

Purpose

Journal of the



**Amputees
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of New Zealand
Incorporated

March 2019



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52% of amputees have fallen in the last year¹

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1. Miller, William C., Mark Speechley, and Barry Deathe. "The prevalence and risk factors of falling and fear of falling among lower extremity amputees." Archives of physical medicine and rehabilitation 82.8 (2001): 1031-1037. 2. Kaufman, K. Risk factors and costs associated with accidental falls among adults with above-knee amputations: a population-based study. American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association 2016. (Mayo Clinic). <http://www.aopanet.org/resources/research/> 3. Ludviksdottir A, Gruben K, Gunnsteinsson K, Ingvarsson Th, Nicholls M. Effects on user mobility and safety when changing from a carbon fiber prosthetic foot to a bionic prosthetic foot. Presented at Orthopadie&Reha-Technik Congress, Leipzig, May 2012.

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Journal are not necessarily those
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EDITORIAL

The old adage "Age is a state of mind" is true of everyone, but particularly for people living with limb loss. However, age is not the only measure of one's ability to have a positive quality of life. Age provides a way to count years, but it doesn't measure your heart, mind or motivation.

In the last issue of *Purpose* I invited some of our more senior (in terms of age) members to share their stories. Shirley has done so and it's easy to see that she definitely makes the most of life.

What we all really want is to live longer *well* and stay healthy enough to continue doing the things we love. A positive mental attitude, the ability to laugh and find humour in situations, getting outside of ourselves and helping others, doing something we love to do, and having the will to beat the odds - all these contribute to a long and healthy life.

What do you expect for yourself? To be able to garden, care for your family, be independent? Do your healthcare providers and family share those expectations? Whether expectations are positive or negative, people tend to live up to them. You must expect that a positive quality of life is possible whether you are 20, 60 or 90 years old.

*"You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt;
as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear;
as young as your hope, as old as your despair."*

- Douglas MacArthur

This issue of *Purpose* has a focus on the more senior amputee, with excerpts reprinted from an early edition of *inMotion* published by the Amputee Coalition. However, for those younger, we also include Top 10 Tips for Growing Up as an Amputee.

Enjoy!

Lorraine Peacock

National Coordinator

P.S. If you are reading this in early March, it may not yet be too late to register and attend the National Conference and Give it a Go! event being held in Dunedin 12-14 April. The programme and registration forms are available on our website www.amputee.co.nz

THE OLDER AMPUTEE - WHEN IS A PROSTHESIS THE RIGHT CHOICE?

The decision to use a prosthesis for older amputees depends first on their cognition, or their ability to learn, remember things, and solve problems. Someone without the proper mental capacity would only be appropriate for prosthesis use if he or she had a caregiver who could learn how to use the prosthesis and monitor all of the issues associated with its use. Linked to the person's ability to think is the motivation to use a prosthesis. Using a prosthesis takes the energy, patience and time of the amputee and a number of professionals who work with him or her. Outcomes from prosthesis use vary, depending on the initial goals of the amputee and the rehabilitation team. A prosthesis can be used for everything from cosmetic purposes (to make the person "look better") to the full range of functional purposes. Each case should be looked at on an individual basis, with the options presented to the amputee and the person's wishes seriously considered. A prosthesis can indeed be a danger for some people; it can, for example, injure skin or lead to a fall if the person is unable to use it safely after training and education. It is important, however, that those providing care and direction after limb loss offer the use of a prosthesis as an option to those who can use it safely.

STAYING FIT AS YOU AGE

No matter who you are or how old you are, you have to keep moving. The human body is designed to be in motion; otherwise, our internal systems begin to malfunction, become maladaptive and can possibly shut down. We should all maintain some level of fitness throughout our years, whether for the aesthetic pleasure of exercise or simply for the sake of our health. Whether we are working out for the sheer joy of an exercise-induced endorphin rush or fighting weight gain, we all have our reasons to start and maintain a certain level of health and exercise focus throughout our lives. As amputees, our approach to the usual lines of exercise will obviously be challenged, but the physical and biological principles of our bodies are the same. Understanding that there are no fundamental differences allows us to find a workout programme that works, regardless of our level of fitness. Remember, adherence and regularity are the key to enjoying the process – the end game is all about results, and the best way to achieve positive results is to apply yourself fully and with sincere commitment. Prepare yourself for the ups and downs that come on this road, and use the resources at hand to overcome any mental or physical setbacks you may encounter. The end result is worth it.

