

By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

Clinging to God's promise of renewal, Jim Styskal looks forward to being back home this spring to watch new life burst forth.

Styskal, who has been in the confines of Craig Rehabilitation Hospital in Englewood, Colo., since Jan. 16, places his hope in the Lord for a full recovery and new beginning.

The rehab center where he has resided for nearly 10 weeks specializes in spinal cord injury and brain injury.



Styskal was paralyzed from the neck down after suffering a fall in the wee hours of Christmas Eve on Dec. 24, 2012.

He and his wife, Bev, had just finished preparing for a talk on marriage they were scheduled to give to young adults in a few days, then they were off to bed in their usual routine.

Bev was awakened by a thud when Jim, who had gotten up to go to the bathroom, blacked out and fell forward, hitting his head on the bathroom door which wrenched his neck in a backward motion.

It was later determined his blackout was from medication he'd taken for years which caused a severe drop in blood pressure.

He was taken to Perkins County Hospital by local EMTs and then transported by helicopter to Regional West Medical Center in Scottsbluff where he remained until arrangements were finalized for acceptance into Craig Rehabilitation Hospital.

While at Scottsbluff, Jim had surgery which restored movement in his arms, however, his hands remained numb and not flexible.

His paralysis, deemed a spinal cord injury, not a severed cord, has caused swelling that impaired his movement. More function of his body is returning as swelling subsides. He has room for improving as time goes along, which could take up to two years or more.

Daily therapy for preparation in returning to their home in Grant begins early with physical, occupational and educational therapy, ranging from working arms and legs, doing therapy in a pool (which incidentally he dreamed about early on while in the hospital at Scottsbluff), electronic biking, and equipment which helps him walk on a treadmill.

At the age of 71, Jim's lifestyle of being very active and fit has proven to be beneficial during the strenuous physical therapy and occupational therapy.

"We have seen answered prayer in many ways and have experienced firsthand God's miracles in various ways on our journey," she said. "We try extra hard not to dwell on our circumstances, but to keep our eyes upon the Lord."

Jim's Top Notch Automotive business is on hold. There are no employees to keep things going. He is working hard toward the goal of someday being able to return to doing what he loves. On May 11, the business will celebrate its 50th anniversary.

By his side the entire time, Bev has been absent from her position at First Insight Eyecare where she has been employed for 28 years. Her position is also on hold for the time being.

"They [First Insight] are all like our second family," she said. "Speaking of family, they are keeping the home and business fires burning. It's great to know we do not have to worry about anything at home." Their son, Mike, who lives in Seattle has been by his Dad's side a lot also.

Last week, Bev went to Seattle to attend a "Fundracer" for Jim at the Seattle Space Needle and Chihuly (blown glass) museum where Mike has done some work.

Their faith as a couple is what they have hung onto since Dec. 24. Their days aren't easy, and they question why this happened, just like any person would. But they wait in anticipation for the healing that the Lord has planned and have claimed Isaiah 40:31 as "their" scripture: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Jim will push on toward his goal, backed by love and support of family, friends, and his community that awaits his return.