

## We Take Care of Our Own

James Denito

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Three months ago a great man died in the state of Pennsylvania. He was not a chiropractor, but he was my father.

Five years ago when my mother lost her battle with cancer, he retired from his CPA practice of 40 years and joined the rescue squad of the local ambulance/fire station as a volunteer. He earned his EMT and went into training as a paramedic. His enthusiasm did not go unnoticed. The Philadelphia Enquirer did a half-page story on him.

He was bitten by an insect or spider on his leg while sleeping on a cold January night. The pain around his knee was excruciating, and a cold sweat and nausea kept him up the rest of the night. He saw his chiropractor the next day, who recommended he go to the hospital. Ten days later and a \$20,000 bill to Medicare saw only a marginal improvement in his condition. He checked himself out against doctors wishes and went to a holistic medical center in New Jersey and worked with MDs who used nutritional supplements, an acupuncturist, and a physical therapist to help heal the damaged tissue of his leg. He also received weekly chiropractic adjustments. Slowly he improved. In late June he was give the OK to return to work as a volunteer on the rescue squad. He was thrilled.

Apparently there was an occult clot in his vein at the injury sight. The renewed physical activity necessary for his rehabilitation may have broken the clot free. When the clot hit his cerebral vasculature one night, he died instantly. His body wasn't found until the next morning. Several of the rescue squad units he had trained or worked with responded. They were shocked by the suddenness of his death, even though they deal with death most every day.

The wake was attended by over 25 squad members in working uniform; several uniformed paramedics and firemen stood as honor guards all evening by the casket. The day of the funeral is unforgettable: 12 uniformed rescue squad members saluting as six of the members carried the casket. Many had tears on their cheeks as my dad passed through the church. Eleven ambulances lined up in front of the procession; two more brought up the rear. We paraded slowly for nearly 30 minutes, red, white and blue strobe lights announcing to the world that someone special was no longer with us.

My brother and I asked the captain at the viewing why they wanted to do all this for him. "We take care of our own, sir," he simply replied.

My father never went to those squads with the intention of changing their views on health care, but he certainly came home many times frustrated by the way paramedics and EMTs work. And he did make a difference. He taught them that the people they rescued were human beings that needed to

be touched and respected. He showed them our way.

What I've thought of most in the months since his passing is one simple thing. What a statement we could make to the world if we also went to a fallen colleague's funeral en mass to tell the world we take care of our own.

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