

It all happened quickly.

I watched the lady sprint forwards and stop the tennis ball, which was rolling from the sidewalk onto the road, with her foot. She bent forward and picked up the ball. As she lifted her hand to toss the ball above the tennis cage, she gestured to her shoulder and expressed uncertainty. She must have been injured.

There was an older man standing beside her who took the ball from her. He leaned his crutch against the dumpster cans and placed one foot behind the other, ready to throw.

I should've acted on my instinct to help.

As he pulled his elbow back and attempted a throw, I watched the ball follow a sad parabola downwards.

Meanwhile, he lost his balance. In very slow motion, I watched him fall backwards and hit the dumpster can.

I sprinted towards him.

The woman was an excellent first responder. She instructed him not to move, asked me to stand back, and called 911. As she relayed instructions I learned that the man was her dad. He was recovering from a hip replacement surgery on his right side. He said he couldn't move his left leg. He seemed calm but said the pain was an 8/10.

When the call ended, the woman broke down.

"I wish I hadn't stopped that ball", she said.

"Please don't think something like that", said the dad.

Lying against the dumpster can, the man told me stories of his life. He was 80 years old and lived in a small town in Minnesota with 300 people. He used to be an elementary school teacher. He loved his job. His town used to have only 200 people before 100 Melanesian people immigrated there. Apparently the immigrants were great at volleyball and competed against other Pacific Islanders in the US. They always won.

Despite the shock of his condition, he seemed in good spirits.

When the fire truck arrived, two firefighters, a lady and a man, walked out. They were strong, carried themselves excellently, and knew what they were doing. After lightening the situation with humor, they asked about his pain.

This was when the daughter expressed that her father had a high pain tolerance. When he had broken his right hip, he had crawled back into the house, gotten up himself and then called for help. He could get through a 25/10 pain without expression.

“Well, that’s gangster”, said the lady.

The firefighters got on both sides to lift him.

“I’m heavy”, he said.

“It’s a good thing I can lift 300 lbs”, the lady replied and smiled.

As they lifted him, he screeched in pain.

I pulled the chair beneath him as he sat on it and lay back.

“It’s too much, it’s too much”, he exclaimed.

They carried him into the fire truck.

I don’t know what happened next but I suspect it was a fracture. I think he will need surgery.