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Journal of the



**Amputees
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of New Zealand
Incorporated

November 2019



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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 Orthopädie&Reha-Technik Congress, Leipzig, May 2012.

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EDITORIAL

Spring is here and the garden awakes! For many, gardening is relaxing and provides us with time out to think and reflect. It can also make us realise that we have no control over the rhythmic cycle of nature and it can be a losing battle to try and bring a garden under control. Nature does its own thing.

It is the same in our lives. We are part of nature and it doesn't pay to try and push the river. We have children who follow their own paths and there isn't much we can do about it. We face losses, old age and illness - there is nothing unusual in that. Being able to let go of resistance to the natural process and go with the flow can reduce stress. Nature goes its own way, just like a river flows in a certain direction. We cannot control where nature takes us. Finding pleasure in our day to day lives starts with accepting things the way they are. Life becomes much simpler that way.

As amputees, we all have individual hurdles to climb and battles to overcome. They are part and parcel of an amputee's life and affect us in many different ways, depending on the type of amputation we have and not least of all our age!

As the only organisation in New Zealand which represents amputees, this Federation, together with its nine Regional Amputee Societies, faces its own battle - that of attracting and retaining members. Our future lies with the young amputees of today and we are realistic enough to acknowledge that we have nothing to offer but support and advice when needed, and fellowship. But surely those qualities in themselves are worth passing on from one to another?

All of which led me to reflect on our logo adopted in 2014 which

- represents the inter-linking and coming together of amputees (shown in the joining of the four figures);
- supports a positive vibrant feel to represent that being an amputee does not mean life comes to an end;
- is moving and fluent, symbolizing that as amputees we are not limited by disability.

Have a safe and relaxed Christmas.

Lorraine Peacock
National Coordinator

Search **Amputees New Zealand** on Facebook
and **Like** us (Closed Group also available)



INTRODUCING NAOMI CARTER

(Naomi was a 1st time attendee at this year's Give it a Go! and is a Committee member of the Waikato Society)

It was just a moment of inattention by the driver, but it almost cost Naomi Carter (nee Jefferies) her life. In September 2017, Naomi remembers being an active and healthy 28-year-old. She loved wakeboarding, snowboarding, hiking, going to the gym and working as a physiotherapist. Then one evening, Naomi returned to her car after a session at her Waikato gym. Her car was parked on a grass verge and she was standing beside it when a passing driver became distracted and plowed into her. In that moment she was thrown about 7 metres across the road and her life "forever changed". Naomi says she doesn't remember the accident "but I was awake the whole time apparently from what they've told me". Her left leg was degloved - the fat and skin had been ripped off, leaving just her muscle exposed. Her left ankle and femur were shattered. All of the breaks in her leg were compound fractures - the bones protruding through skin. The ligaments in both her knees were ruptured, her right foot was broken and her back was also broken in two places. The ribs on her left-hand side were smashed, she had a flail chest, a collapsed lung, broken sternum, shoulder blade and both her elbow and humerus were shattered.



Following the accident, she spent 10 days in a coma and then three weeks in intensive care. After four months in hospital and about 12 surgeries later, Naomi returned home. But a bad infection forced her back in hospital. Her ankle was also "broken beyond repair" and would likely be painful in future. So Naomi eventually made the decision to have her left leg amputated below the knee. The amputation was Naomi's turning point and to this day, she says she has no regrets. "I started to feel a whole lot better, and I was able to move around a lot more and I was in less pain and way more functional without my leg than I had been with it." Naomi's journey has been long and painful - with 17 surgeries, and more skin grafts to come. She

describes it as a roller coaster with "lots of ups and downs". "To start with it was pretty horrendous. I would be down and cry for hours at a time." In the beginning she was also angry with the man who hit her, but a year-and-a-half later, that anger has gone. "I think when you're presented in a situation like this where it's pretty bloody horrible, you

can either dwell on it and sulk about it or you can get on with it." Instead of wasting energy on something she couldn't change, she's focused on her recovery. Although she still has down days, she knows it's normal and it's all part of the process. "I very nearly died the night I got hit and I think part of me did die, and so (on) those days I sort of feel like I'm mourning that part of me and I think that's totally normal and you've got to allow yourself to do that." She also reminds herself that she "could have been so much worse off". Acceptance and confidence have come with time, as well as getting used to people glancing at her leg. "I still feel like we've got a long way ahead of us, but I definitely feel way more myself and that we're definitely getting there now."

