

**AMPUTEES FEDERATION OF
NEW ZEALAND INCORPORATED**

PURPOSE

**Newsletter of the
Amputees Federation of New Zealand Incorporated**



NOVEMBER 2010

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www.af.org.nz

EDITORIAL

No. 91 – November 2010

It's not very often that there's a glut of material to choose from when it comes to deciding what to put in *Purpose* but such is the case this time round.

In this issue are stories of two amputee achievers - a boxer and a motorcycle rider. There's no doubt that we could fill *Purpose* with similar stories covering a wide range of sports pursued by many of our younger members - and indeed the "not so young". As with the Commonwealth Games, the 2011 IPC Athletics World Championships in Christchurch next January and the Paralympic Games in London in 2012 are sure to produce some remarkable achievements and once again we'll be left wondering as to what limits the human body can be pushed. Good luck to all these competitors and we look forward to hearing of your successes.

Just as important is the need to recognise the achievements of the majority of amputees outside the sporting world. For many, particularly the "not so young", it is a significant achievement just to carry on a normal life under difficult circumstances. In fact, in doing so many actually achieve far more than the able-bodied.

How would you rate yourself as an achiever? Remember, it is your own determination and the goals **you** set **yourself** which count; reaching those targets can be as easy - or as difficult - as you want it to be.

Also included in this issue (pages 5-8) is a Registration Form for next year's National Conference which will be held at the Brentwood Hotel in Wellington on 25-27 March. It would be great to see a good turnout of amputees and supporters - an interesting programme has been arranged and a weekend of good company and friendship is guaranteed.

Until next time, take care, and the Peace and Blessings of Christmas be with you and your loved ones.

Lorraine Peacock

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

Auckland & Northland - A visit to Whangarei by the committee on 3 October was a great success, with 23 getting together for lunch at a cafe in the Town Basin. Another visit is planned for the future.

Waikato, Bay of Plenty & Districts - Hamilton Gardens was the venue for their August social get-together and a reasonable crowd got together for a good day out. The Committee had hired a guide who explained the different features of the gardens. Wheelchair access was good, the weather smiled on them and everyone had a great time. Secretary Stan says "The gardens are a great asset to Hamilton - put them on your agenda for your next trip!"

Hawke's Bay/East Coast - A luncheon held at Off the Track near Havelock North was attended by a mix of existing and new members and was enjoyed by all. They will be having a post-Christmas luncheon early next year.

Taranaki - We were sorry to learn of the sudden passing of Secretary Judy Ranford about the time the last issue of *Purpose* was printed. Paul Ryder has taken over the reins and we wish him well. About 20 people turned up to a mid-year lunch at the Ugly Duck Tavern in August, when National President, Wally Garrett, talked about national issues.

Manawatu - A call was out for new Committee members and a Vice President; hopefully there has been some success with these.

Wellington Regions & Wairarapa - We hope it won't be too long before we hear what's happening in the Capital.

Nelson & Marlborough - Secretary Michelle reports that everything is ticking along as usual.

Canterbury & Westland - "The Quake" has of course had a huge impact on the lives of Cantabs but Secretary Ava advises that they have not heard of any members with total devastation. As Ava says, "Who had heard of Geonet before 4 September?"

Otago & Southland - The Society purchased a TV for the waiting area at the Dunedin Limb Centre - just in time for the Commonwealth Games! Two enterprising Committee members are offering a youth mentoring programme to young amputees - in between juggling University commitments with paralympic training.

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

**SUPPORT YOUR DISTRICT AMPUTEE SOCIETY
IT SUPPORTS YOU**

DIABETES MANAGEMENT

For the year ended 30 June 2009, there were 520 major lower limb amputations in New Zealand, of which 212 were listed by the Ministry of Health as caused by diabetes (41%). Of these, 21% were for Maori and 5% were for Pacific Island people.

These figures come from the latest statistics collected by the NZ Artificial Limb Board. It is also known that diabetes is the leading cause of non-traumatic lower limb amputations in the United States where approximately 14 to 24 percent of patients with diabetes develop a foot ulcer which leads to amputation. The following article is reprinted from the Federation's publication *An Ongoing Challenge* and includes excerpts from *First Step*, a publication of the Amputee Coalition of America.

If your amputation was related to poor circulation and/or diabetes, the other leg remains at high risk for loss. The chief problem for a person with diabetes is often the loss of protective sensation in the foot. There are several basic things you can do to compensate for this.

- First, if you have diabetes, you should never walk barefoot. Carpeted and even bare floors at home may conceal hazards like needles or bits of glass that can produce injuries that go unnoticed until a limb-threatening abscess forms.
- Second, you should examine your foot carefully every day for evidence of injury or redness indicating areas of excess pressure or friction. If your eyesight has been affected by diabetes, have a family member or friend do this for you.
- Third, see an orthotist and obtain properly fitted shoes which should be custom moulded if you have any prominent foot bones or a history of foot ulcers.
- Fourth, shake out your shoes each day before putting them on to dislodge any objects, such as pebbles, before they can produce an ulcer.

