

## Matter of Minutes

Klamath Falls couple learns the value of Mercy Flights' air ambulance.

On a snowy February morning Clarence Greenstreet, 77, was bringing in more wood for the stove. He slipped and fell, hitting his head on the frozen ground. His family took him to the doctor for a checkup. Everything looked fine and Clarence was sent back home.

That night, he woke up to go to the bathroom. On the way there, Clarence collapsed and couldn't get up. His family called 911 and the local ambulance rushed him to the emergency room at Merle West Medical Center in Klamath Falls.

"The doctors there did an emergency CAT scan," said his son, Mike Greenstreet. "They confirmed he had a subdural hematoma on the left side of his brain."

A subdural hematoma usually occurs after some type of head trauma. Slow bleeding into the brain from injured

blood vessels causes a blood clot and subsequent pressure inside the patient's skull.

"Since there aren't any neurological surgeons in Klamath

Mike said he watched the helicopter take off and was impressed. "Even with the snowy, nasty weather, it was a smooth take-off. They rushed



**Thankful:** Clarence and Mabel Greenstreet recount the story of Clarence's helicopter flight. When Clarence suffered a traumatic injury, the Mercy Flights air ambulance helped make the difference between life and death.

Falls, we had to get Dad to Medford quickly," Mike said. "The Mercy Flights helicopter got up to Merle West in about 25 minutes. It was a good crew—they were very professional."

Dad to Rogue Valley Medical Center (RVMC) and we drove down."

Dr. Roberson, a Medford neurological surgeon, operated on Clarence to remove the

*Minutes continued inside*



**Answers About  
Mercy Flights**

- Q** Does Mercy Flights offer a membership discount to seniors?
- A** Yes! For individuals who are 62 or older, we offer a reduced price for both single and family senior memberships. This covers the ground, air, and combined packages.
- Q** Do I need to have my membership card with me if I require emergency transportation?
- A** No. When we transport patients in one of our ambulances, we look for their name in our database to see if they qualify for reduced membership rates.



**MERCY FLIGHTS**

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clot. "He had a large clot," Mike said. "The operation lasted about 5 hours."

After a four-day stay at RVMC, Clarence was able to go home. "He walked out of the hospital," Mike said. "The staff was calling him the Miracle Man because they expected him to be in the hospital for at least two weeks recovering. He's doing well. Dad's speech is back to normal and he is working on getting stronger." Clarence is working around his yard and the family said Dr. Roberson said his brain has healed from the surgery. ■

Mike Greenstreet thanks Mercy Flights for saving his father's life.

# Fast Facts

## Insect Safety Tips

Enjoying the outdoors can mean an occasional sting from a bee or wasp. Here's a few tips if you get stung:

- 1 Examine the site to look for the stinger.
- 2 If it's still in your skin, carefully scrape it away.
- 3 Wash the site with soapy water.
- 4 To reduce irritation, apply rubbing alcohol or a baking soda paste. Ice can help reduce pain and swelling.

Stings can produce redness, swelling, and itching at the sting site. Hives, dizziness, and labored breathing may be signs of an allergic reaction. Take the person to the nearest hospital or call 911.

# Caring for Our Elders

Nationally, about 34% of calls for emergency medical services (3.4 million) involve patients over the age of 60. To help meet the needs of this group, Mercy Flights Training Supervisor Mark Wareing recently became approved as a course facilitator for Geriatric Education for Emergency Medical Services (GEMS). This program is a national continuing education curriculum designed to help pre-hospital professionals better assess and manage ill, injured, and disabled older patients. Topics include changes with age, communicating with older people and their caregivers, assessment of the older patient, geriatric physiology, and medication toxicity emergencies.

"This fits into the demographics of the patients we often serve," Wareing said. "The GEMS course helps participants learn more about pre-hospital geriatric medicine, as well as how to care for older adults in a caring, empathetic manner."



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In March, Wareing led a GEMS course for Oregon Health Department staff and educators, as well as trainers for a number of other EMS agencies. The course he taught was the first of its kind in Oregon. ■





# Just a Phone Call Away

Mercy Flights has a new Dispatch Center in its headquarters. Walking into the Dispatch room is like being on the set of a sci-fi television show. With huge computer screens, radio control modules, blinking lights, monitors, and a pleasant computer voice, the Center is completely wired with the latest technology.

The dispatcher tracks the current location of all Mercy Flights' ambulances, and routes one or more of them to an emergency. The dispatcher takes information from the caller and updates the appropriate first responder team (law enforcement or fire department) about the nature of the emergency.

## LANDING ZONE

Finding a safe place to land the Mercy Flights air ambulance in an emergency situation.



The ground crew will mark the landing zone with small, weighted cones or flameless light sources on each corner. All non-essential lights are turned off or down during take-offs and landing. As the aircraft lands, a landing zone coordinator and assistants will help the pilot make a safe landing in the designated zone. It's safest if unauthorized personnel, news media, and bystanders are at least 200 feet from the helicopter.

Once the helicopter has landed, the ground crew has to wait for the rotors to slow or stop before approaching the aircraft. People who approach the helicopter have to walk in a crouching position since the rotor blades can dip down, leading to serious injury. When the helicopter is loaded and ready to leave, the landing zone coordinator will let the pilot know when it is clear to take off.

**W**hen the Mercy Flights' emergency air crew evacuates a critically injured patient by helicopter, each accident scene presents challenges. The pilot is responsible for the safe operation of the aircraft. Landing is a coordinated team effort between EMS, fire, and police professionals.

Whenever a helicopter lands at an unfamiliar location, particularly unimproved sites, the helicopter pilot has to assess the landing zone for its suitability. With help from the professionals already on the ground, the pilot evaluates the following criteria:

- 1. Is the landing zone large enough?** Is the site flat (less than a ten degree slope)? Is it firm? Is it free of debris that could blow into the rotor system or engine?
- 2. The landing area should be free of bystanders, vehicles, and obstructions** such as large rocks, stumps, fence posts, or electric poles with wires.
- 3. What direction are the winds and how strong are the gusts?** It is best when a helicopter can land into the wind.

