

Fate saves outback heart attack victim

By DAMIEN STANNARD

GIL Masters could be the luckiest grey nomad alive.

Within minutes of suffering a heart attack on a remote Queensland highway, the 59-year-old was being treated by a bus driver trained in CPR and a nurse.

Amazingly, a retired paramedic with his own life-saving defibrillator then arrived on the scene, followed by two holidaying doctors.

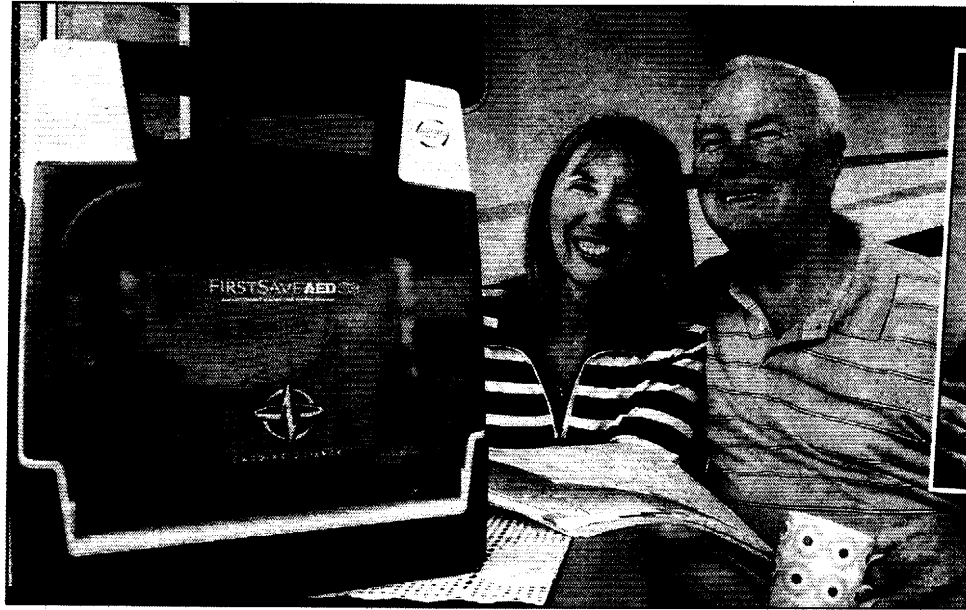
Mr Masters and his wife Lee, on holidays from Western Australia, were driving near Mount Garnet, 170km west of Cairns, on August 14 when he went into cardiac arrest at the wheel.

"His eyes were open but he wasn't conscious," Mrs Masters told *The Sunday Mail*.

They managed to stop the car and Mrs Masters flagged down a bus. With the help of a nurse who was on board, the driver began CPR.

Moments later, retired ambulance officer Owen Brown, 70, and his companion Gail Hawking arrived with the equipment that would save Mr Masters' life.

"I grabbed my defibrillator and satellite phone and rushed to where they were treating him," said Mr



FIRST AID: Gil and Lee Masters (above); Owen Brown and Gail Hawking

Brown, from Melbourne. "The bus driver was in control and doing CPR and mouth-to-mouth, but the patient wasn't responding and there was no pulse."

They connected the defibrillator's pads to Mr Masters' chest and, three shocks later, his heart was pumping again.

"This defibrillator came out of nowhere," Mrs Masters said. "Everything fell into place."

Mr Brown bought the defibrillator for \$3000 "as insurance" and was given a 20-minute lesson on the device after suffering a heart attack in 2004.

Mount Garnett ambulance

officer-in-charge Richard Robson-Petch, who was at the scene within 15 minutes, said the Good Samaritans' skills and composure saved Mr Masters' life.

"The fact that the first two people at the scene were trained in CPR definitely improved the outcome," he said.

"Then the next bloke to

come along had a defibrillator ... you'd be hard-pressed to find another tourist in Australia carrying one of those."

Mr Masters now has stents in his heart to clear the arteries and an internal defibrillator. He is back in Perth and starts work tomorrow.