put a bandage to my head.

I remember the sheriff's deputy being on site followed by the EMT people and some of the procedures such as the neck collar, backboard, and inflatable cast. They took me to Monticello, where the doctors said, "Can't help you," and put me back in the ambulance for Cortez, Colorado, where there was an orthopedist who straightened my foot but did not do surgery on my leg.

The next day my dear friends took me all the way to Alpine, Utah, to bivy with some local friends until I could get a flight out. Two weeks later I had surgery and now I have a stainless steel plate and seven screws in my leg. The break in the leg and the associated hardware is not nearly as bad—read "painful"—as the broken ankle and associated ligament and tendon damage, which will require several months of therapy. I also have some nerve damage that causes non-stop, red-hot-poker type pain that will continue for a couple months. My head, elbow, and left hand still hurt. I'm on crutches for 12 weeks, but I plan to be climbing by October.

Analysis

I have made some observations along the course of this episode.

WEAR A HELMET ALL OF THE TIME. I would be DEAD right now if I had not been wearing a helmet. There was no loose rock or anyone above me when I was leading or any of the other "normal" reasons that cause us to decide to don a helmet, yet I owe my life to that piece of plastic.

Don't be afraid to "sew it up" in the desert. While all of the slack I had out and the fact that the flake was flexible may have done me in anyway, more gear is better.

I am impressed to emotion with the kind attention and care given to me by my climbing buddies. They helped me with the climbing and stuck with me like glue as I went from hospital to hospital and then to Alpine, giving up precious climbing hours. I feel guilty about keeping them off the rock and am very grateful for their support.

Buy good health insurance. The ambulance travel in Utah cost over $2,600 alone.

Lastly. If someone had come up to me, say, three or four years ago and said, "Over the next few years you can climb in great places such as the New River Gorge, Moore's Wall, Seneca Rocks, and Moab; you can meet some great people, stand on fabulous summits, and enjoy the heck out of your free time, but, along the way you are going to shatter your right leg in a painful fall," I would say in return, "Sign me up!"

I am planning to get back at it in September. Aconcagua in February, Moab in May. Nothing about this little injury has dampened my enthusiasm for the vertical world. Rock climbing is worth it. What can I say? I am an addict. (Source: Mark McConnel)

LIGHTNING–POOR POSITION

Utah, Canyonlands National Park, Lightning Bolt Cracks

The incident happened on Thursday, April 12 at about 12:15 p.m. Peter Carrick (Assistant Manager for Pacific Edge Climbing Gym) and I (Pat Kent) were on

Lightning Bolt Crack. There were six climbers in our group: five from Santa Cruz, the others being Eric Malone, Kelly Rich, and Joe, and one, Eric Husted, from Colorado. Kelly and Joe were at the base of the route; they had decided not to climb the route. Eric and Eric climbed the first pitch before descending. They pulled their rope right as the lightning hit the spire. Peter and I were also descending.

When the strike hit we were both anchored at the belay. Although Peter led the first pitch, and I led the second, we moved the belay down to the Liquid Sky fixed anchors (an old hex and a webbing now stuffed in the crack. So, when Peter came to me (at the end of the second pitch), I had him move down to those anchors, then belay me over. When I reached him, he clove-hitched me into the master point. Less than a minute later he was stuffing a back-up stopper into the anchor to beef up our rappel anchors. Right, and I mean RIGHT, as he did that, a loud crack of thunder hit and my whole body flooded with electrical current; my right arm felt like it was being burnt off, and my vision narrowed to tunnel vision.

