

Purpose

Journal of the



**Amputees
Federation**
of New Zealand
Incorporated

March 2016



UNITY®

DARREL SPARKE'S STORY

Meet Darrel, a 44 year old amputee, IT Professional, Taekwondo Instructor and family man. He has been an amputee for 39 years after losing his lower right leg in a machinery accident when he was just 5 years old. Darrel works at an energy utility in Newcastle and leads an active life with his family.



WATCH THE VIDEO
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Darrel recently shared his experience with Unity and gave us some insight into his daily lifestyle and thoughts on the Unity system. His full story, video and pictures are available on the Össur website.

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Included in this Issue

The National Executive	2
Guest Editorial	3
News from the Regions	4
Publications	5
Profile - Adrian Lee	6
Mobile Phone Masts Blamed for Agony Felt by Amputees	7
Introducing Marle Kuhn	8
Travel Tips for Amputees	8
Affiliated Amputee Societies	12

*The opinions expressed in this
Journal are not necessarily those
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GUEST EDITORIAL

It is a privilege to be invited to provide a guest editorial for this edition of *Purpose* and I have expanded upon my editorial from the December issue of the Canterbury/Westland Society newsletter. It is not my intention to direct you in any way but to merely offer some personal thoughts that may or may not be acted upon.

I am sure most of you have at some time in your lives asked yourself the questions, "Why am I here on this earth?" and "What is my purpose in life?". We all want a happy life so how do we achieve this? One can start by taking ownership of how we live our lives on a daily basis. As we move through our lives, our journey throws up many harsh realities that can prove stumbling blocks of varying intensity. The test for us collectively is how we deal with those issues that can cause severe physical and mental challenges that we are required to meet head-on. A quote from J. Sidlaw Baxter sums up the issue very succinctly and precisely. "What is the difference between a difficulty and an opportunity? It is our attitude towards it. Every opportunity has a difficulty and every difficulty has an opportunity".

So, what is a positive attitude? A positive attitude can manifest itself by having optimism, thinking constructively and creatively and having the motivation along with the energy to accomplish tasks/goals. My newsletter article focused on the simple act of choosing to smile and greet other people with a friendly outlook. The overall effect tells the outside world that you are feeling happy on the inside. It is such a simple and, in most cases, spontaneous act that could surprise you with the response you receive.

We all have different attitudes and outlooks on life which in itself is a good, challenging and exciting point of difference but deep down, the majority of us all strive for a happy and contented life. If one chooses to display a positive outlook on life in general, have a smile for everyone and can assist others along the way, I am convinced that you have made giant strides towards achieving a more happy life. To this end, a quote from Walt Whitman fits this perspective very aptly. "Keep your face towards the sunshine and shadows will always fall behind you".

Mark Bruce

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

Auckland & Northland - Our Society has entered a significant growth phase with the goal of benefitting the lives of our members. We plan to achieve this by harnessing the valuable history and experience of our long-term members, while at the same time bringing our recording systems up to date and up-skilling ourselves in the many services available to amputees throughout our region. This motivation has come about due in part to the appointment of our new Field Officer, Marle Kuhn; we appreciate her energy, drive and genuine compassion for others. Don't hesitate to contact Marle or myself for any reason and for support, especially transport issues. *(Helen Hewitt, Secretary) (See Marle's profile on page 8 and contact details for the Society on page 12)*

Hawke's Bay/East Coast - We have been working on a new banner which we revealed at the AGM in February and which met with the approval of those attending. We look forward to the banner's first public outing at the conference in Christchurch. We have secured funding for four of our members to attend the conference and two of our youth are also hoping to attend Give it a Go. *(Diane Walsh, President)*

Taranaki - We are looking at more adventurous outings for the not so 'old' like kayaking, fishing and up to the snow in the winter. For the not so 'young', a pleasant chit-chat over lunch after our monthly meetings has been a hit. A visit to the movies and later on in the year a trip up the Mokau River has been suggested. Bevan Joyce and I attended a 9 day Outward Bound course - went to the extremes of testing one's boundaries, fears and inner strength. O/B are wanting a group of amputees to participate in their own special course. Anyone interested, contact me (see page 12). WINZ and scholarships may be available for funding. *(Christine Windle, Secretary)*

Manawatu - 2016 started with a member luncheon in Palmerston North on 31st January at the Rose and Crown. The venue provided an occasion not only for good food but also for company present to be enjoyed. With funding available to assist members our Society will be well represented at conference in Christchurch. *(John Maher, Secretary)*

Greater Wellington Region - We had a great time at our James Bond theme movie night in November (check out our regional webpage for photos) and are looking forward to meeting more

amputee friends and families at our picnic in Days Bay in February. We are grateful to Pub Charity for funding which will enable some of our committee to attend the Christchurch conference.

