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West Hartford Man Thanks Rescue Teams

June 16, 2008

On the morning of May 27, I had a serious mountain biking accident on Case Mountain in Manchester. It turns out that I broke the neck of the femur, very close to the hip. The operation was on a Wednesday and I was home and able to get around the house on a walker on Friday.

The prognosis is a complete recovery.

This would not have been the case had it not been for many individuals and organizations.

I was located over a mile into the woods, deep off main trails on the Glastonbury part of Case Mountain. The first group to reach me was the all-volunteer Manchester Mountain Bike Search and Rescue Team. It was a welcome sight to see Kurt Wagner and Dave Dunn, both accomplished cyclists, come over the hill. Once at the scene, they were able to communicate with the Manchester and Glastonbury fire department teams and report my precise location and condition.

Backing up the two bike rescue team riders was a host of others. The entire search and rescue team consisted of many more bikers at a staging area at the base of Case Mountain, six HAM radio operators, six CERT team members and a number of other people assisting in the operation and coordination of my rescue.

These teams drill nearly once a month with the Manchester, Bolton and Glastonbury fire departments. They also work with Connecticut Canine Search and Rescue in case the search takes longer and tracking dogs are required. All these people are volunteers, and I only know two of their names.

Second to reach the scene was the Glastonbury Fire Department, and shortly thereafter the Manchester Fire Department/EMTs. They came from two different directions in order to minimize the time to reach the scene.

The ATVs could not reach us immediately, so they had to walk a considerable distance with all their equipment. Then they had to hand-carry me out over extremely rough terrain to reach a trail suitable for the ATV. That was brutally hard work for them, and although they didn't know me, they treated me like precious cargo.

Once I was strapped to the ATV, walkers had to go ahead to help find a smoother path, sometimes directly through the woods, for the ATV. Once out of the woods, the ambulance ride to Hartford Hospital was smooth and quick.

The Hartford Hospital staff was smooth and efficient. Emergency room X-rays, and surgery the next day. These folks are miracle workers. I have some nice new titanium parts that should ring bells at the airport.

There was one other person, a cyclist, who came upon us shortly after the accident. He just waited in the background, obviously concerned about me. When the bike rescuers got close, he rode back to meet them and guided them to me. Then he quietly continued on his ride.

All these individuals and organizations are unsung heroes ... doing this day in and day out without much recognition for their bravery and their concern for their fellow man.

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My helmet is off to them. And I don't know any of their names!

Charlie Beristain, West Hartford

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