The next split second I looked to my arm, lifted it to see if it was still there, then looked to Peter and saw him slumped back in his harness completely motionless. I freaked. The snow was still blowing from the tempest that had hit us, I was wondering about how to do CPR, what was up with my arm (it was temporarily paralyzed), and were our anchors damaged. I was not doing any of this calmly. I yelled down to the others that Peter was unconscious—he was out for about two minutes, then thank god, he came to, moaning, and I needed help. I had the rack, so I beefed up our anchors and I built a separate one, which I used to clip the trail-rope in to. I was able to tie a figure eight on a bight with the one hand and teeth; then I clipped the tail into our main anchors. The rope had already been touching the ground before the strike. I yelled, "Lines fixed," and Eric Husted began ascending with an improvised set-up (tiebloc and prusik). After Peter came to, it was obvious that he was thankfully breathing and his heart was still pumping. But he was very delusional, and had erratic, fitful body movements. Even in the ten minutes that it took Eric to jug up to us, Peter was gaining some control of his motor movement skills. I had to hold him, though, because he was thrashing around so much. For me, Eric coming up to help us was the defining moment of the rescue. At this point the four other climbers who had already climbed to the summit, returned to the base and started heading down the talus. They came back up to the base when they heard the yelling. So, there were eight guys at the base. Out of the eight, Eric jumped on the fixed rope while the other Eric (Malone) checked his improvised set-up and started organizing the others into a first responder team. Husted, who is a father of a six-year-old daughter, had only a second thought before he heroically launched into the still-storming and obviously hazardous spire. When Husted got up he quickly added a 'biner above the master point of the anchor, put Peter on belay, and lowered him to the ground. I was able to rappel with my left hand and a back-up fireman's belay from below.

Once Peter was on the ground, the eight guys began assessing his injuries,

taking down notes, and putting together a plan. Two guys went out and notified the rangers, who in turn notified an ambulance from nearby Monticello. Two other guys went and reconned an appropriate route for Peter to walk (!) out on. They found a great way to the southwest of the spire. Everyone else helped Peter to walk. Within three hours of the incident, Peter was in an ambulance. An hour later he was in Monticello at the hospital/clinic. Two to three hours after that, he was on a plane to the burn center in Salt Lake City.

Analysis

About the exit wounds: Some of the doctors believe Peter was just "splashed" with electricity (I certainly was), and didn't actually have an entry and exit for the current. Peter's capiline top melted on his body, both his elbows were bloodied, the fabric ripped on his jacket and polypro, and his cheek was also bloodied. He had many other small "holes" in his jacket where electricity had escaped. I believe Peter was more than splashed. When he was holding the 'biner with the stopper on it, I think that was a conduit for the current. The reason his elbows and cheek are open wounds is because he was placing a stopper, and those parts of his body had contact with the rock. The big tip-off though, is the mark on the rock where his torso had been facing. The mark was circular, clear in the middle, and "charcoaly" on the outside. I believe this is where the current exited his body and passed to the rock.

We're both damn lucky, and I'm glad to be living and thankful my partner didn't perish right next to me while doing something we both love. (Source: Pat Kent)

AVALANCHE, POOR CONDITIONS, INEXPERIENCE

Utah, Big Cottonwood Canyon, Stairs Gulch

On April 28, Martin Gleich (38), a doctor from Salt Lake City and Scott Dull (39), also a doctor, from Eagle River, Alaska, were killed in Stairs Gulch, a tributary of Big Cottonwood Canyon. The pair left the trailhead about 3:30 to 4:00 a.m. to climb Stairs Gulch to Twin Peaks with ice axes and crampons, rope and snowshoes, but no beacons (they did not own beacons). They did not return by their 11:00 a.m. planned return time.

That evening, a Salt Lake County SAR team walked up both Stairs Gulch and nearby Broad's Fork looking for the missing climbers. They discovered fresh avalanche debris in Stairs Gulch and quickly found Martin Gleich's boot sticking out of the snow about 100 yards above the toe of the debris. His head was buried about four feet deep. Medical examiners later determined he died by asphyxia. After finding Gleich's body, Wasatch Backcountry Rescue, a volunteer group composed of avalanche professionals from northern Utah ski areas, was called. They responded with personnel from Snowbird and a rescue dog. The avalanche dog easily located Scott Dull, about a ten minute hike and 500 vertical feet above the first victim. Although he was buried eight to ten feet deep, part of his fleece shirt was torn to shreds and it stretched out about ten feet, with part of it on the surface. Scott Dull had multiple fractures, and the medical examiner reported that he was killed by trauma.