

AARON RALSTON'S STORY

Aaron Ralston, a 27-year-old mountain sports fanatic from Colorado in the United States, found himself in dire straits* alone in a canyon* in the desert when a 500kg rock came crashing down the canyon to smash his right hand and trap it against the canyon wall. A terrible accident, but the situation was made all the more serious because on this occasion Aaron had failed to tell anyone where he was going. At the last minute the plans for a trip with his climbing partners had fallen through, and on the spur of the moment he decided to head out on his own to cycle up a long mountain trail, leave his bike and then walk down the Blue John canyon. No one had the slightest idea where he was.

After three days of not seeing or hearing any sign of life Aaron realised he would die there if he didn't do something drastic. The course of action was horrific, but there was no other way. He would have to amputate his right hand. Fortunately he had a small multitool knife with him and he had some straps that he could use to make a tourniquet to stop himself bleeding to death when he cut the arteries.

The knife had two blades. When he tried with the larger blade he found that it was too blunt to cut the skin.

The following day he found the **courage** to try the shorter blade, and with that he managed to cut through the skin. Only when he had made a large hole in his arm did he realise that it was going to be impossible to use any of the little tools on his knife to cut through the bones. After another 24 hours of pain and despair the idea and the strength came to him in a flash on the sixth day. With a final burst of energy he broke both bones in his arm and freed himself.

The **ordeal** was not over, though. He was still a long way from help. He had to carefully strap up his right arm and then find a way of lowering himself down a 20m drop in the canyon with a rope and only his left arm, and then walk the 10 km back to his car. Despite his **ingenuity** and all his efforts he would have bled to death if it hadn't been for a very happy coincidence: the moment he got out of the canyon into the open desert the rescue helicopter just happened to be flying overhead.

One of the doctors at the hospital recalls being impressed to see Ralston walk into the hospital on his own, in spite of his injuries and the **gruelling** experience of being in the desert for six days with almost nothing to eat and only a couple of litres of water. He describes the amputation as remarkable. "It's a perfect example of someone

improvising in a **dire situation***,” he said. “He took a small knife and was able to amputate his arm in such a way that he did not bleed to death.” Slim and pale with short reddish-brown hair, Ralston believes that his story was not simply about an **isolated** individual who rose to a formidable challenge. For him there was a spiritual dimension to the experience. In his news conference he said, “I may never fully understand the **spiritual** aspects of what I experienced, but I will try. The source of the power I felt was the thoughts and prayers of many people, most of whom I will never know.”

Where was Aaron Ralston from?:

What colour was Aaron Ralston’s hair?:

Was Aaron Ralston fat or thin?:

Was Aaron Ralston dark or light skinned?:

Where was Aaron Ralston when he was trapped?:

How much did the rock that trapped him weigh?:

How old was Aaron Ralston?: _____

Which hand was trapped? His right hand, or his left?

Why was his situation worse? What did he *not* do which he should have?

What was Aaron's plan after cycling up the mountain trail?

How did Aaron free himself?