Lastly, her message to those getting behind the wheel: "Everyone gets distracted in a car but cars are super dangerous and just think that changing a radio station or looking at your phone might result in you ruining someone's life or killing someone. "People are so used to driving cars these days that they forget that they're considered like a weapon really. And for me - I mean, my whole life was changed that night just because of one moment of inattention."

(Excerpts reprinted courtesy of "Stuff")

BGT Actors Models and Talent are looking to sign up people for an amazing upcoming TV series requiring amputees. They will offer all applicants a complimentary year of membership. Please apply online www.bgt.nz and use 'amputee' as reference in the 'how did you hear about us' section. If you have any queries call 09 827 9995 or email Emma at join@bgt.nz

GIVING A HELPING HAND

Dunedin engineering firm United Machinists has a particularly feel-good partnership with a Canterbury-based company. Knowing they are literally giving people a helping hand is a thrill for the team at United Machinists. The Dunedin engineering firm has a partnership with Taska Prosthetics to produce internal components for the Christchurch-based company's prosthetic hands. It was the first and only firm to achieve production volumes for those components. Had they not been able to, it was "highly likely" manufacturing would have had to go offshore. Taska was exporting the world's first waterproof and robust myoelectric multi-articulating prosthetic

hands to Australia, the United States and Europe. United Machinists has added two machines - a vision coordinate measuring machine (CMM) and semi-automated twin spindle lathe DMG Mori NLX 2500, worth more than \$500,000 in total, especially for Taska.

Taska founder Mathew Jury came up with the idea about a decade ago after breaking both wrists in a mountain biking accident. "Obviously, Mat's injuries weren't as serious as those faced by some of our users, but that experience led to the realisation that the upper-limb prosthetics market was not well served at the time and that he could do much better," chief executive Jamie Cairns said. There was now a team of more than 35 people in design, research, engineering and commercial areas at Taska. The company's success had been driven by a desire to improve the lives of upper-limb amputees by reducing the compromises being made in product design and manufacture. The Taska hand was highly sensitive and agile. It had sensors to detect muscle movement to control the hand as well as its own app and electronic interface to fine-tune and preset hand positions, making tasks such as peeling potatoes a reality. United Machinists was established in Dunedin in the 1940s and the Taska partnership had been a "massive" learning curve but also real validation for the team.

(Excerpts reprinted courtesy of ODT)

And whilst on the subject of upper limbs, it is timely to introduce two young achievers - Corey Simon and Liam McGettigan.



At first glance, **Corey Symon's** fencing record is pretty impressive. He has represented New Zealand several times, won national titles and regularly performs well against older competitors. But what about doing all that with one hand? The 17-year-old year 13 King's High School pupil was born with Amniotic Band syndrome, leaving him without a right hand. He is not one to use that as an excuse — on the contrary he said it was "not really a disadvantage". It certainly hasn't stopped him achieving in his sport. Last holidays he claimed

two New Zealand University Games titles. He then represented New Zealand in the under-17 Oceania Championships in Wellington. There he made the top 16 in the individual foil and was picked for the New Zealand A team, which finished second to Australia. He said having fun was important in getting better — something he had a

lot of in the sport. "Coordination, grit is really important. Sticking with it even when it's not going well," he said of the keys to doing well in fencing. "You have to enjoy it. It's not really good if you don't enjoy it because you don't really want to improve." Corey began fencing about seven years ago, following his mother into the sport alongside his brother, Riley. Recently he competed at the national secondary school championships. He hopes to keep fencing after leaving school and plans to study health science at the University of Otago.

