

My Shocking Experience Last Tuesday

Since I last wrote to you, there has been a great change in our lives. You probably recall that we were visiting neighboring presbyteries for the Presbyterian Hunger Program. This took us as far east as Minneapolis, during which time we visited several Presbyterian Homes. If you remember, Barbara had quintuple bypass heart surgery in November. In the process, it was necessary to carry an oxygen compressor for night time use. This necessitated carrying the compressor in and out every night. When we got home, I felt somewhat weak, so I contacted our family doctor and he ordered some tests.

I realized that it was serious when in the middle of the stress test, my heart stopped for a short time. After that, the doctor scheduled a visit to a cardiologist. It was at that visit that a number of events that we call providential occurred.

We were there on March 1st and we found that the first time I could be scheduled for angioplasty was on Monday. It appeared the only thing we could do was go home 327 miles each way and return on Monday. We left, leaving my cell phone number. We were about 10 miles down the road when my cell phone rang. It was the pharmacy at the hospital calling to have me return to get medications that would not be available in Wolf Point.

We got the medicine and were about to leave again when I had a sharp pain in my chest. I took a nitroglycerine tablet and then my vision became blurred. After a short indecision, I checked into the E R. After examining me, they said I did not have a heart attack but was sent to ATU for angioplasty

My daughter in law Margo recently sent me a Bible carrying case with the famous poem *Footprints* on it. You remember the line, "When you saw only one set of footprints.... It was then that I was carrying you." That happened to me on Monday. During the bypass surgery they used a medicine I am allergic to and I was briefly flat-lined but was carried to see another day.

The last event happened just ten days ago. When taking my blood pressure a week ago Monday, I was surprised to see my pulse at 135, I was sure that was not right so I took it again and got 138, when my wife took me to the hospital.

I stayed for eleven days while the doctors tried to halt the fibrillation with medicine. They released me on Easter evening. The next morning I had an appointment at the Anticoagulant Clinic but after that meeting I felt so bad that I wanted someone to check my vitals. The nurse took me back to the office and found my pulse was back at 135.

After an EKG, the doctor ordered me back to the ER. And on the following day I had that "shocking" experience, a cardio-version that put my heart back in normal rhythm. It was then that I realized that I had happened upon a specialist in this field, Dr Alan Thometz.

I am eternally grateful for the fine nursing staff at Billings Clinic and the number of doctors who made it possible for me to be writing this letter, for the prayers of so many HAE and all the presbyteries who responded with kind gifts and messages. I have often said I had not decided what I wanted to do when I grew up, but after the last forty days, I know I want to find God's Plan and do it with Joy.

Jerry Swanson

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