

Rattlesnake bites Sarnia man in wallet

By TARA HAGAN, SUN MEDIA

SARNIA -- Ray Macklin says a venomous snake bite in Florida last month left him stunned, but the real shock came from his hefty medical bill.

The 73-year-old Sarnia man spent five days in hospital following a bite from a pygmy rattlesnake while visiting Everglades National Park with his wife Lorena.

The couple were leaving the park when Macklin, stepping into the van, felt a pinching sensation in his right foot.

"It felt like stepping on a nail," he said.

Pygmy rattlesnakes are small poisonous snakes that live near marshes and swamps. Their bites are painful, but not always lethal.

When Macklin's foot began to swell he contacted the park ranger.

His ordeal made headlines in the Miami Herald. Macklin was flown by helicopter to a Miami hospital where staff -- unfamiliar with such an injury -- were forced to take a crash course on snake bites, Macklin said.

"They got pretty excited. All of the nurses were piling into the emergency room to see what was going on."

Macklin was given two doses of anti-venom every six hours, until receiving the all-clear on Day 5.

"It was quite an experience, really," he said. "Just over a wee little snake."

Macklin has recovered from the bite, but he's still stunned by the cost of his U.S. hospital stay.

The Macklins had to pay a \$7,000 deductible on their insurance claim. But that's nothing compared to the \$75,000 for the entire medical bill. Their insurance company, ACA Assurance, covered the cost.

But the couple, who travel to Florida every year, consider themselves lucky.

Too many people, Lorena Macklin said, take the chance of travelling to the U.S. without insurance. "A lot of people we talk to have no insurance at all and they think they're safe. But some people can lose their homes because they gamble too far."

Her husband added: "We just want to warn people be sure to have insurance when you go over there. One little accident -- that's all it takes."