

Active Caring: In speech and in deed

By: Don Dyksterhouse – Aug. 2013

As I drove into the plant earlier this month, I noticed the sign that states the last recordable injury occurred on July 27, 2012. That gives me cause to remember what happened to me about a year ago. Specifically, I suffered a stroke on August 2 last year while attending training at the E&E Center. As I reflect on this event, two immediate thoughts came to mind: how fortunate I am due to the action of many individuals; and how completely out of control I was regarding my own destiny



A year later, let me briefly recall the event and my thoughts. It still amazes me how the entire scenario was orchestrated to save my life. As I recall the event, please understand that -- because I was completely unconscious -- all the discussion is through conversations I had later with my family and friends.

It was about 4 p.m. The instructor had just wrapped up the review of the training and allowed the class study time before taking the test. As I looked up at the last power point slide, each line appeared double. I shook my head thinking that the problem would be corrected somehow, but the double vision continued. Feeling tired, I decided to put my head in my hands, take a deep breath and rest a bit. That is the last thing I remember.

Student No.1, who was sitting next to me, saw that I was slumped over and immediately came to the conclusion that I was sleeping. But he kept his eye on me. After a few seconds he tried to wake me by shaking my shoulder. No response. *(First example of active caring)*

By this time, other students began to notice something was wrong. Student No. 2 from across the room came over and took charge. She and the employee next to me placed me on the floor and took off my shoes and socks. I don't know about the shoes/socks but the fact that they stabilized me on the floor ensured that the rescue squad was able to validate that I did not fall and possibly incur internal bleeding. *(Second example of active caring)*

The class knew they needed to contact my wife but my Blackberry was locked. However, Student No. 3 knew my pastor and said the pastor would know my wife's number. He succeeded in obtaining my wife's cell phone number. *(Third example of active caring)*

Student No. 4 called my wife. Believe it or not, my wife actually heard the phone while she was grocery shopping. Student No. 4 not only described what had occurred but practiced three-way

communication so my wife could understand where I would be taken. (*Fourth example of active caring*)

Student No. 5 called the rescue squad, which arrived within 10 minutes. (*Example of active caring #5*) The rescue squad stabilized me, placed me in the ambulance, and brought me to Western Wake Hospital. When I arrived, my wife, pastor and supervisor were all waiting for me. If I had been conscious, I would have cried.

The diagnosis was that two blood clots broke loose and made their way to my brain causing the stroke. Because the medical response was so prompt, and no internal bleeding had occurred, the medical staff recommended the use of a drug called TPA. Prior to administering the drug, authorization was needed from my wife. She was told that the drug was so powerful and dangerous that it had the potential to save me, but that it could also kill me. After consulting with my oldest son and praying with my pastor, she signed the authorization. I was given the drug and subsequently transported to Wake Hospital.

The TPA drug began to break up the clots. Within hours I began to regain consciousness. I won't go into the details of my recovery but the swiftness – and completeness -- of the recovery was truly amazing. I wear a medical bracelet signifying that I am on Coumadin, a blood thinner, to prevent future clotting events. This is the only change to my lifestyle and I am living a normal life.

As I reflect back on what occurred one year ago, I marvel at many things: the active caring of many fellow students who took the principle of active caring to influence their behavior in caring for me; an incredible wife who made a most difficult decision; a miracle drug; and a God that orchestrated all these activities for my recovery.

In the nuclear industry, we demand a plan **and** a contingency plan for significant events so that “we” can control our own destiny. And yet a year ago, I had absolutely NO control over my own destiny. And that's all right with me.

The next time you pass the sign at the entrance to the plant celebrating more than a year of injury-free performance, I encourage you to give thanks for our co-workers who are eager to actively care so that we all have the opportunity to come to work **and** to leave safely. I know I do.