If a foot ulcer occurs, treatment must be prompt and effective to avoid limb-threatening infection. A foot abscess in someone with diabetes is a dire emergency requiring prompt, wide surgical drainage to save as much of the foot as possible. Unfortunately, many people with diabetes, because of denial related to the loss of protective sensation in the foot, fail to seek help for initially minor infections for days or weeks until it may become impossible to save the foot.



Another major action that people with diabetes can take to reduce the chance of a second amputation is keeping their blood sugar levels under tight control. Constant high blood sugar levels lead directly to blindness, kidney failure and loss of foot

sensation ending in amputation. High sugar levels also interfere with white blood cell functions, impairing the body's ability to ward off infection.

In your zeal to take the best possible care of your remaining foot, do not forget your residual limb and its partner, your prosthesis. At the interface where they meet, the residual limb may endure hundreds to thousands of weight-bearing and sliding forces during the usual day of walking. Because the lack of protective sensation in people with diabetes may extend into the residual limb, a daily skin check for any redness indicating friction or excessive pressure is required. These or any other problems not immediately solved by sock adjustments should send you promptly to your prosthetist for evaluation. If skin ulceration has occurred, you should immediately stop walking on your prosthesis and seek medical advice. Continued use of the prosthesis can turn an inconvenience of a few days into weeks of healing or even revision surgery.

These suggested precautions provide a blueprint for maintaining your other foot indefinitely by stopping the vicious cycle of events leading to amputation. The first step, however, is to accept the fact that no-one should care more about your foot than you. If you can also overcome the human tendency to deny the possibility of a second amputation, you are halfway to your goal of preventing it, despite the statistics. The time to get serious about it is now.

OUR THANKS to the NZ Lottery Grants Board, the Rehabilitation Welfare Trust, and Pub Charity, for their recent grants. Without such assistance, our functioning and support to District Societies would be severely limited.

PUBLICATIONS available (no cost) from the National Coordinator or District 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 10 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)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR and any other contributions to *Purpose* are every welcome. If you have anything to share with readers, please send it to the Editor at 213A Bay View Road, St Clair, Dunedin, fax to (03) 455-9547 or email to lorrystan@xtra.co.nz



NATIONAL CONFERENCE

**Brentwood Hotel
WELLINGTON**

25-27 MARCH 2011

Grab a Cheap Air Fare and
Join us for a Weekend of

FRIENDSHIP AND FUN

Interesting Speakers Arranged
Plus a Morning of Sightseeing

SEND IN YOUR REGISTRATION NOW!
(see pages 7/8)

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Friday Evening 25 March

Official Opening by the Hon. Tariana Turia -
Minister for Disability Issues
Meet and Greet

Saturday 26 March

Morning

National Council Meeting

Afternoon

Innovative Treatments for Phantom Limb Pain
Chronic Pain Team, Wellington Hospital, CCDHB

NZ Artificial Limb Board Update -
Mervyn Monk, Chief Executive

Evening

Conference Dinner
Musical Entertainment by
Andre Mendes da Costa

Sunday 27 March

Morning

Wellington City & Coastline Tour
concluding with lunch at the Copthorne Hotel



REGISTRATION FORM

Complete and return, together with registration payment,
by Saturday 12 February 2011

Name(s)

Address

Phone No.

Email

ACCOMMODATION (\$135.70 per night)

Required for nights of

Number of People

(Please indicate if a disability unit is required)

MEALS

Payment for the following meals is required with registration. All other meals, including accommodation, will be charged to the rooms of those staying in the hotel.

Saturday Lunch	\$20.50
Saturday Dinner	\$45.00
Sunday Lunch	\$20.50

(All prices include GST)

To:

The National Coordinator
Amputees Federation of New Zealand Inc.
213a Bay View Road
St Clair
Dunedin 9012

Enclosed is cheque for \$ to cover the following:

- Saturday Lunch
..... (number of people) at \$20.50 per person \$
- Saturday Dinner
..... (number of people) at \$45.00 per person \$
- Sunday Lunch
..... (number of people) at \$20.50 per person \$
- Total Payment enclosed** \$

(Please make cheque payable to the Amputees Federation of NZ Inc.)

