

Overwhelmed with love

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By Jeanine Case

BIG SANDY, Texas—On Feb. 14, 2009, three congregations in East Texas got together to help a family in need. The United Church of God IA, the New Beginnings church and the Church of God Big Sandy (where my immediate family and I attend) participated in a benefit for Mel Edelbach of Kellogg, Minn., who was partially paralyzed in a logging accident in early January.

People who aren't part of these congregations also donated when they discovered what was needed.

The fund-raiser included a spaghetti dinner and a movie for \$7. Family members and others donated the needed supplies. More than \$3,700 was raised that evening. (The total from the local community is more than \$6,000 and counting.)

I know how badly this money is needed, because I am Mel's daughter. Dad is still in St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, Minn. He is scheduled to be released from the hospital on March 20.

Dad is still unable to get around much without his electric wheelchair. There are many renovations needing to be done at the house. Family and friends in Minnesota are donating their time and labor to help with the remodeling to help him maneuver around his home.

A widow maker

Let me review the events that brought this trial upon our family.

On Friday, Jan. 19, 2009, around 11:30 a.m. my dad was out logging. Logging is a career he has loved for over 40 years. He always wears his safety equipment. He plans two possible escape routes when cutting down a tree. After the cut is made, Dad drops his chain saw and runs.

This particular time a large limb about four inches in diameter (from either the tree he was cutting or from the limb of a nearby tree) fell approximately 30 feet and hit Dad on the head. Thankfully, he had his hard helmet on.

On the ground

Dad lay on the ground for about four hours before his brother Bill found him.

He was blessed to remain conscious. He was able to use his years of experience in the woods to maneuver his head so that it was pointed uphill. He was able to tuck his gloveless hands under his body. (His gloves came off in the accident.)

He used his teeth to lift his fingers out of the snow. He said he knew that when he survived he didn't want to deal with frostbite. Frostbite was a highly expected outcome because it was only 10 degrees above zero that day.

Dad noticed deer wandering by him. I later heard him tell his brother that he had hoped to be found before the coyotes started gnawing on him. He also said that he had been concerned that his skidder, which had plenty of fuel in it, might catch on fire.

After my uncle located Dad, it took another three hours to get him out of the woods and to the hospital.

Dad could hardly move anything. He said he had never been so happy to hear an ambulance. When Dad heard that one of the rescue workers was a banker and another was a veterinarian, he joked that he was fine as long as they weren't undertakers.

God blessed my husband, Vern, daughter, Vachelle, and me with a safe trip from Texas to Minnesota. We were able to be of some help. Dad mentioned several times in the days to follow how happy he was to be out of the cold and in a warm hospital bed.

Several family members stayed with Dad at the hospital at night. The first couple of weeks were very hard. Dad couldn't reach the button to push for the nurse. He suffered from horrible cramping. He needed his legs straightened and moved often. He also needed to be turned because he couldn't do it himself.

Dad's injuries were a smashing down of the C-2 through C-7 vertebrae. Doctors put two steel rods in his neck to give room to his bruised spinal cord. The surgeon informed the family that it may take up to two years before we know how much use of his body Dad will get back. We are appreciative for every improvement along his road to recovery.

Dad is at present taking a few steps with help. He can feed himself with special braces on his wrists and a spoon. Dad can get himself from the bed to the wheelchair. With the wrist braces, he can lift one-pound weights. He can turn the pages of a magazine and pick up some small objects. The therapists were very surprised that he can already do that.

Although Dad is right-handed, he was able to write a little with his left hand. His right hand is still not working much.

Positive attitude

I have come to notice of late that the people who are in trials, who are close to God and who have Christ living in them so fully handle trials so much better than I. It is a good thing for us to have our noses in the Bible and our mouths open in prayer.

Dad has maintained a positive attitude throughout this ordeal. I watched him as he showed kindness to the staff, even as he suffered from agonizing pain and leg cramps. He asked the nurses and therapists about their families and if they enjoyed their jobs.

I remarked to Dad what an amazing job he was doing. He let me know that it was God doing the work.

Dad's goal is to be able to walk again before his 3-month-old youngest granddaughter.

Great appreciation

Dad attends the LaCrosse, Wis., congregation of the United Church of God IA, which is pastored by Steve Myers. Not only has the family rallied around Dad, but so has Mr. Myers and his congregation.

As I mentioned, Dad is scheduled to get out of the hospital on March 20. Family members have organized a fund-raiser on March 21. The local Lions Club and his congregation are helping.

If you knew my dad you would realize how difficult it is for him to be receiving help from others. He has been the person giving help to others. But he has certainly expressed his appreciation for all the love that has been shown to him and his family.

Our family has been overwhelmed by the love of the brethren and the community in both East Texas and Minnesota. Some of us have shed tears of gratitude. We praise God for all the help we are getting. We pray that God will bless the generosity of His people.