(Story and photo courtesy of ODT)



Nelson primary school student **Liam McGettigan** is no different to any other Kiwi boy his age. Rugby and basketball dominate the 10-year-old Hampden Street School student's free time and he wears his green Marist Rugby Club hoodie - signed by members of the Tasman Mako team - with pride. Liam is also an amputee, caused by Amniotic Band Syndrome while still in the womb. As a result, his left arm stops halfway between the shoulder and elbow. "Basically the amniotic sac ruptured which formed a band that in Liam's

case wrapped around his arm," his mum Toni Deas said. "We didn't know until he was born - and in the end it didn't make any difference - he's been active, determined, resourceful ever since." Liam "likes all sports" and took part in the Halberg Games in Auckland in October. Liam used a prosthetic limb from the age of 10 months, but by age eight found it easier to go without when it came to most activities - including sport. Whether he is driving towards the basket or making a break for the try line - Liam has no trouble making his presence felt, even when it comes to tackling or fending off opponents. Liam said he did not view his "little arm" as a disadvantage, but rather a unique part of who he is. For Liam, the Games were an opportunity to meet kids who were facing similar challenges and seeing how they coped. Long-term he has aspirations to represent New Zealand in rugby and participating in the Paralympics - although he isn't sure which sport he will compete in just yet.

(Excerpts and photo courtesy of Stuff)



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FLYING WITH A DISABILITY

Everyone has the right to enjoy a trip abroad. Most people take holidaying to far-flung destinations for granted; it's easy to hop on a plane and jet off somewhere luxurious. For those flying with a disability, things can be slightly more challenging. But while that's the case, it shouldn't stop someone with accessibility needs from flying. It takes a bit more planning and preparation, but travelling with a disability is something which is easier than it's ever been before. A recently added link on our website includes tips on assistance available, accessible travel for UK tourists and most accessible cities in the world. Check it out on www.parking4less.com/flying-with-a-disability

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for everything you, as an amputee, need to know!

INTRODUCING NADYA VESSEY



Nadya Vessey loves to swim, to keep active, to travel, and laugh. Simply put, she loves living life. Nadya is also a double amputee. "I was born with deformed feet, of which we don't know the cause" she says. Nadya is in her late 60s and is based in Auckland. She became an amputee at the age of seven, with a single below the knee amputation. As a child she wasn't worried about having one leg. She ran around on her wooden prosthetic, which she says was a heavy, cumbersome thing, and spent a lot of her time swimming. But as a teenager, she became "terribly self conscious". "What had happened was that my lower legs didn't grow properly so my body was sort of out of proportion and I became

acutely aware that I was different." So at 16, Nadya made the choice to have her second leg amputated. The surgery put her body into proportion, added four inches to her height and boosted her self-confidence. "My whole body image changed and I was much more confident and I became a new person really. It was good." As she got older, travelling the world was always at the forefront of her mind. As fate would have it, she got a teaching job on a small island just North of Japan. So with a husband in tow, she took a chance and jumped on a plane. She returned without a husband, but with a new sense of adventure. Since then, Nadya has lived an action-packed life. She's taught English in Kyrgyzstan and lived in China. She's travelled on her own to Machu Picchu in South America, and also travelled parts of India. A few years back she went to Lebanon and worked in a Syrian refugee camp. "I like living, it's good," she says simply. "I never thought I could travel alone. I just couldn't see myself doing that and then when my husband ran off, I had to travel alone and I discovered that I really loved it. So after that I was quite fearless really about where I went and what I did."