LEARNING TO WALK

My granddaughter is one. I am sixty-one.
She has two legs. I have one.
At first, she crawled, then tried to stand. As did I.
Then she stood and was so proud. As was I.
She took a few steps, then had a fall. So did I.
She is short, a mere two-foot small.
I am tall, with further to fall.
Next, she was walking, a few steps at a time,
holding her mummy's hand.
I was too, holding my walker with each hand.
Then came steps, up and down.
Up was easy, down was not.
She still crawls a lot. I cannot.
Outside, the walks are clear.
The snow has disappeared.
She tries the sidewalk, first up the slope, then down.
She trips and lands,
then bounces up using her hands.
I shuffle along as best I can.
The grass is uneven.
She is cautious. First a step, then a fall,
but quickly, she is up, walking tall.
So am I, without the fall. We are both walking now.
She goes alone or with a hand.
I go too, at first with a walker, then two canes,
down to one and now none.
Soon, my granddaughter and I will
walk hand in hand, glad that we can.
She with her two legs, and I with my one.
She is one, and I am sixty-one.

– Herb Hartman, MD

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR and other contributions to *Purpose* are always welcome. Send your contribution to the Editor at 213a Bay View Road, St Clair, Dunedin 9012, or email to coordinator@af.org.nz

If you are receiving this *Purpose* in printed form and would like an e-copy emailed to you, please let us know.

INTRODUCING SHIRLEY READ of Timaru



You were asking to hear from older people. I am in my 90th year and had my left leg amputated above the knee nearly 3 years ago because of Gangrene. I went straight from Hospital into the Margaret Wilson rest home and never shed a tear. I am very happy here and very independent. The staff and home are just marvellous. It is a two-way thing and life is what you make it. I have a motorized wheelchair and am able to go anywhere and everywhere. I am a Reporter for the Margaret Wilson News which is published 3 monthly. Although this can be a very sad place it can also be very happy. I say I have only lost a leg, I'm not sick.

I play the Banjo Ukulele and recently went down to the main street with my Banjo on my knee and was welcomed by all who I knew. The public were encouraged to join in. I was in The Allcomers Old-time Dance but they have all gone now. We played around all the rest homes in South Canterbury and had a monthly dance somewhere in the country. There were about 25 of us. Those were the days when my twin-sister and I used to sing Country Music. I miss that now as our voices have gone. Thank you for taking such an interest.

(Our pleasure Shirley - thank you so much for sharing your story. We'd love to hear from more of you!)



The Federation's Facebook page (Amputees New Zealand), has created a closed group for Amputees, their families, and caregivers. This is a closed and moderated group to provide security and privacy to its members. The aim of the group is to provide an open forum to discuss issues, ideas, and to post inspirational stories, news articles etc. - basically everything that

concerns Amputees. To access the group: Go to the Facebook Page (Amputees New Zealand) on the page there is a link: Visit Group – click on this, and it will take you to the group. Click on join, and you will be asked a simple question. Look forward to seeing you in the group.

Visit our Website at www.amputee.co.nz

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

As part of a series *Stuff* is working on, they want to hear about the experiences of Kiwi amputees. They want to hear stories of courage, struggle, survival and self-acceptance. How does your physical disability impact on your life? What toll has it taken on you and your family? And what would you like to tell people who don't understand or know much about disabilities. Have you ever been judged or discriminated against because of the way you look, walk or talk? Have you lived your whole life with your disability, or was a sudden life-changing event responsible? Email your thoughts, opinions and personal stories to stuffnation@stuff.co.nz or by post to 42-52 Willis Street, Wellington.



