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Defiance, Ohio

## ‘Walking miracle’

### Greg Dobson recovering from severe burns

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“He had a negative-10 percent chance to survive,” said Jennifer Dobson, as she recalled the terrible accident that happened on Aug. 3 of last year when her husband, Greg, was severely burned in an outdoor grilling accident.

Greg, a 48-year-old Defiance resident, is now in rehabilitation at Brookview Healthcare Center in Defiance. He talked about the day of the accident that not only severely injured him, but caused extensive damage to their home.

“I was grilling and my shirt caught on fire,” he said. “The flames came up (on me) and my neighbor (Eric Murray), who was out mowing his grass on Sunday, saw me and got blankets and covered me up. He never mows his grass on Sunday. His wife (Lindsay) came and got my wife and kids out of the house.

“I remember when they took me to the hospital,” he continued. “The doctor said, ‘We can’t do anything for him here.’ I said, ‘Ah, come on doc.’ I remember them putting me on a

*“I remember them putting me on a helicopter and then I don’t remember anything until my wife told me about the kids at Halloween.”*

**Greg Dobson**  
Burn victim

helicopter and then I don’t remember anything until my wife told me about the kids at Halloween.”

Jennifer recalled the long struggle to save Greg’s life and his journey back to recovery.

“The whole day basically was crazy with the house on fire and Greg burned,” she said. “I had to follow the ambulance and leave the house for the firefighters to save. I didn’t know

how severely he was burned. He was talking to me at the hospital. He was coherent. He was telling me over and over that he loved me. I thought he was just a little bit burned. But when we got to St. V’s (Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center in Toledo), I realized the magnitude of his injury. When he first got there, they told me he was burned over 63 percent of his body and then it kept going up. He had a negative-10 percent chance to make it. They put him in a sedated coma for over two months. I didn’t think he would make it.”

Greg said that he was burned on about 79 percent of his body.

“There were so many things happening that first month,” Jennifer said. “There was a step forward (in his condition) and then a step back. It seemed there were more steps back than forward.”

After the first couple of skin grafts, things began to progress. “After the first skin graft surgery, the doctor was not positive about his outcome,” Jennifer said. “I held the doctor’s hand and said, ‘Please, we have two babies.’ After that, the doctor seemed

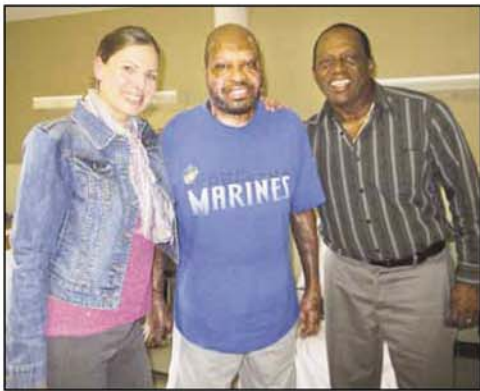


Darlene Prince/C-N Photo

**Greg Dobson, who suffered severe burns on his body, is shown recently at Brookview Healthcare Center going through rehabilitation with physical therapy assistant, Stephanie Wolffe. Dobson was severely burned in a grilling accident last August, but is well on his way to recovery.**

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Darlene Prince/C-N Photo

Jennifer Dobson, her husband Greg (center) and Wilbert Dobson, Greg's father, pose for a picture in Greg's room at Brookview Healthcare Center in Defiance. Greg was severely burned in a grilling accident, but will be going home soon. The family believes prayers from friends, family and the community helped Greg to heal.

## MIRACLE

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to realize that Greg was a real person with a family. I went to the chapel at St. V's and just spent the night praying. I prayed and prayed."

She said after the next skin graft surgery, things went better and the doctor was positive about the outcome.

Greg said he had a difficult time adjusting to his condition in the hospital.

"It was terrible. I couldn't eat, I couldn't do anything for myself," he said. "I am used to doing everything for myself. They wanted to amputate my (right) hand. The beds were not comfortable. But the service by the people in the Toledo hospital was great. Those ladies in the burn unit, wow, I was not the best patient."

