

Medical Guardian Medical Alert Systems Internet Special

"The Alert Button has saved Mom's life 3 times."

Click Here to Request a Brochure

REAL ESTATE | JOBS | CARS | DEALS | CLASSIFIEDS | PLACE AN AD | SIGN-IN/SIGN-UP | SUBSCRIBE | E-REGISTER | CUSTOMER SERVICE | TODAY'S PAPER

SEARCH SITE

LIFE

SURF REPORT/CAMS | WEATHER | LIVE TRAFFIC

HOME | NEWS | SPORTS | BUSINESS | ENTERTAINMENT | LIFE | TRAVEL | OPINION

Beaches | Best of OC | Blogs | Columns | Comics | Contests | Food | Gift of Giving | Health and Fitness | Home and Garden | Horoscopes | OC Moms | OC People | Outdoors | Pets | Photos | Puzzles and Games | Shopping and Deals | Video

Published: Sept. 12, 2012 Updated: 12:42 p.m.

Text: + - Next Article »

# Meet the dead guy

Tweet 7 | Recommend | 6 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends. | Email | Share

By KEITH SHARON / THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

On an otherwise unremarkable Wednesday morning in June, an insurance salesman from Irvine suffered a massive heart attack and died in front of his wife in the emergency room at Hoag Hospital.

Then he died again 10 minutes later.



Richard Kroot, 56, of Irvine, stretches after the treadmill, recumbent bike, free weights, resistance, tricep push downs, and seat pulley row exercises at Hoag Hospital Cardiac Rehab Center in Newport Beach.

CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

[MORE PHOTOS »](#)

Then, while a cardiologist was trying to figure out what was causing his heart to keep stopping, he died again.

Then, just when you might think all this dying was becoming passe, he died one more time for good measure.

Each time, he was shocked back to life - CLEAR - by the Hoag staff and a heart defibrillator.

For those of you keeping score at home that's: Insurance Salesman 4, Grim Reaper 0.

On June 20, Richard Kroot, the repeatedly dead man, became, to borrow a phrase, the luckiest man on the face of the earth. He is the guy who died four times in one day and lived to tell about it. Next time you see Richard, you might want to shake his hand or touch his head - anything to get some of his mojo.

"It was the most amazing thing," said Kroot, 56, almost three months after his deaths.

Kroot is alive today because he had the good fortune to start his day by dying in at Hoag's Irvine emergency room. If he would have died at work, in the car, in the hospital parking lot, or if one of the best cardiologists in Orange County wouldn't have been just a few rooms away that morning, this would be his obituary.

Kroot "was damn lucky," said Marcy Brown, Executive Director of Hoag Hospital Irvine, who has been in the business of saving people for 25 years and has never seen anything like this. "He was surrounded by the best of the best. There must be a bigger purpose for this guy's life."

And just wait until you hear what dying did to improve his sleeping arrangements.

...

Richard Kroot is just a quiet, unremarkable guy, which is why people calling him a Miracle Man makes him a bit uncomfortable. He is related to former Angels pitcher Al Levine, who was an unremarkable major-leaguer.

"Calling this a miracle is something for someone

ADVERTISEMENT

SERVING WOMEN. SAVING LIVES.



Register today @ [www.komenoc.org](http://www.komenoc.org)

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23  
FASHION ISLAND, NEWPORT BEACH

else to say," Richard said.

ADVERTISEMENT

WELLS FARGO

See site for details

"What is Wells Fargo doing to help our local economy?"

"We loaned almost \$4 billion to more than 95,000 small businesses in Southern California the past year alone and we're working to help even more."

- Kevin Y.  
Business Banker  
Wells Fargo, Irvine, CA

There's more to know about Wells Fargo >

More from this story



SLIDE SHOW:  
Meet the dead guy  
9 Photos >

More from Morning Reads

- Counseling flight crews after 9/11 changed her life
- Rosendale v. Rosendale: Divorce case stretches to 12 years

He was raised in the Chicago area in Glenco, a suburban town along Lake Michigan. He has an accounting degree from the University of South Florida. He likes the Cubs, the Bears and the Blackhawks ("I've given up on the Cubs, but who hasn't?" he said). He works for the Robinson Insurance Company in Lake Forest, but he spends most of his time behind a desk keeping in touch with his clients over the phone.

