

# 'But I'm lucky to be here'

By MARIA BILLIAS

A Darwin man told yesterday how his left arm was amputated after being bitten nine times by a deadly snake.

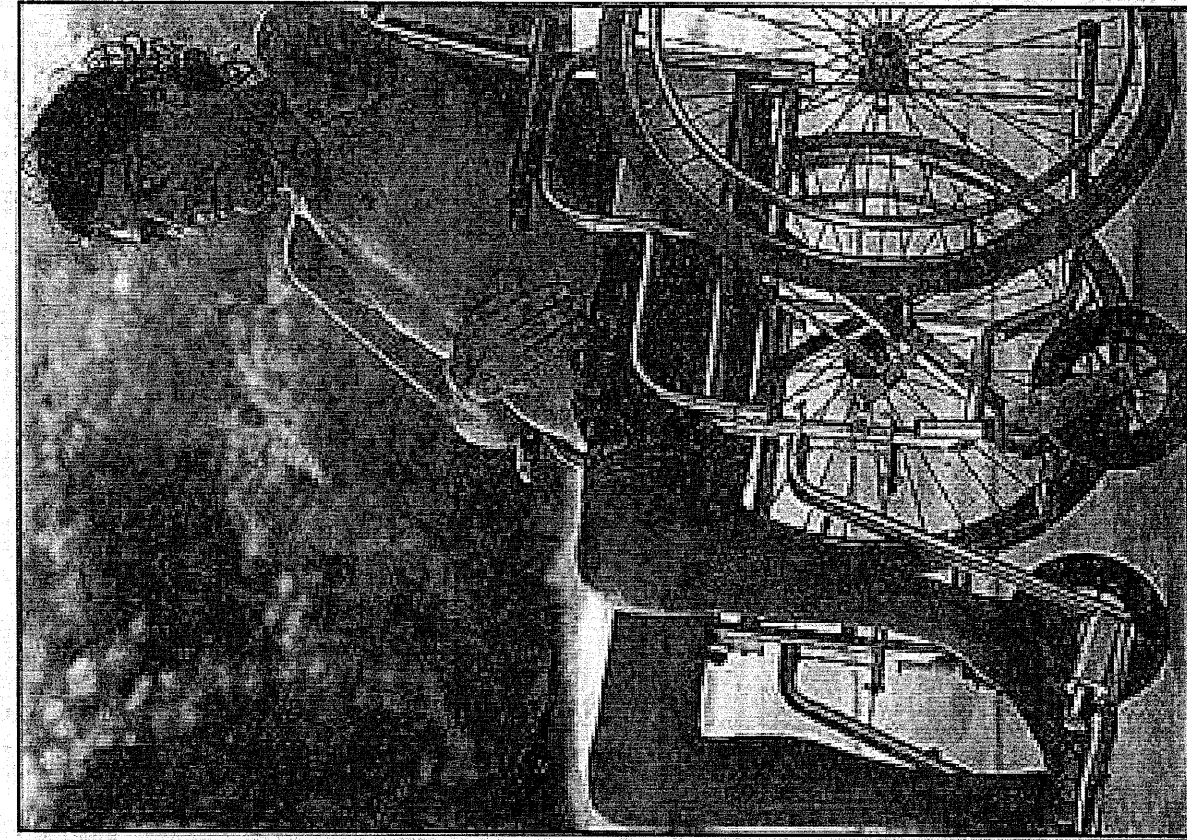
Gordon Lyons said he almost died after his heart stopped three times on the operating table at Royal Darwin Hospital.

He spent seven weeks in a coma and was kept alive with a dialysis machine and ventilator after a king brown bit his left arm two months ago.

Mr Lyons, who has still not regained movement in his legs, said doctors revived him three times on the operating table.

He said: "I'm lucky to be here right now."

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Gordon Lyons ... lucky to be alive after being bitten by a potentially deadly king brown snake

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"But I still can't believe my arm's been chopped off just for one snake. I still have my life and I guess that's the most important thing."

Mr Lyons said he was bitten by the snake, considered to be one of the most venomous, after he picked it up from the side of the road near Litchfield.

Mr Lyons, who admitted he was drunk at the time, said he and a mate had been driving from Mandurah to Darwin when they saw it.

He said: "I remembered the guys at the Mandurah Pub wanted something to put in their huge fish tank."

"But I made the stupid mistake of grabbing it with my left hand because I was holding a beer in my right one. I had its head in my hand but it got loose and grabbed the web of my left hand — its fangs were that big it ripped my hand open. I tore it off me and put it in a plastic bag and threw it in the back of the car."

## Stupid

"For some stupid reason, I stuck my hand back in the bag, and it must have smelled blood, and it bit me another eight times."

Mr Lyons said he began vomiting and suffering diarrhoea "about three seconds later."

He said: "My mate was trying to keep me awake by whacking me in the head and pouring beer on me."

Mr Lyons said his last memory was passing out, covered in blood, at the Noonamah Hotel moments before being taken by ambulance to the Royal Darwin Hospital.

R.D.H. specialist physician Bart Currie said the venom had caused severe damage to Mr Lyons' muscles, which led to his left arm turning black and becoming "dead".

Mr Currie said: "Of all the snake bites in Australia I'm aware of, this man is the luckiest to have ever survived."

*Put your beer down first!!*