

Patient's attitude serves as inspiration

Steve Wiebe didn't see the wall of flames racing toward him as he stood in the back of a pick-up truck in late August, trying to open a hose valve to a water tank. A barley field fire in had burned out of control and Steve was helping to get it stopped. The farmer Steve was working for drove the pick-up truck into the fire before making a slow turn to get out. The water hose valve wouldn't budge, and Steve was suddenly engulfed in flames.

"I jumped off the truck and luckily landed on my feet. I ran out of the fire then stopped, dropped and rolled. If I hadn't landed on my feet, I don't think I'd be here today."

Steve was driven 30 miles to the nearest hospital in Powell, Wyo. "When I got to the hospital, I ran inside and told them 'I need an anesthesiologist, right away,'" Steve said. "I handed the doctor a list of phone numbers I had in my wallet. I told him to give me a couple of minutes to pray, then to knock me out and call my family."

When Steve woke up, he found himself at the University of Utah Hospital's Burn Center in Salt Lake City. An entire month had elapsed.

"I was life-flighted to the burn center and they kept me in a coma while they took care of my skin. I have third degree burns over 67 percent of my body," Steve said. After several weeks of skin graphs

and physical therapy, 42-year-old Steve wanted to be closer to home in Nebraska. He was sent to Saint Elizabeth Regional Medical Center in early November for a surgical procedure, then admitted to Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital.

"I've been working on neck stretches, facial massaging, legs and upper body strengthening and mobility. My neck and arms have been the biggest challenge. I have to keep working on stretches to keep the gains I'm making. My therapists have been a huge help. I can walk better, I'm stronger and getting my coordination back."

Steve's positive attitude has impressed his Madonna team and is an inspiration to other patients. "Steve works hard, but also enjoys his time in therapy. He is always sharing jokes and visiting with others," shared Holly Schifsky, OTR,

Madonna therapist and program manager.

"I love being around people," commented Steve. "I thought, as long as I have to be here, I might as well have some fun. I've made a lot of friends at Madonna."

Steve is looking forward to playing golf with his sons again and continuing his progress when he returns home to Hastings, Neb. "My job for the next year or so will be rehabilitation. I'm thankful for what I can do and I'm ready to move on."



Madonna OTR Holly Schifsky adjusts the Monark UBE (Upper Body Egonometer) to challenge Steve Wiebe during his therapy sessions.