(Ken Te Tau, Vice President)

Nelson & Marlborough - This year we hope to hold fortnightly coffee meetings with field officers Claire and Carla. In Nelson, meetings will be at the Honest Lawyer on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month at 10.30, commencing on 11 March. In Blenheim, there will be afternoon meetings at Ritual, 10 Maxwell Road, on Wednesday afternoons at 2.30 pm commencing 9th March.

(Claire West, Secretary)

Canterbury & Westland - Everything is in place for the conference and we are looking forward to hosting attendees over a weekend of information, guest speakers and catching up with friends from around the country. *(Eileen Popplewell, Secretary)*

Otago & Southland - Our "Young Achievers" - Holly Robinson, Anna Grimaldi and Rory McSweeney - excelled at the IPC World Athletics Championships in Doha in October - an excellent lead up to Rio. We wish them well! *(Lorraine Peacock, Coordinator)*

Newsletters of Regional Societies are available on the Federation's website (www.af.org.nz), along with other useful information.

**SUPPORT YOUR REGIONAL AMPUTEE SOCIETY
IT SUPPORTS YOU!**

PUBLICATIONS available (no cost) from the National Coordinator or Regional Society Secretaries

A New Challenge - Advice for New Amputees (a 32 page booklet)

An Ongoing Challenge - A 60 page publication which covers a wide range of topics and includes personal profiles of 11 amputees.

A Challenge with Purpose - A History of the first 50 years of the Amputees Federation of NZ Incorporated (275 pages)

The Amputee Society of Otago & Southland Inc. - The first 60 years (146 pages)

OUR THANKS to the NZ Lottery Grants Board, Pub Charity and the Lion Foundation for their recent grants; we very much appreciate this support.

PROFILE - ADRIAN LEE

(condensed from an article written by Geoff Hansen)

Adrian Lee lives in Onekawa, Napier; he has 3 daughters, 2 of whom live in Taranaki and one locally. He is a really funny guy, you only have to call him, get his answer-phone and hear his message from "The Butler" referring to Adrian as "The Master". Adrian was born in Wellington and was the 2nd eldest of 4 children. He grew up during the 2nd World War and his parents during that time shifted to Shannon. His Dad managed the American World War 2 troops supplies in Seatoun and came home at the weekends. Adrian was a very good athlete; at Horowhenua College in Levin they called him the "Shannon Flyer." He was the champion in races ranging from 100 yards to the mile. Later the family shifted to Hastings where he began his first job at the Herald Tribune (he was the lad there or as he called it "the runner", and where he met his wife to be, Eleanor. They married in 1955 (sadly Eleanor passed away two years ago).



Adrian decided to get into the insurance business and took a position at Hastings Colonial Mutual. He climbed up the ladder and was offered a position at Nobel Lowndes in Auckland where they resided for 10 years before returning to Napier. Adrian then took on a car salesman's role with Stewart Greer Motors. After 2 or 3 years in this role the Manager of Norwich Union came into Stewart Greer's to have a look around, although he had bet his staff a morning tea shout he wouldn't be talked into buying a car. Obviously he hadn't been smoothly talked by Adrian before and he lost the bet. However he told Adrian he was wasted in this role & talked him into working for them. Adrian was given a medical and it was discovered he

had peripheral vascular disease and a blockage behind his left knee. A lot of walking was suggested to clear it. This didn't stop Adrian getting the job & working there for 20 odd years. He later moved

on to another job but unfortunately not long after he started there the problems with his leg began. Adrian had been getting bad pain when he mowed his lawns and after visiting his Dr for a check-up, it was later discovered that he had three aneurysms. A number of operations followed, culminating in an above-knee amputation. Adrian went back to work initially using a wheelchair, then crutches and he continued working till his retirement at the age of 70+.

