

Bob's Story

**“Do not make this a story about ‘son saves father.’
Everybody did their part.”**

Bob – New Sharon, Maine

In the middle of a New Sharon field, Bob Nichols died, and then, thanks to medical emergency skill and modern technology, came back to tell about it.

Nichols, 67, of Nichols Custom Welding and Nichols Technology Center in Wilton, who's been flying a powered parachute ultra light for about five years now, headed out a couple of weeks ago for his typical spin in the skies over New Sharon.

“I took off and there seemed to be a problem with the plane right away,” he said. “It was pulling to the left so I came back across the river and headed back to the field I'd taken off from. That's all I remember.” Nichols' good friend Arnie Daggett, who was always present when Nichols flew, and Nichols' son, Nick, were standing in the field watching.

Nichols came back to the field and landed, Daggett said, got out of the plane, walked around back and fell to the ground in what the duo would discover was full cardiac arrest.

Nick, 35, a member of the Coast Guard, immediately started Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation. Daggett called 911 and went out to the end of the dirt road to point emergency vehicles to the right field.

First to answer the call was Jason Davis, an emergency medical technician with the New Sharon Fire Department's First Responder Team. Davis opened Nichols' airway while Nick kept up the CPR.

“I don't know where he found the strength,” Daggett said of Nick. “He just kept going and going. He wouldn't stop.” “I was afraid to stop,” Nick said. “I expected that he was gone, but I had been taught to continue until someone arrived to relieve you or you were sure they were gone. I didn't dare to stop. I just stayed with it. What if he wasn't gone?” Nick kept up the CPR until Franklin Sheriff's Department Deputy Aaron Turcotte arrived and ran across the field with a portable defibrillator. The device, which provides an electric shock to the heart muscle, was provided to each of the department's vehicles through a grant award.

While Nick had kept oxygen going to his father's brain with breaths and the chest compressions of CPR, his father had had no pulse for 15 minutes. Once Turcotte applied the defibrillator to Nichols' chest, his heart started right up. A NorthStar Ambulance Service crew arrived and transported him to Franklin Memorial Hospital. He was transferred by the medical helicopter LifeFlight to Maine Medical Center, where he was in the Intensive Care Unit for a ten-day stay.

He also suffered broken ribs and sternum, has had a pacemaker implanted in his chest, suffered double pneumonia, but looked like a happy million bucks sitting at home Monday evening.

These days, his friend Daggett and his family members are happy to be celebrating his survival, and everyone is in a state of awe over his survival, not the least of who is Nichols himself.

(Bob's Story, continued)

The family is praising everyone who had a part in keeping him alive: Nick, Daggett, Turcotte, Davis and everyone who came after them.

"Everybody had a role to play as though it were all pre-planned," said Nick's wife Rachel. "It was incredible how every necessary factor fell right into place. We couldn't have planned it and had it work out any better." Turcotte himself had been on duty for only an hour and that's how he happened to hear the call. He already knew the location so he headed right over.

"And those boys on the New Sharon Fire Department. They really know their stuff," Daggett said. "They are so well trained and acted so professionally. I was so impressed."

Chain of Survival

Ron Morin, retired owner of the former Sugarloaf Ambulance Service said this case hit every link of what they call the "Chain of Survival." Morin explained how first a member of the general public gave CPR, then first responders arrived and provided an airway. Then the Sheriff's Department arrived with the defibrillator. Followed by NorthStar emergency medical services with advanced life support. Then came the transfer to FMH which made the call to LifeFlight to get him to Maine Medical Center whose intensive care unit took over. The enhanced E-911 system at the Franklin County Dispatch Center was a most critical link, because dispatchers were able to identify the location and got all the players in the right place with the proper information.

"It doesn't happen that way very often," Morin said. "I get very emotional when I think about it. I was in the emergency medical field for 36 years and this is exactly how it is supposed to work, but I wouldn't dare admit how seldom it does." Nichols said his wings have been clipped. He won't fly anymore.

"What if I'd have had the heart attack in the air? That plane could have gone on for 90 miles and landed who knows where, maybe killing somebody," he said.

Nick, who helped save his father's life, said he doesn't want to hear anyone say he saved his father's life. He denies it fervently bragging only about what all the others did.

"Do not make this a story about son saves father," he insisted. "Everybody did their part. I will say it was very emotional. Hard to find words for now. It was surreal." On this warm May evening, the family members kept talking about it as a miracle, just how everything fell into place to save their patriarch's life.

"When they left with him in the ambulance I didn't have much hope for him," said neighbor and friend Gary Mayo. "After the way they had worked on him and the way he looked, I thought they were just going through the motions."

More To The Story

Very reluctantly, Nichols said there was more to the story.

"I said I don't remember anything after landing in the field, but the truth is I was hovering over the scene, I saw my son on his knees giving me CPR and everything else that was going on around me. I know now that there is more. That's all I'll say." "A greater power was definitely at work that day," Rachel said.

"I've been mowing the church lawn for many years now," Daggett said. "Today I did an extra good job."