INTRODUCING MARK BRUCE



I was the third born son to my parents in Geraldine in 1958 after they had moved from Hokitika 3 years previously. My Dad set up his own plumbing business in Geraldine and I have wonderful childhood memories of going to jobs with him in the plumbing truck. After starting school, three weeks later our family moved to Christchurch where my parents had purchased a 7-day dairy business. When I was 6, my older brothers and I approached our parents to tell them we wanted another sibling. We simply thought that if we put an order in, a baby would arrive and it did - so 3

boys became 4. Through ages 11 to 14, I was involved in cycle racing and recall Mum "carting" my brother and I all over NZ to compete. After leaving school at the end of my fifth form year and aged 15, I "left home" (because I was right and my parents were wrong) and ended up in Blenheim where I lived and worked for nearly 18 months. This period of my life made me grow up very quickly but upon my return to Christchurch the first thing I did was to tell Mum and Dad that they in fact were right and I was wrong! I started playing rugby for the Linwood club and made my way through age group teams, representing Canterbury at U17, U18, U19 and Senior B and finally the Linwood senior team in 1980. After spending around 3 years working as a block layer, I decided to enter the Ministry of Transport as a traffic

officer and spent the early part of 1978 training at Trentham before graduating. For the next few years, life was great - work was going well and my rugby career looked promising. But in February 1983, at the age of 24, I was involved in a motorcycle accident whilst at work and due to ongoing problems over the next 2 years, I made an elective decision to have my right leg amputated BK. This is a decision I have never regretted as the challenge not only provided me with many opportunities to become involved with amputees but, more importantly, it gave me a completely different outlook on life.

I have been a member of the Canterbury/Westland Society since the mid-1980s, for the last 11 years as a committee member and President for the last 7 years. I am also the Funding Coordinator and editor of our quarterly newsletter. For the last 8 years I have been an area coordinator for the annual Breast Cancer Foundation Appeal and these roles provide me with a great deal of satisfaction. My partner, Robyn and I live in Somerfield, near the Cashmere hills.

I lost my best friend and brother, Alan, to kidney cancer in 2011 but one of my proudest achievements in life was to complete visiting all 50 states of the USA in 2014. Alan had expressed a desire to complete this with me but his passing put paid to those plans so to finally achieve it in his honour was an extremely proud moment in my life. I had attempted to complete this task in June 2013 but whilst at an Amputee conference in Orlando, Florida, I ruptured my patellar tendon when I was involved in an Amputee Mobility Clinic. This necessitated me being medically evacuated back to NZ for immediate surgery. I attended my second Amputee Mobility Clinic in August 2017 and successfully managed to rupture my Achilles tendon. Hence, I am not attending any more clinics!

In June 2015 I was co-opted onto the National Executive and the following year I was elected to the position of Vice-President. In 2017 I was elected as President, which position I currently hold. Significant achievements in the last two years have been the signing of Memorandum of Understandings with both CCS Disability Action and the NZ Artificial Limb Service, the latter in regard to establishing a nationwide Peer Support programme. I believe that service to fellow amputees and families has a positive effect on all involved and we should continue this selfless and productive work along the fine traditions of all who have passed this way before us. My personal focus has always been to do what I can to assist, support and enhance the well-being of others who experience challenges in their lives.

TOP 10 TIPS FOR GROWING UP AS AN AMPUTEE

- * It gets easier.
- * Your attitude will affect how others perceive and treat you.
 - * Give yourself permission to feel what you feel - being different isn't always fun.
 - * Don't limit yourself.
 - * You have nothing to prove.
 - * Tell your family and friends how to support you.
- * Only you can decide if a prosthesis is right for you.
- * People who don't accept your difference are not worth your time.
 - * Reach out to others.
 - * Laugh when you can.



IN THE NEWS - In the last month, Sharon (Shaz) Dagg has become New Zealand's para-triathlon champion. A farm accident in October 2016, when a corrugated iron-covered fence gate pinned her left arm between a post, breaking it, led to three amputations, the last of which was above the elbow. Shaz (52) works for ParaFed Manawatu and lives in Feilding but took part recently in the inaugural Hawke's Bay Ocean Swim Series. Her aim is to become New Zealand's first para-triathlete at the 2020 Paralympics in Japan. Shaz will attend two races in Australia — the Oceania

Championship at Newcastle, NSW, late next month and Devonport, Tasmania, on March 4 — before joining the world championship series circuit in a bid to qualify as a Paralympian. The series will take her to Japan, Switzerland and Spain to make the cull for the 16th edition of the Paralympics from August 25 to September 6 in Tokyo.

