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# A Modern Good Samaritan

BY KATIE SHAW

On a September evening in 1998, Keith Mattingly, Religion and Biblical Languages Department chair at Andrews University and military chaplain, was on his way home from a conference for military personnel in Wisconsin. Following behind a black Jeep Cherokee, he was getting ready to exit onto Interstate 94 from the Indiana Toll Road just outside Gary, Indiana, when suddenly, a semi truck on the opposite side of the road careened across the median toward him. The truck hit the Jeep in front of Keith, which was passing another semi truck, causing the Jeep to bounce back and forth between the two large vehicles and burst into flames. Keith narrowly missed hitting the truck by slamming on his brakes and turning into the median. When his car had stopped completely, he got out to assess the damage and spotted the black Jeep. "The car was almost unrecognizable," he said.

At the accident site, cluttered with debris causing the toll road to

be shut down for several hours, Keith was allowed much freedom because of his chaplain's uniform. An emergency medical technician (EMT) called Keith over to talk to the guy in the Jeep as the fire department spent a couple hours cutting him out. The driver was conscious just enough to want someone to notify his wife of the accident. Keith crawled into the upside-down Jeep through a broken window and took down the information from the Jeep's driver, Anthony Czapla of Valparaiso, Indiana. Anthony repeated his phone number when Keith requested it so he could call Anthony's wife. "This was a call that nobody wanted to make," Keith remembered. "I was trained to make these kinds of calls being a military chaplain, so I volunteered."

Keith called Debbie Czapla, told her what had happened, and offered to come pick her up from her home and take her to the hospital. When he arrived at her house, she had already arranged for some friends to take her, but Keith offered prayer and gave her his card in case he was needed as a witness in any future legal proceedings.



Keith Mattingly

In late November 1998, Anthony called to say thank you and to let Keith know how he was doing. Anthony's foot had been crushed in the impact, and he didn't know if he would ever be able to walk again. Keith asked him if he was in much pain, and Anthony responded, "What's pain? I get to wake up each morning and see my wife and kids. The pain is worth it because I'm still here."

Several years later, Keith was, indeed, called to be a witness. During a recess in his testimony, he finally got to meet Anthony face to face. "He is a big guy," Keith recalled. "He walked up to me and gave me the biggest hug I have ever received."

That was his last contact with Anthony until he received a short note from him this past Thanksgiving. Anthony sent his best wishes for the holidays along with a paper his son Patrick, a seventh-grader, wrote titled "My Hero." The paper is largely about his dad, but Patrick also included a description of Keith: "I never met this man. I know he is a chaplain. But to me, he is a hero and an angel sent by God to save a total stranger."

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*Katie Shaw is a news writer for Andrews University Relations.*