

News article helps prevent a choking death

By AL DIEFFENBACH
Medical Editor

A Hood Canal woman was alive today because of an article in some Sunday editions of The Seattle Times.

The wire-service article, by Arthur J. Snider, a Chicago Daily News science writer, told of a method suggested by Dr. Henry J. Heimlich of Cincinnati for dislodging a foreign object stuck in a person's windpipe.

Isaac Piha, 5019 125th Ave. S. E., Bellevue, said he read the article twice Saturday night and early Sunday while at his cabin on Hood Canal.

IT TOLD of Dr. Heimlich's method of forcing a piece of food out of the

windpipe. The rescuer stands behind the victim and places both arms around him just above the belt line, letting the head, arms and upper body sag forward.

Then the rescuer grasps his own right wrist with his left hand and presses strongly into the victim's abdomen.

This forces the diaphragm upward, compresses the lungs and, hopefully, pops the food from the windpipe somewhat like the cork of a champagne bottle.

In the article, Dr. Heimlich noted that about 500 cubic centimeters (about a pint) of air is left in the lungs even after exhaling. The suggested rescue method has not been tested on

humans because it would not be ethical to expose a volunteer to the danger.

Piha, who has had to retire from operating the Bull 'N Bear Restaurant here because of a heart condition, said he was interested in the article because of the number of instances in which patrons of restaurants have choked to death on pieces of meat.

IN MANY instances, would-be rescuers have assumed the problem was a heart attack and tried in vain to give mouth-to-mouth aid, not realizing that the windpipe was blocked.

One physician has said that the tip-off to the problem in such cases is the fact that the victim cannot talk.

Piha said he and members of his family were enjoying a Father's Day gathering Sunday afternoon when Edward Bogachus ran from his nearby cabin calling for help for his wife, Irene.

Piha, his son, David, 26, and his niece, Diane Rood, 20, ran to the Bogachus cabin and found Mrs. Bogachus slumped at the dinner table and beginning to turn blue.

"I thought about heart attack and about that article in The Times while I was running to the cabin," Piha said. "When I saw that they'd been eating dinner, I knew it was food lodged in her throat," the Bellevue man said.

PIHA SAID HE grabbed Mrs. Bogachus and applied Dr. Heimlich's suggested treatment two or three times, then, exhausted, he handed her to his son who applied the abdominal pressure two or three more times.

"Diane, who is a nurse at Swedish Hospital, reached into her throat and removed a large piece of chicken," Piha said, and the emergency was over.

He said he wanted a copy of the article so he could write to Dr. Heimlich, as the doctor requested, in an effort to see if his suggested technique would work. Isaac Piha is sending him one "yes" vote.