

By Jan Rahn Managing Editor

Grant resident Pat Lierley is home following an accident that could have cost him his life.

Lierley was electrocuted on Friday, July 24, while working with his son, Murphy, on a Valley Pro center pivot irrigation system 12 miles south of North Platte on Highway 83.

"I knew I couldn't let my emotions get involved," said the 18-year-old during a phone call Monday—he's back to work, but it will be a while before his dad is.

According to an account of the accident placed on Facebook by Murphy, the accident happened around 2:30 MDT.

Pat was at the end of the pivot, making cell phone calls to Murphy who was at the controls located in the field's center, instructing him on which buttons to push. Murphy said they were in the field about two hours prior to the time Pat told him to turn the pivot on at 3:30 p.m. and await instructions.

When the call came, it was his father saying, "Murphy, I'm driving myself to the emergency room, turn the pivot off and call your mom as soon as you can."

Because his dad didn't sound well, Murphy said he tried to get to the pickup in a hurry, sprinting down the pivot road to a farm house where he asked for a ride to the end of the cornfield.

"I was scared to death that dad had already left for North Platte," said Murphy, but upon seeing the pickup with the passenger door open, he ran to see if his dad was there.

"The very first thing I saw was blood, and lot of it," he said. "Both of my dad's legs were covered in blood and he was leaning against the passenger seat."

The blood was coming from Pat's right arm, which was also covered in blood. He told Murphy to take his belt off for a tourniquet.

"A million things rushed through my head," said Murphy, realizing the need to stop the blood loss, which took both of their belts to make a double tourniquet.

What Murphy thought was a cut, was actually an electrical burn as he raced against the clock at 115 mph to get his dad to the emergency room at Great Plains Regional Medical Center. In the meantime, he'd called his mother, Mona, to meet them at the hospital.

Unsure where the hospital was, the brave young man said he just kept praying and trying to keep his father conscious.

Murphy said his dad removed a completely blood-soaked paper towel from his arm and he saw the gaping wound from the electrical burn.

"It looked like someone had taken an ice cream scoop and taken about three scoops from his flesh," said Murphy. "I didn't want dad going into shock from looking at it, so I put a shirt I had on the wound and told dad not to look at it and to focus on his breathing, and that he was going to be just fine."

Upon arriving at the emergency room Murphy remembers his dad saying he couldn't walk. He then lost consciousness. Someone approached Murphy to inquire about their religion and indicated Pat might not have much longer.

Murphy said he dropped to his knees in prayer.

His mother called—he told her to take her time, it was just a cut. He was afraid for her to know

the truth in fear she would put herself in jeopardy on the road.

Murphy was told by the nursing staff he could stand outside his dad's room but couldn't go in. When the priest arrived to deliver last rites, the two of them entered.

"I remember gripping my rosary so tight that I was breaking the beads," he said.

Pat was airlifted to St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Lincoln. His wife had arrived in time to get aboard.

A nurse told Murphy the tourniquet he applied saved his dad's life. Pat had lost 65 percent of his blood supply, and received seven units of blood in North Platte and another en route to Lincoln.

Murphy said when he went to Lincoln the next day, his dad was talking and he was able to learn what had happened. When Pat reached the pickup he tried dialing 911 but his fingers couldn't hit the buttons—so he pushed the "send" button—which just so happened to be the previous call to his son.

Murphy's Facebook story says the horrible wound on his dad's arm was caused by the electric current making both its entrance and exit there—a one in 1,000 chance. Usually electricity grounds out at the neck, stomach, or other soft spots on the body, said Murphy.

"Looking back on my actions now, I don't even remember the majority of the stuff I did," he said. "It seems to me that the Holy Spirit completely took me over and used me for a miracle."

Update on Condition

Murphy said his dad knew what to do and has said to his son, "I never knew I was that tough and I never want to find out again."

Murphy said, "One more mile and he wouldn't have made it."

Undergoing the healing process, Pat is home in Grant but must make the trip to Lincoln each week for follow up, said Murphy during Monday's phone conversation.

He said his dad is doing pretty well except for being tired and unable to move his arm because of a splint.

He'd had four surgeries in six days, said Murphy, explaining that the removal of dead skin underneath is one reason for the length of the wound.

Doctors will eventually perform skin grafting in the 12-inch long by three-inch wound. There is shark skin stapled to the wound with donor's skin on top of it, said Murphy. He said his dad has a very positive attitude despite the fact he has no bicep and won't be able to move his fingers.

The 2009 Perkins County High School grad will soon be heading to Lincoln to college. He said he loves working with his dad- because they have a lot of chemistry together, and each of them just seems to know what the other one wants or needs without speaking. He will miss that, but is so very thankful his dad is still around, thanks to his fast action.

He chuckled about how his dad "can't stand the sight of blood" but was able to give instructions on what to do.

"I couldn't think—just act," Murphy said.