days after that they were meeting with the liaison from Craig. Plans were secured and they were to be transported the very next day. On February 14, Valentine’s Day, Larry and his bride were flying on a Learjet to Denver.

After being admitted to Craig, Larry and Terry met with the exceptional team assigned to them. Plans were extensive and began quickly. With multiple activities and goals, each day contained over seven hours of rehabilitation. Terry was provided onsite accommodations for one month and initially thought she would then be commuting 45 minutes from a friend’s home. Then one day a case manager delivered surprising news; an anonymous donor had taken care of any further charges. Terry could remain close to Larry throughout his time there. This was just one of many financial provisions made along the way. Each need seemed to be met in a miraculous way.

For three months Larry and Terry lived at Craig, and throughout that time they focused on possibilities and blessings. Gratitude helped them overcome the overwhelming feelings that would creep in; gratitude and faith that God was in control and had purpose in all of it. During that time, Terry made one trip back to Sisters to make plans for necessary changes in their home. With only four days home to get things going, she was bolstered by friends, relatives, and church family. So many aspects needed to be updated; flooring, furniture, doorways, the shower.

Larry had to be able to navigate the house with ease from his breath-directed wheelchair.

Despite a lengthy commute, Larry’s son Tyler, who had already done so much in relocating the motorhome twice and driving through thunderstorms and winter weather on mountain passes to bring their Jeep to Denver, jumped right in to help. A compassionate work team

from within the Sisters community also came together to ensure that every need was met (including pledges from neighbors willing to help with physical needs once they were home). Transportation, a vital component to daily life, was also taken care of with the arrival of a “perfect” van (provided by an anonymous donor from another state) designed to allow Larry to independently enter and sit up front when they are driving.

When it came time to say goodbye to the staff at Craig, Larry’s team voiced deep admiration for his attitude and offered assurance that he and Terry were going to be fine. These exceptional practitioners had become like family and made the entire experience remarkable; they also taught Larry what a gift it is to be able to receive the help needed. Each individual had offered a compassionate heart, diverse background and unique perspective. Larry believes that “if you look for good, you will find it,” and his life truly reflects that focus. He also knows how blessed he is, because not every fellow patient had the same outside support system or ability to focus on the positive.

Finally being able to come home after five months away felt so good to Larry and Terry. Living each day in their newly remodeled house, with picturesque views of the forest and buoyed by loving friends and family is a blessing beyond compare. Perhaps only in a small town as special as Sisters could the welcome home be so personal and secure. Gratitude and faith remain a primary focus, and with increasing sensation in his shoulders, Larry’s hopes are high for another miraculous recovery.



Author Presentations

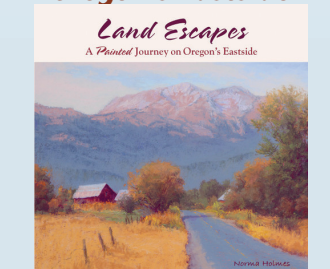
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