

The Death of Elder Joe Crews

On Thursday, October 6, 1994, Elder Joe Crews experienced a coronary occlusion. One of the small arteries which nourish the heart muscle itself was almost entirely closed, and no longer sending blood to the heart muscle.

When it was determined that this was the problem, he was quickly ambulated from the Frederick, Maryland, Hospital to Washington Adventist Hospital, in Takoma Park. Immediate angioplasty surgery (an attempt to unblock the artery) was performed and it was said to have been successful.

By this time it was Friday evening, and the family visited with Elder Crews at the hospital.

Then he suffered a stroke. At first, it was thought to be a small one, and Elder Crews, awake, even told the nurses he was experiencing it. Then he went unconscious.

By the next morning, Sabbath, it was discovered that Elder Crews had experienced, what was said to be, a massive stroke. As a result of the surgery, small pieces of material can be loosened in the blood vessels, travel elsewhere in the system, and then block small arteries. When this occurs in the brain arteries, the result can be unfortunate.

He never regained consciousness. A cat scan revealed that the situation was grave. On Sunday morning, the family planned for an anointing at 2 p.m.

A careful examination by a cardiologist and neurologist on Sunday revealed there were no neurological functions. That means that the brain was no longer operating. The common term for this is "brain death."

As will be noted in the following reports, it was stated that built-up pressure from the stroke was keeping fresh blood from entering the brain. But the pressure caused a blood vessel somewhere to burst.

The official cause of death was a cerebral hemorrhage. Although not known what initiated the bleeding, the blood-thinning medications Elder Crews had been placed on immediately following the angioplasty operation, enabled the blood to flow rapidly out. The brain was undernourished and ceased to function. "The life is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11), so when blood no longer reached the brain, it died.

In this way, what may have been only a small stroke, through the leakage of thinned blood, turned into a major disaster. Just a few seconds of that would result in irreversible consequences.

The family requested that life-support systems be continued until Monday. Elder Crews was anointed by close, long-time friends on Sunday afternoon. It

was confirmed that blood circulation throughout the brain had essentially ceased.

Elder Crews' family was called together, so they could be present when the life-support systems were turned off.

The official time of death was listed as 1:30 p.m., Monday, October 10, 1994. It was at that time that the systems were turned off, and the artificial breathing machine unplugged.

The funeral will be held at the Hagerstown Seventh-day Adventist Church at 10 a.m., on Thursday, October 13. Elder Crews would have been 70 in December.

Elder Crews was a man of God who tried to be faithful to the truth. May we all be faithful, so we can meet him in heaven.

Douglas E. Batchelor, a California pastor, will take his place as speaker at Amazing Facts. The director of 3ABM has told others that Batchelor is one of their most popular speakers.

Elder Crews stood solidly for historic Adventism. We can only hope and pray that those who follow him will be as faithful.

Here are the announcements, prepared for Amazing Facts, by the family of Elder Crews. It consists of three separate messages. The first was written by Sharon Crews (Larry's wife) on Sunday morning. The second was written by her husband, Larry, on Sunday night. The third was prepared by Dennis Crews on Monday. Everything within brackets is ours.

[1 - WRITTEN SUNDAY MORNING BY SHARON]

Sharon composed this message; later one is more accurate re. some facts.

Dear on-line friends,

Thank you for your interest in my father. He did not have a heart attack, although he easily could have. One of his coronary arteries was 99% occluded. He spent this last Thursday at the Frederick Hospital during which he was having chest pains upon the least exertion. The hospital at first did not recognize the severity of his case and tried a treadmill stress test. The test did not last long before they realized they needed to take much faster action. They believed an immediate angiogram followed by an angioplasty was necessary, but they were not for the procedure at the moment. They then sent him, by ambulance, to Washington Adventist Hospital, in Takoma Park, where the procedures were immediately performed. The coronary artery was successfully opened, and Dad was feeling fine and was to be released from the hospital two

days later. The doctors said it was a miracle that Dad did not have a heart attack before he reached Washington Adventist Hospital. It was also most providential that this was the only weekend that Dad was not away on a speaking engagement. He was booked up with appointments for many weeks surrounding this weekend.

