

Brady couple feels lucky to be alive

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Suburban smashes into bedroom during wee hours of Halloween.

Nearly a week after a Chevrolet Suburban rammed into a Brady couple's home twice, friends and neighbors can't figure out how Bob and Lucille Koenig survived.

"Everyone who has seen the house says that," Lucille said Tuesday.

Since the early-morning accident last Thursday, which also happened to be Halloween, the couple has been staying at the Comfort Suites in Gothenburg.

Miraculously Bob got only a bump on the head and Lucille bruises on her back while escaping the bedroom.

Christopher Ahola, 30, of Gothenburg, was charged with driving under the influence of alcohol after the vehicle smashed into the couple's bedroom while turning south from Commercial Avenue to Matthewson Street, according to Lincoln County Sheriff officials.

Lucille, who's 76, said the couple was sound asleep when the vehicle first struck the house.

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“And I barely got out of bed before he rammed the house a second time,” she said.

After the first hit, Lucille said she didn't remember getting out of the bed.

Ahola then exited the vehicle to see if the Koenigs were okay.

“I could smell smoke which was the exhaust from the Suburban and thought something was on fire,” she said.

Lucille was on the phone in the kitchen dialing 911 when the second crash occurred but 82-year-old Bob was still trapped in bed.

Ahola had climbed back into the Suburban and gunned the engine, she said, thinking it was in reverse but it was still in drive.

What had been about a foot and a half of car in the Koenig home changed into five feet after the second impact, she said.

Lucille said Bob was a Korean War veteran and never remembered hearing anything like the sound of the crash while serving in the war.

Somehow Lucille managed to squeeze through an opening in the door from the bedroom to the kitchen although the impact had popped out the end of a closet that was shoved against the door.

“I don't know how I got through a six-inch space,” she said.

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When she got to the kitchen, she dialed 911.

In the meantime, Lucille said Bob was panicked and hollered for her several times.

Brady Fire and Rescue officials arrived and had to pry the damaged door off its hinges, move the closet end and clothes strewn about before pulling Bob from the bed.

Sheriff officials arrested Ahola at the scene and the Suburban was towed away.

Lucille said the Koenigs could be out of their home for six months while the kitchen and bedroom are replaced.

“It’s the inconvenience that hurts the most because we’d love to be in our own home,” she said.

“But we’re okay. That’s the main thing.”

Initial damage estimates were \$30,000 but Lucille said she expects the cost to be higher.

Lucille added that they’re grateful Ahola stopped at their house two days later and apologized for the crash.

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