

2/21/05

I am sorry you did not have a North 40 column to read last week. I was at the Shasta Regional Medical Center worrying about my sister all week. You have all heard the terms, "life has no guarantees", and "enjoy today to its fullest, because you can't change yesterday and you don't know what will happen tomorrow". Or something like that. These words have a far deeper meaning to me now.

My sister, Rita, who is 18 months older than I, had a stroke a week ago Saturday. You may be wondering why I am putting this in a column that is about the North 40. It is because strokes affect all of us, and sometimes we need a reminder or a "wake up call" if you like, to be aware of how we abuse our bodies and how medical science has improved and continues to improve -- and, I believe we all should be aware of what is out there for us.

Rita was luckier last week than she would have been last year. There is a new thrombolytic drug recently developed for stroke victims, that if administered within a three hour window after the stroke onset surrounds and dissolves the blood clot while protecting the undamaged brain tissues around the clot. Rita did not realize how desperate her condition was. She thought her arm had gone to sleep. She realized she had difficulty walking, and her words were slurred. But she was able to justify all of these symptoms as being the aftermath of sleep. It was not until her left leg would not work and she fell, unable to get up, that she realized she was in trouble.

By the time she was driven by ambulance to the hospital in Corning and then flown by helicopter to Shasta Regional Medical Center, she was just beyond the 3 hour window. By this time the stroke had paralyzed her entire left side of her body. The Neurologist, along with Rita and her family, decided to take the risk and administer the medicine. The difference it made for my sister one week after the onset of the stroke is nothing short of amazing. Those of you who watched the recent ER program that featured a stroke victim who was paralyzed on one side, and could not talk or open her eyes, but could hear and understand everything being said, will have a pretty good picture of what my sister was going through. The stroke did not affect Rita's mind or memory. Her speech was slurred caused from half of her vocal cords, tongue, and jaws being paralyzed, and she had some confusion. Like the patient in the "ER" show, she could not open her eye lids and when she did, she could not focus her eyes on any target on her left side.. By the time you read this, my sister will have been transferred to a rehabilitation center. She has regained the use of her left leg, the feelings are returning to her left arm, even though she cannot lift the arm, she can make a fist, and the paralyzes to the left side of her face is reversing.

The message I am trying to pass on is if you have a family history of strokes, or you have been told you are at high risk of a stroke, take an active control of your medical decisions, including becoming informed as to what is available. Because my sister has active, uncontrolled atrial fibrillation, her doctor should never have taken her off the blood thinner she was on. To make matters worse, she had a physical just 2 weeks prior to the stroke. The doctors noticed she had the blood clot, and told her she was in imminent danger of a stroke, and STILL scheduled her next appointment 3 weeks away -- one week after her stroke. Luckily the doctors and staff at Shasta Regional knew what they were doing and had the most up-to-date training and equipment. I credit their constant around the clock care for saving my sister from being forever frozen in a body that no longer could do the things that make her life enjoyable.

Please take care of yourselves, become familiar with your family medical history, and if there is a hereditary disease, educate yourselves on the symptoms and latest treatment. Okay! Class is over.

I recently met a young woman that a lot of you already know. Denise Turner works at the Sasquatch, and has cooked dinner for most of us at one time or another. We sat over a cup of coffee last week as she told me her wonderful amazing story of how she recently located her birth mother after 40 years.

Denise knew she was adopted from an early age, but never attempted to find her birth mother because she was afraid of causing her problems, and didn't want to take the chance that her birth mother didn't want to be found. One day, when Denise was busy cooking, she was told a customer wanted to talk to her.

Setting across the table from a woman she had never seen before, Denise was unprepared to hear the woman ask her if she knew she was adopted. Denise always felt that she was “different” from her brother and sister, and when she was 7, her mother confirmed she was adopted.

When Denise replied that she knew she was adopted, the lady said her birth mother was a friend of hers and had been searching for her, and to top it off, lived nearby in Hyampom, and did Denise want to meet her. She was so startled by this news that she went back to her stove and started loading the grill with hamburger patties, even though she didn't have any orders for hamburgers.

When Denise called the number the lady gave her, and she heard the voice on the end of the line, she knew instinctively she had found her birth mother, or rather her birth mother found her. Over time, Denise learned that her birth mother, at 14, had been seduced by the father of the children she was babysitting. When she became pregnant, her parents made her go to a home for unwed mothers, and put her baby up for adoption.

Denise and her birth mother have become very close “friends”, and find that they have a great many things in common. She said they talk, laugh, and think alike. They have many of the same philosophies, likes and dislikes. Even more amazing, when the two reminisced about the past 40 years, they discovered they both had wanderlust for new places to live, and both lived in many of the same towns, in different times.

Robin Renten Chapter of the Red Hatters will be having a Red Hat Breakfast Wednesday, March 16th at the Sasquatch at 10:00 a.m. Sue Chatterton, Royal Scribe, requests those Red Hatters who are planning on being there get there reservations in now. This will not be the usual Red Hat gathering. Instead of putting on their best

Red Hat regalia, make-up and hair-do's, these Red Hat ladies are to come in red hats, pajamas, slippers, or robes or purple sweats, and no makeup or fancy hair. It should be a sight, and I will be out of town and not able to make it. Darn!!!! It sounds like it is going to set Trinity Center on its ear. Can't help but wonder how many men will try to crash the breakfast. Not a good idea guys.

Sue Chatterton say's “I will be having a dyeing session at my house for anyone needing to dye those pj's or whatever. My machine and purple dye will be available if you bring your articles to my house early enough. I have a yellow pair of flannel pj's that will be turned into my purple attire”.

I have 4 Tickets left for Bridger Beverly/Holly Anderson Dinner that will be held on March 13 at the IOOF Hall. The tickets have virtually flown out the door. It is a testimonial to how respected both of these folks are. It is going to be a great evening. Sheri has been busy developing a very nice dinner menu, and Elaine Ulrich, Helga and I have been busy putting together a Kayak Tree.

Brandy Ann Arana-Barcelos and Joseph Anthony Prado II were married October 2, 2004 at the Antique Wedding Chapel in Reno, Nevada. They reside with their daughter Laiya Nicole, 3 ½, in Hayward, Ca.

Brandy graduated from Coffee Creek School and attended Trinity High School, where she joined the wrestling team, and graduated from Union City High School. She earned bronze, silver and gold medals for wrestling while attending both schools. She is presently pursuing a CPA degree. Her husband, Joey, is a mechanic for U-Haul. Brandy is the granddaughter of Jack and Judy Brusnighan of Coffee Creek