During his life Adrian has had a passion for music, reading and writing. In fact he has written around 4 short stories. He has yet to approach a publisher and has thought of combining them into one longer story. They are fictional stories but based on some fact or true personal stories. We look forward to seeing something in our upcoming Hawke's Bay newsletters from you Adrian. I also look forward to meeting Algernon Peabody "The Butler". Strangely enough he's never around when I call in, he must have a lot of holidays owing.

MOBILE PHONE MASTS BLAMED FOR AGONY FELT BY AMPUTEES

(Mail Foreign Service)

They have been accused of causing everything from migraines to nosebleeds and even cancer. Now a new study suggests that signals from mobile-phone masts can cause excruciating pain for people who have lost limbs.

The research was prompted by US soldier Major David Underwood, who lost an arm and part of a leg when hit by a blast in Iraq. He reported feeling a painful buzz in the stump of his arm while driving under power lines - or using his mobile in open spaces. 'The pain almost felt like having my arm blown off again,' he said. Tests on rats by scientists at the University of Texas confirmed that amputees feel pain in an electro-magnetic field equivalent to being 128ft from a phone mast.

The study published in the journal Plos One, says radiation can be picked up by neuromas - clusters of inflamed nerve bundles that can form after serious injury. Professor Mario Romero-Ortega said: 'Our study provides evidence that subjects exposed to cellphone towers at low, regular levels can actually perceive pain. 'My hope is that this study will highlight the importance of developing clinical options to prevent neuromas.' Major Underwood said: 'It is pretty amazing that a few short conversations with this team led to validation of what I, and many others, experience.'

INTRODUCING MARLE KUHN

*Recently appointed Field Officer
of the Auckland/Northland Society*



My name is Marle and I am the new Field Officer for the Auckland and Northland Region. Originally from South Africa, my husband and I have been living in New Zealand for 12 years. I started my role on 25/1/16 and I'm finding it an exciting challenge. I'm a new Mommy of an almost 8 month old baby. We enjoy getting out and about, meeting people and learning about the Amputee Society and our clients. I've been a Registered Nurse for almost 10 years now, and I've spent most of my working life in the surgical field, working in both Private and Public Hospitals. In my private time I love spending time outdoors with my family and doing Yoga.

I am looking forward to meeting everyone and hope that I can support our members in a way that's needed.

TRAVEL TIPS FOR AMPUTEES

(It is possible that some of you may be planning an overseas trip - if not this year, then at some time in the future. We are grateful to Limbs4Life for permission to reprint their excellent advice from a recent article - this will be concluded in the next issue of Purpose, with notes on a personal experience by Diane Walsh to follow.)

General Travel Tips - Regardless of the type of travel transportation you are taking there are a number of important tips we have developed through research, consultation with experts and through discussion with amputees who frequently travel. It is especially important to be prepared in case you encounter a problem with your residual limb/s or prosthesis, or experience an unexpected medical situation.

- Ensure your prosthesis and liners are in good condition before you embark on your journey. If you plan to travel for an extended period of time, make sure you have a maintenance check on your prostheses and ask your prosthetist for additional stump socks and liners.

- Always take essential items in your carry-on baggage. That way if your luggage gets lost you will have what you need on hand.
- Pack stump socks, packing tape, skin dressings, moisturising creams, cleaning agents or even spare liners. If travelling by planes internationally ensure all liquids (creams or cleaning agents, etc) that are brought on board are in travel size packaging and enclosed in a clear plastic bag.
- If you are prone to swelling and will be active in a climate that is humid and/or using your prostheses for longer periods than you are used to - pack some stump shrinkers to reduce any swelling. Speak to your prosthetist to ensure that your shrinker socks are an adequate fit.
- If you rely on a wheelchair, a maintenance check is essential before you start your journey.
- Take any medications you need and, if possible, pack two sets. Place one set in your carry-on bag, in case the other set in your suitcase is lost or damaged.
- Carry a medical certificate or letter from your doctor if you need to carry hypodermic needles or prescription medications.
- Have a copy of your doctor's number in your purse or wallet in the event of an emergency or if you need to obtain prescriptions while you are away from home.
- Have a copy of your prosthetist's phone number and email in case you need some advice while you are travelling.
- Find out the contact details of prosthetic facilities in the areas you are travelling to, in case of an emergency or damage to your prosthesis.
- Consider taking fold up travel crutches or a walking stick if you think that the extra activities and walking from your daily norm may cause excessive stress or fatigue.
- Find out about accessibility at your destination hotel. Does it have an accessible entry and shower and does it have bathroom rails? Does it have steps and, if so, how many? When researching hotels look at online hotel booking websites like www.hotels.com that include accessibility options in their search criteria. Just remember that accessible rooms can greatly differ from one hotel to another. If you require the use of a shower chair/stool, speak to the hotel to make sure that they can accommodate your needs. You can also ask your travel agent to investigate on your behalf.

