

Nurse Saves Life in Scottish Countryside

Kaiser Permanente San Francisco nurse Joan Roehling (pictured) visited Scotland to celebrate her birthday, but stepped in when a local reverend had a health crisis.

What was supposed to be a relaxing birthday trip to Scotland for a San Francisco home health nurse ended up being a bike ride she will never forget.

Joan Roehling, RN, had traveled many times through Europe with family and friends, but thought she should do something special for her 48th birthday: She decided to take her first solo trip abroad. She picked Inverness, an ancient city in the Scottish Highlands.

“I am of Scottish heritage as well as a huge fan of history,” said Roehling. “I went alone so I could wander in museums and visit the sites. I simply wanted to see it for myself.”

On her birthday, Roehling had everything planned out. The warm summer day was to start with an early bike tour through the Ness Islands, on the River Ness, before ending with a dinner in Old Town Inverness.

“I was only on the bike ride for about 20 minutes when the tour guide called for a doctor or a nurse to come help,” said Roehling. “This was a heavily wooded hiking and bike path near the Inverness Castle and not many people were around.”

CPR and Sudden Teamwork

Roehling was on the fourth bike behind the tour guide and quickly spotted the Reverend Hector Morrison on the ground. Roehling jumped off her bike and dashed over to the reverend’s side.

She later learned the 64-year-old, of the Hilton Parish Church in Scotland, was jogging when he collapsed.

“A young lady who had been running nearby was shouting, ‘Are you ok?’ to the Reverend when I ran up. I found him on his side, eyes wide open, and he was not breathing. I couldn’t find a pulse, so I simply started CPR,” said Roehling.

After a few moments, a local businessman on the same bike tour came over to help.

“I showed him what to do and he began compressions. I then asked someone to call for an ambulance and for a thin shirt, because I needed to clear his airway and began rescue breaths,” said Roehling.

She and the businessman, Kenneth Loades, took turns performing CPR. Others soon came to

help.

Sharing Their Hearts

“It took 25 minutes before someone was able to bring over an automated external defibrillator and another 10 minutes before paramedics arrived,” said Roehling. “Once they were there, I was absolutely exhausted physically, in addition to being mentally drained.”

The Reverend Morrison survived, and Roehling said she still keeps in touch with him on social media.

“He and I have shared how our meeting in such a traumatic way has affected us both,” she said. “I’m getting to know his heart and I’m able to share a bit of mine, too.”

Following the experience, Loades was inspired to start a fundraising campaign to buy more heart-start defibrillators for the city of Inverness. For Roehling, the inspiration took a different form.

“The experience made me think a lot about family, friends, and faith,” she says. “Life is all about the relationships you build.”

The relationships she built through her experience in Scotland have become so strong she is returning in April. She said she looks forward to meeting up again with the Reverend and Mr. Loades, along with some new friends she met during her life-changing experience.

“It will be wonderful to see everyone,” said Roehling. “Except this time, it’s going to be a lot less stressful and a lot more fun.”