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THE RIPPLE EFFECT

THE RIPPLE EFFECT (BY LANE LYON)

We've all heard of the ripple effect. An online dictionary describes it as "a series of consequences caused by one single action or event." That's about right. Actually, it's spot on. My entire family would agree as well.

Our ripple struck December 20, 2011. I remember the exact moment. I was at my desk contemplating the upcoming holiday and week off from work when the phone rang. My mom was frantic as she explained my father had been in a terrible accident and was in an ambulance headed for the hospital.

Fast forward five days. It was Christmas Day. In an attempt to deliver an ounce of Christmas cheer, I wore a Santa hat to the hospital. It was a nice try. The truth is, the "ripples" were so strong, smiles were hard to come by.

My father, Dennis Lyon has been active in the golf profession for many years. He was superintendent/manager of golf for the City of Aurora Colorado from 1973 until his retirement in 2010. He is also a past president of GCSAA and a columnist for GCI. Now he was hooked up to a tangle of tubes and wires. He was lucky to be

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alive after being hit by a pickup truck. He was on an afternoon stroll with his canine pal, Putter, when the accident happened. The impact was so intense, his back was broken – along with his collar bone, shoulder, pelvis and tail bone. (Putter, by the way, only suffered a minor abrasion).



Dennis Lyon and his son Lane Lyon, together as Dennis continues to heal from being hit by a truck during the holidays last year.

My dad had other injuries too – his right ear lobe had to be reattached, and he had severe internal injuries, including a lacerated spleen. There was also head trauma. Minor bleeding on the brain would leave my dad confused and asking the same question for weeks after the accident, "What happened to me?"

He wasn't the only one asking. Our family was flooded with love and support we will always cherish when we think back. Very soon after the accident, it became clear we needed to disseminate information to many concerned family, friends and colleagues. My sister, Casey, set up a page on a terrific site, CaringBridge.org. If you want to visit, enter dennislyon1. The initial Caring Bridge response was from friends and family. Our cousin wrote, "It might be too hopeful to hope each day will be better, but we always hope it will not get worse."

It didn't take long for us to realize the "ripple" was widening.

Two days after Christmas, Doug McNeil a colleague from the City of Aurora wrote: "It's hard to know what to say after something so tragic has happened. All of us in your golf family are wishing you nothing but the best. We know you have a long road ahead, but hopefully you will feel our support all along that road."

As the days and weeks went on – he was hospitalized for seven weeks – our entire family was at his side celebrating every milestone – IVs out, memory returning, pain settling, physical therapy, first steps, a wheel chair down to dinner, even the first trip to the bathroom! The entire time we were awe struck by thousands of page views to Caring Bridge, (there are over 8,300 to date). The page received hundreds of messages, many from golf superintendents from



around the world. There were also hundreds of cards and e-mails from people who were concerned about my dad. Our family remains truly grateful for all the support.

Fellow GCSAA Past President Steve Cadenelli, one of Dad's best friends, flew from Massachusetts to Colorado three times to help Dad during his most difficult stretches.

The "ripple," as truly awful as it was, also opened our eyes to how special our father is to so many people. One entry read, "I would not be who I am today without Dennis Lyon, and I pray for his full recovery. He mentored me and many others through soccer and through life, and he is a man of many strengths and overwhelming compassion." Whoa.

Occasionally, we'd think of one person who wasn't posting messages or calling us: the pickup driver. We can't stop thinking about the life changing ripples he set into motion that day. Sure, accidents happen. But only when you experience the ripple effect of something like this do you understand how life can truly change in an instant.

The pain, the injuries and the ripples are something our dad thinks about every hour of every day. We family members are thrilled he's now continuing his recovery at home. Special thanks to all of you who helped my dad by sending positive ripples.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT BY DENNIS LYON, CGCS. Special thanks to my son Lane for sharing his thoughts in the first portion of this article. My wife Penny and our other children, Corey and Lydia, Casey and John and Jesse have also been invaluable during my healing process.

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—Dennis Lyon



Above, Dennis with his canine companion, Putter, and below, surrounded by family.

the ripple. However, a stone does not move from the edge of the pond into the water under its own power. In my case, an irresponsible driver caused the ripple when he hit me with his pickup, threw me up onto the hood, and then caused me to fall from the hood onto the pavement. Fortunately for me, the next thing I remembered after the accident came eight days later in the University of Colorado hospital. My family was there at my side. I had fortunately survived eight days of intense pain and surgeries. My family was there throughout this very difficult time. They were wonderful and invaluable.

As the ripple has grown I have been overwhelmed by the support

and prayers I received from City of Aurora employees and other friends and colleagues from the world of golf and elsewhere. The kind words and support I received have brought me to tears many times. The generosity I have received from GCSAA, the Wee One Foundation and many individuals has been amazing and so valuable during this financially difficult time.

Throughout the past several months I have seen and experienced both negative and positive ripples. On the negative side I was severely injured and almost died. My recovery has been slow and at times I have wondered, "Why me?" My family has suffered and paid an amazing emotional price. On the positive side, so many people have been kind, caring and helpful. I have also grown personally. I feel I am a more compassionate person and am committed to assisting others as much as possible.

What then do I need from you? I need you all to avoid creating a negative ripple on yourself, your family, another person or another family. For starters, please make sure you and your employees operate in a safe work environment. You and your family must always live safely. Don't drink, text or even talk on your cell phone while you drive. Always drive responsibly. Don't be like the pickup driver who hit me. Please do whatever it takes to keep from injuring yourself or someone else. Life is short and we have to spend it all with one body and one brain. I am lucky I had a broken back with no life-changing physical injuries. I also suffered a brain injury without life-changing impacts. I thank God and all of you who helped and supported me. Let's all spend our future surrounding ourselves and others with positive ripples only. No negative ripples allowed ever, you are all too important. **GCI**