Excerpts courtesy of HawkesBayToday

Have you seen our two publications?

A New Challenge - Advice for New Amputees
An Ongoing Challenge

Both are an interesting read and are available from the National Coordinator or your Regional Society.

YOUR RIGHTS

As a person with a disability, you have rights to be treated fairly, to be free from discrimination on the grounds of your disability, and you also have the right to have your physical, emotional and social needs or desires respected. The Human Rights Act (1993) makes it illegal to discriminate against a person because of their disability. The rule applies at work or school, and when seeking accommodation. A Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights protects your rights to receive quality health and disability support services. A free advocacy service is available to assist where people with disabilities believe their rights have been breached. It is also important that you are aware that you have rights when visiting the Limb Centre. You can request an appointment with the surgeon at any time and you also have the right to request a private consultation with any person providing a service to you, e.g. the prosthetist or the surgeon.

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

Auckland & Northland - The 73rd Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday 17 February. Outgoing President George Marr opened the meeting and introduced guest speaker Stephanie Shennan, Northern Regional Manager of the NZ Artificial Limb Service. Stephanie spoke for an hour with an extremely interesting view of where the limb Service has come from and a view of the future of prosthetics. (*Janis Bourne, Secretary*)

Waikato, Bay of Plenty & Districts - Our focus is to provide information, support and well-being for our members. If you read this and think "I would like some of that", contact us – that's what we are here for! The Amputee Ruapehu Snow Trip 2019 has been booked for the weekend of Friday 30 August. (*Jill Moody, Secretary*)

Editor's note: After many years of dedicated service, President Lee Cook is stepping down at their AGM on 9 March. Lee first became involved with the Waikato Society when she was a key person in its re-establishment in 1983 after it had been in recess for more than 20 years. For the first 9 years Lee was the Secretary before moving on to the position of President. Well done Lee - truly an amazing record!

Hawke's Bay/East Coast - With the hype and festivities in Hawke's Bay during February for Art Deco we managed to hold our AGM at the Napier Conference Centre last weekend. With a good turnout

of around 30, a new Vice President and 3 new Committee members the meeting was a great success. The Committee and current members are looking forward to a good year ahead with more 'get togethers' and monthly newsletters to keep everyone informed of what's happening and reminders that we are part of a wonderful community. (*Jacqui D'Ath, President*)

Taranaki - There hasn't been anything of much significance happening in Taranaki in the last three months. The Society has decided to go to bi-monthly meetings. A good social gathering was held at the Garretts in early December for the end of year function. Other than that the Society has been ticking along as per normal. (*Wally Garrett, President*)

Manawatu & Districts - On the horizon we are planning for our AGM and the National Conference in Dunedin. Our AGM and shared lunch will be held on Saturday 16th March starting at 10.30am at CCS in Palmerston North. I am excited that we have 2 of our members who are happy to speak at our AGM. They are Susan who participated in the Queenstown Marathon towards the end of last year and George who will talk about his experiences relating to Phantom Pain. Anyone interested is welcome to attend. (*Elisabeth Cottam, President*)

Greater Wellington Region - Jo Maling & Kath Stone represented the Federation at the Bledisloe Reception at Government House as part of the Waitangi Day celebrations. They report that the company, catering, entertainment and weather were excellent. They were dressed in their "day wear" finery for the event and even wore hats! (*Ken Te Tau, Vice President*)

Nelson & Marlborough - Our thoughts have been with Deborah and Max who live in Wakefield and were evacuated due to the fire threat. At the time of writing, they are still on standby with bags and car packed just in case.

Canterbury & Westland - Nine members will be travelling to the Conference in Dunedin in April. The Society is also celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. (*Eileen Popplewell, Secretary*)

Otago & Southland - There may still be time to register for the Conference and 75th Jubilee in Dunedin on 12-14 April. It promises to be a good time for all! (*Lorraine Peacock, Coordinator*)

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

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A black and white photograph of a man with a prosthetic right leg running on a gravel path. He is wearing a dark polo shirt and shorts. The background shows a fence and trees. In the bottom left, there are two overlapping circles, one blue and one green.

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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.