Travel Security Checks - If you are travelling by a domestic or international plane you will go through security checks. However, if you are travelling by a cruise ship or some international railways you may also be subject to security checks. Because of this, and because amputees face some additional checks, it is important to arrive at any terminal early.

- If wearing a prosthesis, be prepared to set off the alarms when you walk through a body scanner. Let the staff know you are wearing a prosthesis before you walk through. Security staff will then scan you with a hand-held wand to locate any metal objects. They may also ask you if they can give you a 'pat-down' (i.e. light touch of your body over the top of clothing). A pat-down should be done by someone of the same gender as you, and you can also request it be done in a private room if required.
- If you are a lower limb amputee, you are not required to remove your shoes. Security staff may ask you to do so, however they can simply take a scan of your shoes with the use of a hand-held wand.
- Mobility aids such as walking sticks and crutches can be taken on planes but they must also be screened by security.
- Any inspections or security screenings should be respectful and within reason. Although security checks can feel intrusive, remember these security checks are in place to protect us all. Screening points have chairs and walking aids available for you to use during this process.
- Following the security scan you may also be asked to participate in a drug and explosive trace scan. This is a simple procedure where the attendant will use a hand-held wand to lightly tap your shoes, bag, assistive devices or any other personal belongings. It usually only takes a minute for this check.
- Remember each airline commissions their own security company at airports so the procedure may change from country to country.

Airline Travel Tips

The following tips should be helpful if you are travelling by plane, and if any are relevant you should speak to your travel agent or airline well in advance of going on holiday. Most, if not all, airline companies have disability and accessibility policies that you can learn about on their website or through a conversation over the phone. Before choosing an airline company, do your research and ensure you choose one that will meet all of your requirements.

- Some airports can be very large and have long distances between where you check in and where you board your plane. You may want to consider requesting wheelchair assistance (either in the form of a motorised vehicle or travel chair) and/or baggage assistance to get to or from a gate lounge. This can be particularly useful if you have to rush to catch a connecting flight.
- Sometimes an airbridge (an enclosed tunnel allowing passengers to board or disembark from a plane without going outside) to link the airport terminal gate to an airplane is not used. If one is not used, generally passengers will need to use stairs. If you can't manage steps, airline staff and ground crew will assist you to access the aircraft in a wheelchair via the use of an electric portable lift (cherry picker). You will be accompanied to the aircraft with the support of airline ground crew who will support you during the lifting process.
- If you're unable to walk to your seat ask whether the airline company can provide you with an 'aisle chair' (a collapsible narrow wheelchair that can travel along the aisle). An aisle chair will allow you to move easily between the chair and your seat and provide access to the toilet during the flight. Most toilets in aircrafts have handrails for support.
- Comfort and accessibility is important, particularly during long flights. For lower limb amputees, you may want to book an aisle seat near the toilet or you may want to book a seat with more leg-room. Upper limb amputees may prefer a window or aisle seat on the same side as your amputation, that way you can collect food and beverage service with your sound limb.
- Be aware that flying can cause swelling of the limbs, and if you take your prosthesis off during the flight you may have difficulty getting it back on. For this reason it is wise to leave your liner on, or use a 'shrinker' in place of the liner. Speak to your healthcare provider regarding the removal of your prosthesis and ask for their advice.
- Sitting still for extended periods of time are known risk factors for the development of blood clots in leg veins; a condition known as Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT). Some researchers believe that long-haul flights can be a risk factor, especially for those with diabetes or other related medical conditions. Consult your doctor on how to reduce this risk.

(Next issue - Cruise Ships and more.....)

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Remember that you're not the first person to have lost a limb - many others have passed along the same route and achieved conspicuous success.

If you wish to do the same, you are more than half-way there - the remainder is as easy or as difficult as you make it.