Added Jennifer: "I have a whole new respect for what nurses and doctors do in a hospital."

Greg agreed and said the work they do is amazing and that they are underpaid. He added, "And I put my wife and father through hell."

Greg's father is Wilbert Dobson, who lives in Saginaw, Mich.

"I lost my wife last year. When this happened, I jumped in my car and drove to the hospital and we prayed for my son," said Wilbert. "I placed it in the hands of Jesus. I remember when we were sitting in the waiting room and a custodian came by us and said, 'I have seen them come through in a lot worse shape than him and they walked out.' That just lifted all of us right up. It has been a rough road. We have stumbled, but have not fallen. I just thank everyone.

"The good thing about this is I have been able to spend a lot of time with my two grandchildren," Wilbert added.

When Greg first arrived for therapy at Brookview Healthcare Center, he was not able to use his legs.

"I couldn't walk, my legs were dead," he said. "I couldn't even stand. My therapists (Brian Dukes and Stephanie Wolfle) worked with me and with my hand. They worked with the fingers so there is space between them now."

The fingers were originally closed after the accident, but he can now wiggle them a little. He expects to regain some of the use of his hand.

Said Jennifer: "The doctors were going to cut it off, but I stopped that. I thought maybe in the future, with therapy, he might be able to use his hand."

Recalled Greg: "When the therapists used to come in the room, I would say, 'Oh, man.' But my dad would keep telling me, 'You need to get out of that bed.'"

"When I first came here in February, I couldn't walk. But they kept working with me. They started with a walker and one day, Brian said he wanted me to walk to the therapy room, which is about 50 yards from my room. I thought I couldn't do it, but Brian insisted and had a wheelchair behind me. I walked part of the way and then I sat down to rest. Then I walked the rest of the way. I have been walking since then."

Greg, who was wearing a bright blue U.S. Marine shirt, talked a little about his time in the service as a Marine.

"I was in for four years," he said "It was tough. After two weeks of basic train-



Photo courtesy of Greg and Jennifer Dobson

Shown is a view of the back of the house owned by Greg and Jennifer Dobson, of Defiance. Greg was severely burned in a grilling accident last August, but

has survived and is on his way to recovery. The incident with the grill also caught the house on fire and caused a great deal of damage.

ing I wanted to go home. Marines don't play. But, I think having been a Marine — it helped me a lot."

Greg said he works for Purfood as a supervisor.

"I hate sitting around," he said. I want to get out and earn my money. My boss drove here from Youngstown and visited me for three hours. He told me not to worry about my job and that it was secure."

The Dobsons have two children, a 7-year-old girl and a 3-year-old son. Greg also has a 14-year-old son from a previous relationship, who goes to the middle school in Defiance.

The younger children go to Holy Cross Catholic School in Defiance. Both of the Dobsons were impressed with the way the school has held prayer sessions for Greg.

Greg's therapists noted that when he first came to Brookview, he didn't want to do anything.

"In the beginning he was reluctant to come down to the therapy room," said Wolfle. "But he eventually got to the point where he started coming down here and now he loves it. He'll do everything and anything you want him to do. He always wants to improve and get better. He is so motivated now. He's an amazing patient. His smile is definitely contagious. Just a completely different guy. He's a miracle."

Added Dukes: "He was completely dependent for

all of his self care when he first got here: going to the bathroom, feeding, eating, brushing his teeth ... to see the level of progression is just unbelievable. (When he walked for the first time), that was a big day for all of us, for him, the staff ... all of us. He's a walking miracle."

Greg believes he will be able to go home either this month or in June.

To help with medical bills, Jennifer's parents have put Greg and Jennifer on the fundraising website: [www.gofundme.com/gregdobson](http://www.gofundme.com/gregdobson). "My parents have just been wonderful,"

Jennifer said.

The Dobson family is especially grateful for the outpouring of support and prayer that has come from the Defiance community.

"The prayers are just amazing," she said. "They helped us to get through."