

10
SECONDS
THAT
CHANGED
MY
LIFE

I woke up in Intensive Care with a ventilating
tube down my throat

IAIN M. MACLEOD

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10 Seconds That Changed My Life

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my parents, whose love and support have seen me through this ordeal.

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CHAPTER 1

Not an Ordinary Day

Thursday, 15th June, 2017, will be forever embedded in my brain as the day my life changed. I never could have imagined to what extent. The day started as every other day, but it would prove to be anything but an ordinary day. I would end the day lying in Intensive Care in an Aberdeen hospital with a ventilating tube down my throat.

I awoke at home that morning about the usual time, 6:00 a.m. The dawn chorus was singing merrily. I groped under the pillow to locate the controller that opens the door and blinds, turns on the lights, and switches on the TV and radio. Measuring about ten by five by three centimeters, I hung it around my neck with a black bootlace, turned down the duvet, and moved to get out of bed. Usually, I put on Radio Scotland each morning to find out the latest news, but for some strange reason, on that particular morning, I did not switch on the radio. Probably thought I would

switch it on while sitting at the table having my first coffee of the day in about ten minutes.

A few months earlier, I had bought a memory foam mattress because the old mattress was sagging in the middle. On hindsight, it would prove to be the worst thing I ever bought.

Rolling out of bed onto my knees that morning, which I did because the mattress was low to the floor, my left elbow slipped on the memory foam protector and wedged between the bed and the bedside cabinet. The morning before, my left hand slid off the mattress, and I had the passing thought, *I must remember to move that cabinet today*. I wish I had remembered!

With my elbow wedged, I tried to heave my torso off the bed and onto the floor, but I did not have the strength. I lay strewn across the bed, right arm lying on the mattress at about one o'clock and the left wedged, palm against the cabinet and elbow against the side of the bed, my legs splayed open like pincers on the floor.

I was well and truly trapped.

I remember thinking, *How am I going to get out of this mess?* The pain in my left arm was extremely severe, like no pain I had experienced before. I wriggled to free my arm, but it was jammed tight. Then, I had the bright idea of lowering my wedged elbow down to the floor through the space between the cabinet and bed because that would allow me to get onto my knees and hoist myself to a standing position using my elbow crutches.

Centimeter by centimeter, my elbow slid down. At this point, I actually thought my idea would work, but

my elbow came to a sudden stop halfway down where the mattress meets the base of the bed and there were a few millimeters cap. My bright idea did not work. In fact, it was going to prove an extremely bad idea. Instead of working its way loose, my elbow became more deeply lodged between the bed and the bedside cabinet.

Now I was well and truly trapped. Lying half sprawled across the mattress, half on the floor, I felt the fight for life slowly ebbing with every wriggle. The controller hung around my neck, but I could not reach it. I could not free myself.

Minutes turned into hours. As the hours passed, I felt myself falling into a sleep-haze, though I never lost consciousness. Unfortunately, I vividly remember everything through that infernally long time. This was going to be a long wait for help, if it ever arrived. The pain in my left shoulder was excruciating.

I resigned myself to the fact that I was going to die in that room, and felt strangely peaceful. Dying in my house in my beloved Fochabers was a comforting thought. I have done many things in life, but never thought the end would come with a simple thing such as getting out of bed. My mind turned to my mother. She would be totally devastated and would never get over it. I imagined the police telling my parents and their reaction. How utterly, inconsolably distraught she would be. I would have done anything rather than put my mother through that pain.



I lay trapped for eight hours. My body was starting to shut down. The pain in my left arm began to ease, and my breathing slowed.

Mum and Dad were on holiday in the campervan. Mum always phones every morning to find out how I am each day. The phone rang three times, but it was under the pillow, out of reach. Each time Dad left a message. When I didn't answer, he phoned my neighbours, Charlie and Minnie Paterson, who had a key, to ask if they could check to see if everything was okay. They told me later they had noticed that my blinds, which were normally open by mid-morning, were still closed. Suddenly, I heard a key in the lock, and the door opened, and Charlie and Minnie appeared in the bedroom doorway and said they would phone an ambulance. Five minutes passed, though it might have been longer, and my GP Dr. Critchley appeared by my side.

“Hello, Iain,” she said in a soothing, comforting voice. She examined me. I was told later that I had only fifteen minutes to live if I had not been found. A short time later, two paramedics appeared at the bedroom door. They extracted me and took an ECG trace of my heart. I was put into a chair and wheeled down the ramp to the waiting ambulance. Being wheeled out of the house, passing through the short hallway with its framed photograph of Stornoway Harbour (marking the maiden voyage of the new ferry, *Isle of Lewis*), down the

ramp and past my silver car, my pride and joy, little did I know that I probably would never drive again.

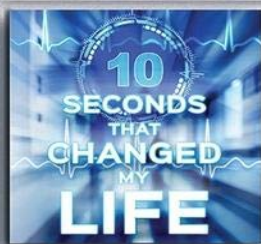
In the ambulance, I was transferred to a stretcher and strapped in like an Egyptian mummy. On the journey to Dr. Gray's hospital in Elgin, about ten miles away, I remember thinking, as I passed the landmarks of my beloved Fochabers, *See you again soon!*

At the hospital, in Accident and Emergency, the doctors and nurses fussed over me like worker ants going about their daily routines. They examined me and took my vital signs. I remember speaking to them as I lay on the examining bed – not about the state of the world, though it had a lot to be desired, nor philosophical conversation, but answering their numerous questions. That would be the last time that I would ever speak in my voice again. Something that I had taken for granted for fifty years was gone now, never to return.

"Thursday, June 15, 2017, will be embedded in my memory forever," says author Iain M. MacLeod. "I greeted the summer day eager to face the world with my usual free-spirited independence, and ended the day lying in the Intensive Care unit of a hospital in Aberdeen, Scotland, with a ventilating tube down my throat. Billions of people get out of bed every day without any problem, and that had been true my entire life despite being a wheelchair user with Cerebral Palsy since the age of three. But when I got out of bed that fateful morning, everything went horribly wrong." In his book, *10 Seconds That Changed My Life*, Iain describes the various stages of his hospital experience as well as his personal journey through joy and sorrow, frustration and elation, and the reality of coming home to a new normal. Iain hopes to encourage those with special needs to never give up, and to always remember that they are able, not disabled, and have unique abilities to share with the world.

His memoir draws us into the experience of those who live with a physical disability, and it speaks to the challenges they must overcome on a daily basis. Step into Iain's world and dwell within the poetic inspiration of gratitude that comes from accepting life head-on with hope, resilience and joy despite hardships and setbacks.

10 Seconds That Changed My Life is available at **Amazon**, **Barnes and Noble**, **Waterstones**, and wherever excellent books are sold, as a paperback, a hardcover, an ebook, and as an audiobook narrated by Toni Frutin, a two-times winner of the One Voice Awards. (<http://tonifrutin.com/about.html>)



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