

1 My brain attack chapter and hospital admission

This is my account of my rather unpleasant and completely unplanned adventure, which began on Thursday, 28 March 2007 at my home, 1 Dickens Close St. Albans. At 6 am, my alarm went off and I got up, ready to face new challenges for the day. I was looking forward to fetching my sister, Corien, the following Saturday from her daughter's home near Wimbledon. Corien was to spend a few days with me and possibly even accompany me one or two of my work trips. At the weekend I would show her around St. Albans and perhaps go for a meal or two. I was scheduled to do the post run that day.

The post run is from Harrods' Aviation at Luton airport to Harrod's at Stansted airport and back to Luton. I bounded downstairs, made myself a cup of coffee, filled my flask with hot water and made sandwiches. Then I bounded back upstairs at least two steps at a time, spent a little quiet time doing my daily devotions 'Our Daily Bread' and then got into the shower. While turning on the taps, I had difficulty increasing the hot water flow as somehow I did not have the strength to turn the left hand tap, so I decided to look at it later and settle for a quick cold splash. As I opened the shower cubicle door and stepped out, I felt my legs collapse under me and as I sank to the floor. I remember grabbing towels and padding the edge of the bath, basin and toilet pan so as to prevent me knocking my head and causing any physical injury. I somehow managed to crawl back to my bed and got up onto it. Just after 8am Keith Ward, my boss, phoned to enquire where I was, "Hi mate, where are ye?" so I told him I was not feeling too well and that I intended resting on my bed until I was feeling better and able to go to work. I had no idea what was wrong with me. I just felt in a dream world and distant and drowsy so I just lay back on my bed and tried to sleep.

The day seemed to go surprisingly quickly. I tried to phone Jean, my girlfriend from Marlow, several times during the day but had great difficulty getting through and repeatedly got, "The number you dialed...." so I just lay back and continued sleeping. I was not in any pain and feeling very comfortable with a multitude of thoughts going through my mind as I drifted in and out of consciousness. Shortly after 8pm, Jean phoned and I told her what happened and she suggested that I call 999, but I assured her that soon I would be fine as all I needed was a short rest. She told me that she would come over, and I half-heartily agreed, as it is always good to see her and enjoy her company. Apparently my speech was slow and slurred. I wanted to go downstairs and make a cup of coffee, so that I would feel better by the time she arrived, but ended up on the floor. I desperately tried to get back up and onto my bed and while trying to get up I felt another hand sticking out from between the two mattresses and I shook this hand and wondered who's it was - maybe another body in the room with me. It even occurred to me that it was God's hand, trying to help me up.

After some time, I realized that was my own hand and it had little feeling. I was unsuccessful and thought I will just wait for Jean to arrive.

When Jean arrived she shouted up to me and told me she could not open the front door. There was always a spare key hidden in a little box on my patio so I pleaded with her to give the door a big shove as I thinking it was jammed underneath. I did not realize that it was still locked with the key in the lock on the inside. I asked her to get Frank, my neighbour, or another neighbour to help her. I was later told that Jean was bitterly cold and kept going back to her car for some warmth. Frank arrived and he decided he would call Don who is one of the Trust's Trustees. When Don arrived he broke the glass pane in order to unlock the door. I was later told that this was around 10pm. Frank then went home to make Jean a well-deserved cup of tea, as she was now bitterly cold. Don and Jean then came upstairs then and when they saw me lying on the floor with my shorts only halfway up my legs they knew that there was something seriously wrong and told me they where going to call for an ambulance. I conceded that they call for help and so Don dialed '999'.

I still wasn't sure what the ambulance crew could do, as all I wanted was to get back onto my bed and I thought that perhaps I was too heavy for Don and Jean. I remembered that Don had had back trouble recently. It was not long afterwards that I heard someone arrive, come upstairs and put an oxygen mask on me. Apparently the paramedic was a small female and she would clearly not get me downstairs on her own so she summoned another ambulance. When it arrived, my vital signs were again checked and I was told that I probably had a stroke and would be taken to the Hemel Hempstead Hospital. It was suggested that someone pack a small overnight case, and I remember asking Jean to pack my shaving machine and charger cord and tried to tell her where my suitcase was, but she could not find it. Apparently Frank went home and fetched me one of his own. I was still too heavy and a third ambulance was summoned. I finally accepted that perhaps there was something wrong with me and from then on just went with the flow. I was put on some sort of chair and my journey began.

I was carried down my rather steep set of stairs. I remember bumping my legs as I went around the corners and Don's voice as he directed the procedure. I was then put in the ambulance. I was going to hospital and I just lay back and tried to enjoy my ride. I realized that I was in good hands here in the UK and also that my Lord and Saviour would be alongside me with whatever would happen next. Jean followed behind in her car. I wondered if the ambulance lights were flashing, as I did not hear the siren. I asked why they did not have the siren on, "Why don't you put the siren on mate?" I was told it was too late at night, apparently about 11.30pm. I felt cheated. My first ride ever in an ambulance - imagine going to hospital without lights and siren!