

## Survivor S·t·o·r·i·e·s

### Stepped Off - When will the journey end!

By Steve Pape



turned out I didn't leave Scotland for another six weeks.

That morning, all I can remember is sitting down for breakfast and passing some time talking to a couple of other bikers. After pulling out of the hotel's car park, I have no recollection of what happened next. From what people have told me, and from what the police crash investigators have deduced from the scene of the accident, I was apparently going around a left hand bend at speed. I must have lost control of my motorbike and collided with the walls on either side of the road seven miles out from the hotel. The scene was apparently like the aftermath of a bomb blast.

I was taken to the nearest hospital specializing in neurological injuries; Ninewells Hospital in Dundee. I was immediately placed on a ventilator because I wasn't breathing on my own, even though my heart was going okay. My lungs had also collapsed so I had two chest drains inserted to keep them inflated. It must have been like a scene from E.R.! Once I was safe to move, (with drips, catheters, chest drains and loads of monitors attached), I was taken for a CT scan of my brain to assess the damage, as my helmet was proof that I had suffered a head injury. Although there was no bleeding, my brain had been damaged due to the acceleration/de-acceleration forces of the accident. It was all very touch and go as to whether I would live or not so I was taken to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). By this time, my wife Carol had been notified and was already onboard a plane to Scotland with her parents. For several weeks, my condition was very unstable and nobody could tell Carol if I would survive. How she coped with it all I don't know. She says that



being a nurse helped because it meant she could take over a lot of my day-to-day care with confidence, leaving the ICU doctors and nurses to concentrate on the business of keeping me alive. All the time I was at Ninewells Hospital, Carol and her mum lived in a little relatives' room on the unit. As daft as it sounds, Carol says that life became very simple during that time. Every day was a matter of life or death for me and the normal day-to-day worries that we all have became very inconsequential. Needless to say, Carol completely lost her appetite and slept very little. She often comments that stress should be bottled, as it would make a great diet pill! Of course, I was oblivious to the worry I was causing and I can remember very little of my time in hospital. However, while I was in my coma, (or 'sleeping,' as I call it), there are a few occasions that I can recall. Call it a dream or an out of body experience, but I remember standing in what I can only describe as an open space, pitch black but with a faint glow of light over the horizon. I was in the middle of a wide, flat, open space, feeling very calm and very peaceful. It's strange, but there was a sense of overall

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