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Published January 27, 2016

Grateful Moraga Couple Applauds MOFD Response

By Nick Marnell



Tom and Millicent McCormack Photo Andy? Scheck

At about 2 a.m. on Dec. 22, Moraga Bluffs resident Tom McCormack was sitting on his bed and he said that he couldn't breathe. "He told me to call 911," said his wife, Millicent. According to the dispatch records of that night's emergency call, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District crew arrived in 11 minutes and they immediately commenced continuous positive air- way pressure therapy, a procedure used for years by fire departments and other emergency service providers.

"My husband fought them over the mask they tried to put on his face," said McCormack. She and the paramedics convinced her husband that wearing the mask would probably save his life.

The mask that the paramedics strap over the patient's nose and mouth attaches to a tube connected to the ambulance oxygen supply. For many patients who have trouble breathing, like McCormack's husband, slamming a mask against

their face seems counterintuitive. Convincing the patient to allow the intrusion of that mask is often a stressful aspect of the emergency call, according to firefighter-paramedic Dave Iman.

The crew bundled up the patient and carried him into the ambulance and drove him to Kaiser Medical Center in Walnut Creek, where he spent two days in the intensive care unit before he was released.

"The MOFD crew knew what they were doing. The Kaiser doctor said that the crew saved my husband's life with the use of that mask," said McCormack.

"I can't say if we saved his life, but with the mask the patient was definitely better off," said firefighter-paramedic Andrew Leach.

McCormack says: "We're all in the 'departure lounge' of life. None of us know whose plane is taking off first. I'm just grateful to God that I still have my Tom."

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back

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