Before all this happened, we had planned a small family gathering at my parents' house this weekend. Instead, our family had a wonderful time at the hospital, Friday evening, visiting Dad following the successful angioplasty. Dad was very happy and looking forward to doing much more work for the Lord. Sabbath morning, however, we received a telephone call, from the hospital, informing us that Dad had had a stroke. Strokes are an infrequent, but possible, side effect of the angioplasty. During the procedure, there is potential for plaque to be dislodged and go to the brain. At first the nurses thought it might be a small stroke. Dad very quickly lost consciousness. A cat scan revealed that the stroke was massive, and the doctors informed us that it was only a matter of time before the damage from the stroke would extend to centers controlling Dad's vital functions. Today, Sunday at 2 p.m., there will be an anointing. We ask everyone to pray at this time. He is truly in God's hands. God has miraculously saved his life many times before.

People across the nation are praying. Elder Folkenburg included Dad in his morning prayer at the special Annual Council Sabbath services at Sligio Church and at the afternoon meetings. We very much appreciated his and his wife's visit and prayers with us at the hospital later Sabbath afternoon.

Friday evening, Dad was expressing sadness at being in the hospital on such beautiful fall days. He was eager to enjoy the beauties of God's creation. If God does not intervene to save his life, we firmly believe that his next awareness will be the mighty return of Christ and the beauties of the new creation.

Dad will be 70 years old in December. My parents celebrated their 47th wedding anniversary last Wednesday.

Thank you for your prayers and thoughts at this difficult time.

In the Blessed Hope.

Faithfully yours, Sharon and Larry

[2 - WRITTEN SUNDAY NIGHT BY LARRY]

Tim,

Both cardiologist and neurologist confirmed to us, Sunday afternoon, that my dad's neurological functions are no longer compatible with life. He's essentially 'brain-dead.'

The objective determination was made by a relatively simple test showing that the pressure buildup, from the stroke, no longer allows any fresh blood to enter his brain. If his heart doesn't stop on its own tonight or by noon tomorrow, as the Drs. said, it is very possible we will agree, Monday afternoon, to the discontinuance of the artificial breathing support which will allow him to finally rest from his labor. His testimony can now be that of Paul, in 2 Timothy 4:6-8: "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my

course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord . . . shall give me . . . and . . . all them that love His appearing."

I am staying by the hospital with my mom tonight. In light of this current situation, I'm planning not to come to work tomorrow. I'll leave appropriate Audex messages on my two lines and will be in touch with you again soon. This is not an easy time. Your prayers and support are very much appreciated.—Larry

[3 - WRITTEN MONDAY MORNING BY DENNIS]

My brother Dennis prepared this message for us:

To all the friends, in many places, whose love, prayers, and inquiries regarding our dad have come our way—thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We regret to say that he passed away at 1:15 this afternoon (October 10). Dad's official cause of death is cerebral hemorrhage. We do not know what caused the bleeding to start, but, in any case, the blood-thinning medication necessary for the angioplasty procedure he had undergone the day before contributed to a very rapid and catastrophic result that was impossible to reverse. The doctors were as surprised as we were by this turn of events.

Though a Sunday afternoon radiological test indicated blood circulation to his brain had essentially ceased, we asked doctors to extend respiratory and blood pressure support through this morning, in order that all immediate family members might have the chance to say good-bye together, and to keep open the window of opportunity for Providence to work in any way possible.

Dad had been anointed earlier Sunday afternoon by a group, including several of his closest associates in the ministry—a gathering of godly men who knew him well and loved him deeply. In light of the many fervent prayers offered in his behalf, we believe that it was God's will for him to rest now, and know his work will live on as a testament to his extraordinary commitment to the gospel ministry.

Viewing will be from 6:00 until 9:00 Wednesday evening at the Hagerstown S.D.A. Church; funeral is scheduled for 10:00 am on Thursday (same location). In the meantime, your prayers will be much appreciated as we adjust to the many changes before us—especially our mother, whose personal life will be affected most profoundly by the loss we all have suffered. Any phone inquiries should be directed to Joe Fields or other staff at Amazing Facts (301-694-6200). They are better equipped than we at the present to handle such calls.

Thanks again for your support and prayers. Maranatha!

In the blessed Hope,

Larry & Sharon, Dennis & Terry Crews

This is the verse after the one Elder Crews so loved to preach on:

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord . . . , that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Revelation 14:13.

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HCR 77, BOX 38A - BEERSHEBA SPRINGS, TN 37305 USA