

Help Is on the Way

A winter blizzard, a car crash, and a long wait | **ELDON HATCH**

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. —Psalm 46:1

As part of my job as a cattle broker with my father's firm in the fifties and sixties, I visited farms throughout the Corn Belt. On one of those occasions, I had made appointments with a number of farmers and knew it would be a full day's work getting around to visit all of them.

I awoke that morning to find we were having a blizzard. The roads, as I knew they would be, were terrible, but the traffic was light, and I made pretty good time as far as Gibson City, Illinois. The sun rose as I left the town, so I could see a little more clearly, but the snow was blowing and drifting, making the roads hazardous.

When I topped a hill, I could see an older gentleman driving in front of me. There was a stop sign just ahead, but his car wasn't slowing down. A Nash Rambler was headed for the intersection from the right and, with horror, I realized the man in front of me was going to miss the stop. In an instant, he broadsided the Nash, hitting the driver's door.

The crash was deafening. Both cars spun like tops. The passenger door of the Nash flew open and a teenage boy was thrown to the ground.

I stopped my car, switched on my flashers, and jumped out. Horrified, I

stood frozen in the middle of the road. I fought back tears and cried aloud to the Lord, "Please help me! I need to help these people!"

By the time I reached the crash site, the elderly man had opened his door and started walking down the road in a daze. The driver of the Nash, a young woman, was pinned in her seat by the steering column. She had lost consciousness. She had hit her head on the windshield, and her arm and shoulder looked broken. A small child in the back seat seemed unhurt but was crying hysterically.

I didn't have any medical or emergency training, but I had always heard you should never move anyone in a crash. I was afraid I would make the situation worse by trying to help.

I cried out, "God, please help me! What should I do?"

Miraculously, out of the blizzard came a pickup truck pulling a house trailer. The driver stopped, and I ran to him and asked if the heat was on in the trailer.

"Heat on!" he shouted in reply.

"Please, help me get the child, the boy, and the man inside," I pleaded.

Both of us made our way to the teenager, who by now was on his hands and knees. Together we helped him to his feet and half-carried, half-dragged him to the warmth of the trailer, hoping it would lessen his shock. We covered

him with a blanket.

"Can you get the child?" I shouted to the driver, as I headed down the road after the dazed man.

"Please come with me," I said to him, taking his hand. "I'll take care of you."

By the time we reached the trailer, the truck driver had placed the child inside, and he helped me support the man as he climbed in.

I knew that the teenager needed immediate medical attention, so I urged the driver to hurry to the next town and find the hospital. I told him I would stay with the woman until help arrived. As the red taillights faded into the storm, I had a sinking feeling in my stomach. It had all happened so quickly.

I stood there in the middle of the snow-swept road, my heart pounding. I knew I had to help this woman. In an instant, I realized I should have gotten a blanket from the truck driver. The wind was howling, and the windows of the Nash were broken out. I ran to the car, pulling off my jacket, and, as carefully as I could, wrapped the jacket around the woman.

She had a large, bleeding gash on her forehead. Her left arm hung loosely and appeared to have been relocated to the middle of her chest. Her face was the color of the snow, with a red river of blood in the middle. Her body started to shake, and I knew she needed to be



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warmed. Sitting in the passenger seat, I put my arm around her and pulled the jacket around her as tightly as I could. I would try to keep her warm with my body.

As I sat there, I kept hoping someone else would pass by or that help would arrive. The minutes ticked by. No one came. The woman started to stir and cry out, “My arm hurts so much!”

I tried to pull her arm and shoulder into a more normal position. This seemed to help the pain, but she continued to cry out, “Help me! Help me!”

I felt so helpless, but I knew God was with us in this overwhelming time of need. I praised God for his presence in that car that very moment.

But more time passed, and help still didn’t come. This woman was so pale and she shook so violently that I knew

she needed help soon.

It had been about an hour when a car finally appeared. The driver stopped, rolled down a window and said he would send help. Then that car, too, sped away.

Nobody else came—I mean *nobody*. My body ached with the cold. My arm was numb, but I had to hold the woman’s arm and shoulder in place.

I started to pray the Twenty-third Psalm, and to my amazement, the woman started to pray with me. As we prayed, I could feel strength returning to my body. It seemed as if the car was filled with warmth and a peacefulness that I cannot explain. We just sat there, the blizzard blowing through the smashed window.

What a sight we must have been, but God’s mercy was with us. At long last, the flashing lights of an ambulance

pierced the storm. The ambulance came to a halt next to the Nash, and a man jumped out—not an ambulance driver, but a doctor! The ambulance had been out on a death call with the local undertaker, and the doctor had had to wait for it to return. That was why it had taken so long to get to us. A nurse jumped out the other door with a black bag in hand.

The doctor sized up the situation in an instant. The nurse pulled open the bag and prepared an enormous shot of Demerol. I moved out of the way as the doctor injected this painkilling drug into the injured woman’s body. The nurse pulled the stretcher out of the ambulance.

Now, how would we get the injured

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Eldon Hatch is a member of Naperville (Illinois) Evangelical Covenant Church.

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woman from behind the wheel that had pinned her in so unmercifully?

“I’ll take her shoulders, and you grab her hips!” the doctor shouted to me over the storm. “We’ll try to slide her out the passenger’s side.”

The driver’s door had been smashed so badly that it could not be opened. I again remembered what I had heard about moving an injured person, but it didn’t seem that this doctor had read that book. He just tugged, and he told me to push. I couldn’t imagine the pain this woman was in, but the doctor just kept pulling and I kept pushing until finally her body slipped from that dreadful trap. It was like a baby being born. All of a sudden her body was free. With the nurse’s help, we lifted her carefully onto the stretcher and placed her in the ambulance.

The doctor had known what he was doing, because we had the woman out of the car and into the ambulance in just a few minutes. Another big shot of Demerol and then the doctor, nurse, and patient sped away into the storm, siren blaring and lights flashing.

I just stood there shaking in the wind, almost paralyzed by the cold. A police car pulled up as the lights of the ambulance vanished in the snow. As the police officer arrived to clean up the debris, I just stood by the road, my eyes filled with tears, thanking God for his blessings.

Needless to say, I didn’t look at any cattle that day.

Two weeks later, the brother of one of the farmers I was to have met was in the hospital for surgery. As he walked the corridor, cane in hand, he noticed a woman in one of the rooms who looked worse off than he was. Her arm was in traction, her hips were supported with sandbags, and her head was bandaged.

“What happened to you?” he asked.

She told him of the terrible crash, of the agony she had suffered, and of how God had answered her prayers and sent her a good Samaritan. o