"He's just a really nice man," said his wife, Debbie.

He doesn't look like a candidate for heart trouble. He's 5-foot-7 and weighs just over 150 pounds. He doesn't smoke. He doesn't drink alcohol excessively. Before he died, he walked about 25 miles per week. He lives about five miles from his office, and doesn't appear to have much stress in his life. Richard and Debbie live with a 3-year-old Chihuahua, Lizzy. When Richard comes home from work each day, Debbie tells Lizzy, "Daddy's home" and the little dog runs to greet him.

It was his diet, he found out later, that could have been killing him all along. He ate burgers, fries, pizza, cookies and ice cream with regularity and three of his arteries became blocked.

About three years ago, he began feeling pain in his right shoulder. He put some ice on it and took some muscle relaxers. But the pain persisted. What he didn't know was that the shoulder pain was caused by his hardening arteries.

On Wednesday, June 20, Richard Kroot was walking out the front door of his Irvine home to go to work when the strangest pain hit him square in the jaw. It was like someone punched him, and he nearly fell over near his front door.

From the other room, Debbie asked what was the matter, but Richard, being a man, said "Nothing."

Richard went to work sweaty, clammy and unstable. He sat at his desk, dying. At 8:55 a.m., he called Debbie. Because he said he needed help, she knew something was terribly wrong.

As she pulled up, he was walking slowly to her car. When he mentioned his jaw pain, Debbie knew he was having a heart attack.

"Jaw equals heart," she said. "I read that somewhere."

(Note: Dr. Mahmoud Eslami, Hoag's Interventional Cardiologist who helped save Richard's life, said Debbie was right. Jaw pain is a sign of a heart attack.)

Debbie announced in the emergency room, "I think my husband is having a heart attack."

He was put into a wheelchair. Questions were asked about his insurance. He was rolled into a room and put in a bed. Suddenly, his head dropped to the side.

"THERE HE GOES," Debbie screamed.

That's when Richard Kroot's heart stopped. He stopped breathing. They shocked him, but he still wasn't breathing. In Debbie's mind, too much time was passing. A nurse put her arm about Debbie.

"He was gone," Debbie said sadly.

For some reason, the next thing that popped into her mind was their Chihuahua greeting Richard when he came home from work.

"DADDY. DADDY. DADDY," she screamed hoping the energy she brought into the room would save her husband's life. She said she must have screamed "DADDY" 10 times.

Richard, who has very few memories of June 20, said he didn't see a white light. Nothing profound happened, he said.

"I heard my wife say Daddy," he said, a tear forming in his eye.

...

Dr. Eslami was working on another patient down the hall when he heard "Code 60" over the loudspeaker. Code 60 means a patient is having a heart attack right now.

"We have a patient who is dying," Eslami explained to the other patient, who quickly had to clear out.

Richard Kroot remembers seeing another man getting off the table in the Catheter Lab so Eslami could look at him.

Eslami met briefly with Debbie.

"Your husband is in a very difficult situation," Eslami explained.

"He didn't give me much hope," Debbie said.

Eslami quickly started an angiogram – inserting a tube from the groin to the heart and injecting dye – to see where the problem was. He found Richard's circumflex artery was completely blocked and the plaque inside it had "exploded like a volcano." During the angiogram, Richard's heart stopped.

"So we shocked him," Eslami said.

Eslami inserted five stents (small tubes) into Richard's heart. His heart stopped again.

"So we shocked him again," Eslami said.

During the angioplasty (a balloon is injected to open the artery), Richard's heart stopped again.

Do you see a theme developing here?

"We were able to return him," Eslami said, "or he would have been a statistic."

...

Debbie talked to one of the hospital attendants who saw her husband die and come back that day.

"He told me to buy a lottery ticket," Debbie said. "He said we should buy a motor home and travel all around the United States."

- Seventeen cover winner hopes to inspire girls through soccer

Editor Picks



Bank Robbery Suspect Throws Money ...



