I pushed for several hours at a 5 mph pace—a pace that in any other race would put me at the back of the pack, but in desert conditions is too fast to maintain. I arrived at Furnace Creek approximately three and a half hours later and only one minute behind my scheduled time. The temperature had already surpassed 110 degrees Fahrenheit.

At about mile 32 I took a calculated risk and asked for a Slim-Fast, which usually results in fast energy with little or no stomach ramifications. As a runner passed me and asked how I was doing, I told him that I was having stomach problems and then immediately projectile vomited. Luckily with the abundance of water I had consumed, it was relatively pain free and my stomach immediately settled. I switched to my second pair of running shoes that were two sizes larger than those I normally wear because my feet were rapidly starting to swell from the 200-plus degree ground temperatures. When I removed my first pair of shoes I found that the insole of my left shoe had melted to my sock.

The 18-mile, 4,900-foot climb up Towne Pass was a blur. Making things worse was the large amount of sunscreen in my right eye that no matter how many times I tried to wash out, continued to burn. For several hours I ran like Popeye, keeping my right eye closed. This finally became difficult and I decided to run with both eyes closed. At times I could even doze off while continuing along the never-ending climb. Some first-aid folks spoke with me a couple of times, expressing concern because they knew I was running with a brain tumor and because I was swerving all over the road. I told them that I was sleeping as I was running and they seemed content that I wasn't going to collapse.
PART WAY UP
MT. WHITNEY
(8,360 ft.)

"Physical demands were grueling, with moments of vomiting, hours of puncturing blisters and tapeing feet, an episode of peeling my melted insole off of my sock and periods of bleeding from severe chaffing."

STAGE 6—9.9 miles TOTAL—90.1

STAGE 7—32.2 miles TOTAL—122.3

As I feebly attempted to calculate the required speed to safely finish the race, I found that my lack of sleep during the last day and a half left me with an inability to calculate the most basic math problem. A fellow runner’s crew chief assisted with the calculation—I needed to run 21-minute miles for the next 31 miles, which allowed me two hours of down time and eight hours to complete the final 13 miles up Mt. Whitney. The exhaustion rate was severe and my mind started visualizing minor hallucinations. Shadows were turning into palm trees and factory buildings, and ultimately I saw a purple light that lifted the crew car up into the air. By about 2 a.m., I was ready for another 30-minute nap. At about 6 a.m. we passed the Dow Villa Hotel, leaving me with 12 hours to climb the final 13 miles.

STAGE 8—12.7 miles TOTAL—135

The first three miles passed within the first hour, this left 10 miles to go in 11 hours. I was dead-tired and for the first time in the race I allowed my body’s fuel supply to get to zero. I requested oatmeal and a Power Bar; this gave me enough energy for a final boost. Several times within the last two miles I had to stay silent as the combination of total exhaustion and elation nearly brought me to tears. I maintained a 1.8 mph pace up the final big mountain and finished climbing the 8,360-foot monster at approximately 11:30 a.m., six and a half hours before the cutoff.
I felt comfortable going into the surgery knowing I had done my homework and that I had the most renowned surgical team in the world for this particular malady—my neurologist had performed more than 3,000 surgeries for this type of tumor.

Immediately after the operation, I awoke to see my wife’s concerned face. She asked me to smile and was happy to see that I had full facial function. By day two I was able to get out of bed and walk around. With the balance nerve cut, it felt like my head was about two feet above my body. This didn’t concern me as I am comfortable with the human body’s ability to adapt. Additionally, I knew my own stubborn nature was only limited by the doctor’s restrictions. I was supposed to be in the hospital seven days and flying home by day 14; I was out by day three and flying home by day 10.

It’s been approximately two weeks since the surgery. My strength increases each day. I am speed walking between three and five miles a day. I am also negotiating with the doctor to run the Lake Tahoe Triple Marathon—one marathon a day for three days—Oct. 10, 11 and 12. My big plans for next year are to sign up for the Western States 100 and to take on the Badwater 135 a second time. I am already coordinating with my race captain, and my goal is to place in the top 20.

Marinosik is the worldwide vice president of quality assurance and regulatory affairs for the medical division of Sannins-SCL.

This story first appeared on SIGMACHI.ORG. Stay tuned to the Web site for updates, including a recap of Marinosik’s Lake Tahoe Triple Marathon experience.

"Not knowing what will come of my running after the craniotomy, I can only say that if this is indeed my last [race], it was an experience of a lifetime."