

IN&OUT

An Unexpected Crash

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David Schenck was not well-prepared for the ride, but on-board technology allowed paramedics to prepare a waiting surgeon for when his heart crashed. And, it saved his life.

Recently, my 22-year-old son Aaron and I started working out together at the community center. Not one for stationery bikes and treadmills, I suggested we ride mountain bikes. In my late 30s, I'd ride on mountain trails, and Trail 100 in North Phoenix was my favorite. After a few rides in Anthem, I wanted to take my son to Trail 100 to show him what mountain bikes are made for.

The First Crash

The first ride was a three-mile round trip and I was surprised how tired I was. In my late 30s, I could ride 10 miles on this trail and feel great. The next time I wanted to go six miles round trip. About one-and-a-half miles into the ride, I was racing down a hill and I hit loose rocks. My bike went one way, and I another. Nothing was broken, but I had some gnarly scrapes. I cleaned up and finished the ride.

At the end of three miles and a long climb, a steep technical part required I shift down, but my chain came off and I fell again. I was breathing so heavy and my heart was racing so fast, I knew I had not prepared my body for this, but the next leg was downhill. I rode down and climbed two final hills before coasting back to the car, barely able to hold on.



The Big Crash

I realized I pushed myself too hard, so I asked my son to drive home. On the way, I started feeling the pain from my wounds. We stopped for gas at Costco and, had I realized I was having a heart attack, we were only a minute away from the emergency room. But I didn't.

We got back to Anthem and the pain was not subsiding, so I did what I always do when I have medical concerns: I called my mother. When she heard "chest pains," she came over to take me to urgent care. It was another 15 minutes before a doctor was examining me and determined I needed to go to ER. The Daisy Mountain Fire Department arrived in moments.

The Lifesaving Ride

About 45 minutes had passed since the pain started and I finally realized what it was. The crew from the fire department worked like a finely-tuned machine; every word they spoke, every move they made, was to save my life. I heard them say "It's a level three... It's a right side... his heart rate is 42." They said I wasn't getting enough oxygen to my brain. I knew I may black-out, so I began to pray. Then, I felt a sense of peace knowing that if I never awoke, I'd be in loving arms. The next thing I heard was, "We may have to pace him."

A few minutes later, I felt a WHAM!—as if Mike Tyson hit me in the chest on both sides. Wham! Over and over. I counted 10, maybe 12 times. I remember asking, "Do you have to do that?" "We are trying to get your heart rate back up." I didn't know what they knew from the EKG: I had a full blockage of my right coronary artery causing an acute myocardial infarction, aka, a heart attack.

Now, about 70 minutes had passed. The Daisy Mountain crew wheeled me into the ER where Dr. Rafael, a highly-respected cardiologist and heart surgeon, was waiting. The crew had been communicating vital information that allowed the doctor to immediately perform the correct surgery. Seventeen minutes later (a new record for John C. Lincoln, according to him), I was looking at a monitor showing the before and after X-rays of the surgery just performed.

I want to thank my family and friends from AZ Hills Church and from around the Anthem community who prayed for me and have been so caring. I especially want to thank those who played a part in saving my life—John C. Lincoln Urgent Care, the Daisy Mountain Fire Department crew, Dr. Rafael, and, of course, my mom, who even though I said, "It may just be gas," didn't buy it.

—David Schenck