

# Struck by a cruel stroke

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By KATE GRIFFITH

**C**LIVE Fuller was 50 and in the prime of his life. But within the space of a few minutes, his life was changed forever. Struck down by a severe ischaemic stroke, Clive lapsed into a coma and was not expected to live.

But Clive is one of the lucky ones who is able to battle on, progressing inch by inch along the path to rehabilitation.

His stroke hit from "out of nowhere" one Saturday morning as

he lay in bed. He had no family history of stroke and no medical conditions himself.

"Boom!" is the only word Clive can utter to describe it. It is one of the few words he can say.

Today, he sits listless, unable to speak, paralysed down his right side. He can only walk slowly, with the aid of a frame. His wife Carol said she would never forget the look in Clive's eyes the morning of his stroke.

"He just had a look of disbelief in his eyes. It was a very haunting look," she said. "The worst thing was that he knew what was happening to him, through his own first aid knowledge.

"He was in Modbury Hospital for 10 days and they said he wouldn't live. Then at the Hampstead Centre, they said he would never walk again," Carol said.

But after two months in a wheelchair, Clive found his feet. It is one of many unexpected progressions he has made since leaving hospital.

"He did surprisingly well because he had an inventive brain and came up with ways to make his progress faster. He was very determined," Carol said.

"He's had to learn to spit out toothpaste again and brush his hair. He had to learn to do even the simplest things all over again."

Clive's career as an electrical engineer at the University of Adelaide was cut short and these days he fills his time with various types of therapy, going to the gym and restoring antique gramophones, radios and clocks.

Stroke Awareness Week ends on Sunday and Carol wants to make people aware of Stroke SA and other support groups.

"There is a lot of money and awareness of cancer but not for strokes," she said. "It's like throwing a pebble into a pond, the ripples go a long way out. It affects the whole family."

Strokes kill 37,000 Australians each year, costing the community \$1 billion. They are the third biggest killer after cancer and heart disease, causing 10 per cent of all deaths.

Carol urges anyone who is close to stroke sufferers to advocate for their rights and offer them everything possible to regain what is lost.

"Not everyone has the same opportunity to progress," she said. "The rate of progress depends on how much you can afford to spend on treatment and rehabilitation. Those who cannot afford it just miss out.

"There should be some sort of government assistance for people in our situation."



Carol and Clive Fuller, before Clive suffered a severe ischaemic stroke.