Over the years, she's gone from having a heavy wooden prosthetic, to having two fairly light prosthetic legs that she can slip on and off at the click of a button. Weta Workshop also made her a mermaid tail to be used when swimming. "There is hope. Technology just gets better and better. We don't know how well off we are until we've lost something really." Life as an amputee is no big deal "because

it's my normal", she says. "It's not the end of the world, it really isn't. Amputees get such a lot more publicity now with runners and dancers. It's not such a taboo thing as it was in the past." Nadya's message to other amputees is that self-acceptance is the key. It's also important to get used to your prosthetic and in your mind see yourself as whole again. "Your attitude about yourself will affect the attitude of others. The most important thing is people accepting you but then, I guess I think that also goes with you accepting yourself because you are different. When you're young, you don't want to be different. But when you're older I tell you what, you do because people remember you. It's great to be different."

(Excerpts reprinted courtesy of Stuff)

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

Auckland & Northland - A social function is planned for the end of November - the first for a long time. More information will be in the newsletter due out soon. It will be a Pay your Own Way affair, with spouses and partners welcome. These used to be a regular feature but have been on hold the last few years. *(Janis Bourne, Secretary)*

Waikato, Bay of Plenty & Districts - Our annual snow trip was again a huge success, with amputees and support people coming from all over NZ. We are looking forward to organizing next year's event. Our thanks to NZALS and NZCT for their sponsorship. We have had three casual meet and greets. If you would like to attend one of these lunches please get in touch. Our end of year function will be held on 30 November in Tauranga at the Oaktree Restaurant, Greerton Motor Inn. With the help of Bevan Joyce, a Summer Amp Camp is being planned for 18/19 January at Mount Taranaki. Amputees and their families are welcome to take part - if interested contact Matt on 021 272 0666. *(Matthew Bryson, President)*

Hawke's Bay/East Coast - Back in August, our Field Officer, Geoff Hansen attended the NZALS Conference in Wellington and was asked to be part of a demonstration process known as Direct Socketing - creating a below knee limb in 2 to 3 hours as opposed to a few weeks. You can read more about Geoff's experience in our newsletter on the Federation's website. *(Jacqui D'Ath, President)*

Taranaki - A final get together is to be held on 30 November, prior to the AGM in February when a decision will be made as to the future of the Society.

Manawatu & Districts - Shaz Dagg (Sports Development Officer for Parafed Manawatu) is doing a great job in re-activating this group and each month there is an opportunity to try a new sport. Badminton was popular, and there's been blo-karting, ten pin bowling, rock-climbing, indoor rowing and 4-wheel driving. Next to be tried is wheelchair basketball and Shaz hopes to get schools interested in taking part in a tournament.

Greater Wellington Region - No recent news but the Society raised \$500 through members attending a movie fundraiser at the Lighthouse and a sausage sizzle at Mitre 10 Mega was planned for late October.

Top of the South - Following on from the last *Purpose*, we have been able to get new banners made (which look pretty cool) and also now have bumper stickers for our members. We are still meeting at the Honest Lawyer and All Clubs Marlborough once a month and we had National MP Stuart Smith and his wife Julie at the October Blenheim lunch. It was with sadness that we lost a long time member, Helen Turnbull, who passed away in July (on her 83rd birthday). That's all for now folks but remember - "one minute of anger is 60 seconds of happiness lost forever". (*Max Alty, President*)

Canterbury & Westland - We enjoyed a most successful Quiz function held at the Cranford Alehouse in mid-July and raised over \$1,500. We were also one of the selected charities to participate in the "Z" Good In The Hood promotion during the month of September so our fund-raising to assist fellow members has been going well. Our Christmas function is being held on Sunday 17 November and we are anticipating a turnout of around 50 members. C/W members have been very active in volunteering for the new Peer Support scheme and by the end of the year, we should have about 10-12 trained volunteers in our region available to support new/prospective amputees. A lead group has been established locally and a big thank you to those people who are prepared to support their fellow amputees and other volunteers - Gill Thomson, Brian Coker, Justine Mangan-Woods and Mark Bruce. (*Eileen Popplwell, Secretary*)

Otago & Southland - A quiet time at present in the south but annual get-togethers are planned in Dunedin and Invercargill later this month. (*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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