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Heroic workers save Rapids man after accident

By Andrew Hellpap
Daily Tribune Staff

Vern Christman went to work on a typical May day.

His life would soon change.

Christman, 64, of Grand Rapids, an employee of Golden Eagle Log Homes in Biron, punched the clock and drove his delivery truck full of insulation bundles and other building supplies to a job site, located south of Rainbow Casino, off of Highway G near Nekoosa, for Necedah-based Creative Builders.

Upon arrival, Christman began unloading materials as he had done time and time before in his 11 years working for Golden Eagle.

After grabbing hold of the banding around one of the insulation bundles, the strap broke, sending him falling backward off the truck head first onto the cement underneath him.

The impact of his head on the pavement knocked him unconscious.

"From that point I didn't remember anything," Christman said.

What he missed was his life being saved.

Tom Dodge and Brad Pellegrini, employees of Creative Builders working on the home Christman was delivering to, rushed to his aide.

Dodge immediately tried to talk to Christman, but he was unresponsive and did not have a pulse, according to a written statement he provided. He declined to be interviewed for this story.

Pellegrini called 9-1-1 and waited at the end of the driveway to the construction site to direct rescue personnel to the scene.

Christman still had no pulse, and Dodge began CPR, the report states.

He then loosened Christman's clothing to keep him from going into shock.

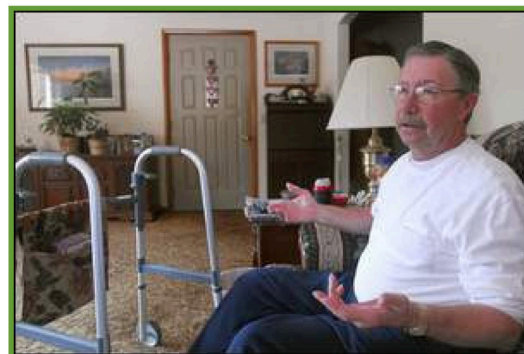
The ambulance arrived soon after and transported him to Saint Joseph's Hospital in Marshfield. Other than a few staples to heal a cut from the fall, Christman was back to work with Golden Eagle in 21 days.

"Lucky to be alive ... it was Tom Dodge that gave me CPR to bring me back to life," Christman said.

About a week after the injury Christman sent thank you letters to Dodge and Pellegrini, but did not get a response.

Rep. Marlin Schneider, D-Grand Rapids, awarded Dodge and Pellegrini with legislative citations for their efforts at the Golden Eagle Christmas party Jan. 13. This was the first time since May Christman saw Pellegrini.

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Vern Christman fell from the back of a truck and hit his head and was helped by two other men at the job site he was at, while working for Golden Eagle Log Homes. TOM LOUCKS/Daily Tribune

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