

Miracle

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Tucker awoke nearly four hours later in the emergency room and was told that he had actually died for two to four minutes before his heart was shocked back into beating with a defibrillator. Tucker, who said he thought he'd only been out for a few minutes, added that he recalls only vague images during the entire ordeal.

"About all I remember is seeing light and somebody coming through a door," he said. "I don't think it was something from the other side—I'm guessing it was a doctor or somebody coming into my hospital room. I tried and tried to remember if I'd seen anything else, but nothing comes back to me."

Discharged after spend-

ing two days in the hospital's intensive care unit, Tucker said he feels much better these days, although his chest is still a little sore nearly a month after the incident.

"My chest is still sore from the (defibrillator) paddles and my sight is a little blurry, but other than that, I feel OK," he said. "It was the first time in my life I ever spent the night in a hospital and I wanted out as soon as possible."

Although Tucker is able to walk, the weakness he feels in his legs as a result of multiple sclerosis forces him to frequently use a wheelchair, which is a challenge when it comes to keeping up with his 6-year-old son, Devin.

"I'm doing the best I can to take care of my son," said Tucker, who added

that he has been married to his wife Jean, who works at a trucking company in Rockdale County, since 1994. "I'm in a wheelchair about 80 percent of the time—the rest of the time I walk with a cane in consideration. But Devin, is what keeps my legs working."

Now drawing disability, Tucker was working as a radio operator for the State Capitol Police Division in Atlanta when he was diagnosed with MS, an immune system condition that can cause considerable physical and cognitive challenges. Prior to his diagnosis seven years ago, Tucker had worked primarily in the private security industry.

He has no idea how he came to be diagnosed with MS, although he said an

automobile accident in downtown Atlanta in 1999 was when his medical problems began.

"I got rear-ended in Atlanta, and two weeks later my left hand went numb," he said. "I feel like (MS) must have kicked in then. I was told for two years that the problems I was having were due to nerve damage, although I also had the symptoms for MS."

Four days after being told he had MS, Tucker learned that his wife was expecting their first child, which opened the door to the first miracle experienced by the Tucker family.

"Four months after Jean found out she was pregnant, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer," he said. "The doctors said we had to make a decision, and we knew we were taking a big chance with Jean

having surgery and chemotherapy while she was pregnant."

Jean Tucker, who is now cancer-free, completed her chemotherapy treatment on Jan. 16, 2003, and came home that night saying she didn't feel well. The Tuckers immediately went to the hospital, and Devin

was born less than an hour later, seven weeks premature and weighing 3 pounds, 4 ounces.

"He was 15 inches long," said Tucker of his son. "He was tiny."

Dubbed the "Miracle Baby," Devin remained in Rockdale Medical Center's neonatal department for a month, and is now a 40-pound first-grader at Heard-Mixon Elementary School.

Although he's no longer able to work, Tucker dabbles in the art of air brushing, has written several children's stories that he'd

like to see published and is a bit of a shade-tree inventor. While some may view the Tucker family's situation as somewhat dire at times, Tucker himself feels extremely lucky and blessed.

"I don't know about life expectancy, but I don't feel sorry for myself," he said. "We deal with things the best we can. It's been rough, but I've been told many times before that what doesn't kill you makes you tougher."

"One of the things I do remember about the day I died was I had to be back home by 2 o'clock, which was when Devin gets off the school bus and I had plans to do some other things after my MRI. My plans definitely changed that day. I didn't always believe in God, but I do now, especially after all that's happened in the last few years."