Sharon Osbourne Reveals Ozzy's Dram...



TU Football Players Bust A Move



Ryan Lodi's Dating Miss

ADVERTISEMENT

FREE Checking

with eStatements

30,000 ATMs

SDCCU® Mobile Deposit

Open your account!

San Diego County Credit Union

It's not big bank banking. It's better.™

Federally insured by NCUA.

Richard Kroot, however, isn't that kind of guy. He didn't buy a lottery ticket, or start checking off his bucket list. He didn't throw a party or do anything to commemorate his winning streak over death.

He did hire a lawyer to draw up a will. But he basically celebrated coming back to life by going back to work in the insurance office.

"I try not to rush through things anymore," Richard said. "I stop to enjoy the sunset. I'm kinda the same guy, but I eat better."

One of these days Richard and Debbie plan to take a cruise in the Baltic Sea, and maybe they'll move to their favorite spot in the U.S. – Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia.

Until then, they will both enjoy the fringe benefit of dying that the Kroots never expected.

For more than a year, Richard has slept in another bedroom because he snored so loud. Apparently, fighting for oxygen, loudly, is a side effect of the restricted blood flow in Richard's heart.

"Now I don't snore anymore," said Richard, who has moved back into his master bedroom.

"Who knew?"

Contact the writer: [ksharon@ocregister.com](mailto:ksharon@ocregister.com)

COMMENTS | PRINT | EMAIL | SHARE

[More from Morning Reads »](#)

Reader Comments

Comments are encouraged, but you must follow our [User Agreement](#).

1. Keep it civil and stay on topic.
2. No profanity, vulgarity, racial slurs or personal attacks.
3. People who harass others or joke about tragedies will be blocked.



Add a comment...

Post to Facebook

Posting as Kevin Rice ([Change](#))



**Ricci Rohde**

wow, that's quite a story. Lucky guy! He gets a fifth chance.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · 18 minutes ago

Facebook social plugin

[View Article](#) | [Article Photos](#)

[CHOC Pediatric Cardiology](#) Children's Pediatric Cardiology Advanced NICU & Cardiology in OC. [www.CHOC.org/pediatric](http://www.CHOC.org/pediatric)

[Aliso Viejo Boot Camp](#) Transform your body, heart & mind Caters to all fitness levels. [www.transformationbytruth.com](http://www.transformationbytruth.com)

[Earthquake Survival Kits](#) Stay Safe 72 Hours After Disaster Buy Directly from the Manufacturer. [www.Quake](http://www.Quake)

[Home](#) | [News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Business](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Life](#) | [Travel](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Deals](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Place An Ad](#)

[Return to Top](#)

ADVERTISE OPTIONS

- [Self Service](#)
- [Place an Online Ad](#)
- [Place a Print Ad](#)
- [Place a Classified Ad](#)
- [Media Kit](#)
- [Advertising Contact Info](#)

CONTACT OCREGISTER

- [About Us](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Corrections](#)
- [Customer Service](#)
- [Subscribe Today](#)
- [Subscriber Services](#)
- [Site Help](#)
- [Site Feedback](#)

OCR SERVICES

- [Archives](#)
- [Buy Our Photos](#)
- [California Lottery](#)
- [Deals](#)
- [Orange County Businesses](#)
- [Register Insider](#)
- [Register in Education](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Facebook Comments FAQs](#)

NEWS YOUR WAY

- [Blogs](#)
- [E-Mail Newsletters](#)
- [E-Register](#)
- [Mobile](#)
- [RSS](#)
- [Article Map](#)
- [Site Map](#)
- [Video](#)

ADVERTISING

- [Classifieds](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Deals](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Place a Classified Ad](#)
- [View our Media Kit](#)

PARTNERS

- [KDOC-TV](#)
- [MSNBC](#)
- [OC Excelsior](#)
- [Coast Magazine](#)
- [Preferred Destination](#)
- [OrangeCounty.com](#)
- [FreedomPolitics.com](#)
- [Freedom Printing](#)



Copyright © 2012 Orange County Register Communications. All Rights Reserved.  
[Privacy Policy](#) | [Site Help](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [Site Map](#)