SEND IN YOUR REGISTRATION
BY SATURDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2011

Your Registration Form will be returned to you, together with a receipt

INTRODUCING GEORGE TAAMARU by Janis Bourne

Like everyone, George Taamaru has a story to tell. Born in Rarotonga in 1973, the second eldest of eight siblings, George had a passion for rugby - All Black Buck Shelford was his idol. At the age of 14 George worked mowing in an orchard, earning a grand total of \$30 per week; this was saved until he had \$125 for the purchase of a pair of Buck Shelford Rugby Boots. He then got a job in a bakery, earning \$400 per week, and when asked about returning to complete his education, he declined. Life was much more interesting, earning money, playing rugby - what more could a lad want or need? George's mother struggled with an alcoholic husband and George was also struggling to financially support himself and family with his earnings. Life changed after a motorcycle accident at the age of 17. George lost two months of his life while he was in a coma; he woke with his left leg amputated. Being fit and determined, George's greatest goal was to continue with his sports. Power lifting became his sport of choice.



George had to travel to New Zealand for limb fittings on a regular basis. As this was expensive and time consuming he decided it would be better to move to New Zealand to live, but he returns to his county of origin, Rarotonga, every year. During his stay in New Zealand he has achieved a great deal, not only in the sporting field but also academically. He has a Diploma in Business Management and Office Function from the Auckland University of Technology and is currently studying for a Diploma of Therapeutic Massage and Sport at New Zealand College of Massage.

From 1999 to 2008, George has attended three Paralympic Games, two Commonwealth Games, two World Championship events, two Asia Pacific Championship events and two European championship events, representing New Zealand in the Power Lifting Bench Press. For the last four years George has been involved in boxing and is encouraging other above or below knee amputees. George had a win against Raymond Green at Panmure Lagoon Stadium on 21 August this year and has a video of the event. George wears a "peg leg" whereas Raymond has a full prosthetic foot. "That foot work got me!" says George. "I was so engrossed in the feet; I forgot to look what was happening with the upper body and suddenly Raymond was on the mat." The demonstration bout was part of a corporate event being hosted by Team Attitude Boxing Club. George believes this sport is the beginning of bigger things for the future of single lower leg amputees. He is looking for an event to qualify him for the next Paralympic Games in the UK in 2012, which could be shot put or discus. One of his many goals is to form a training centre for Physically Challenged Persons.

DISABILITY-RELATED INFORMATION

The updated version of the Weka website managed by Enable NZ (www.weka.net.nz) has a link on it to the Disability Funding Information website that provides useful information regarding specialised equipment and housing modifications.

- *Information Centres* links regional centres that are able to provide in-depth knowledge of local disability services and agencies.
- *Equipment* suppliers are listed by category and provide contact details and access to websites and online product catalogues.
- *Info by Topic* is a new category that will be used to list disability related information on employment, education, travel, living with a disability, new to disability etc.
- *Support* lists disability providers and agencies by region and by services provided and is being constantly updated as new information comes to hand.
- *Library* provides access to the Enable NZ free library service that contains many books and DVDs that are available to be loaned by the general public.
- *Resources for Maori* lists agencies that provide services with a focus on Maori with disabilities.
- *News and Events* is a medium that can be used to promote and publicise events that are of interest to the disability community at large.

DISABILITY ALLOWANCE

The Disability Allowance is for people who have an ongoing disability that is likely to last at least six months and who need help with everyday tasks or ongoing medical care. If you're on a benefit (e.g. Invalid, Sickness, Domestic Purposes), you'll usually qualify for a Disability Allowance. If you're not on a benefit or are getting NZ Super or the War Veteran's Pension, you and your partner's income must be under a certain limit. To learn about the Disability Allowance, talk to your GP, phone Work & Income on 0800 559 009, or visit www.workandincome.govt.nz

MOBILITY PARKING PERMITS

MCCS Disability Action advises that as from 1 October this year, the fees for mobility parking permit increased to \$50 for the long-term permit (5 years) and \$35 for the short-term permit (up to 12 months). The Amputees Federation of NZ strongly believes that permanent life-time permits should be available and will continue to lobby for this - to be reviewed should it ever become possible to grow another limb!

FIVE TOE CROW STICKS WITH PASSION FOR MOTORCYCLES

Contributed by Kathryn Stewart (Doug Crow's email is flybmw@comcast.net)

Doug "Five Toe" Crow is mad about motorcycles. He got his first bike in the 1960s when he was 15 years old and has barely stopped riding since, except during intense bouts of surgery. Crow, a US native, suffered a horrific road accident in 1981 when he rolled his pick-up truck three times, crushing his legs that had become lodged outside the cab. Crow walked again, despite doctors' expectations, but in 2005 his left leg was surgically removed below the knee, due in part to his existing injuries and compounding health issues. After years of living with chronic pain, Crow says he was mentally prepared for the amputation. "They wanted to amputate 25 years before. I'd had use of it for 25 years, but I was frustrated for 25 years too. I was in pain every day and I was taking strong pain medication. Ever since the amputation I've been happy," he says.

Learning to walk again with a prosthetic leg was a slow and painful process that had to be mastered before getting back on his motorcycle. But, it was only hours after his surgery that Crow turned his attention to making that possible. With no ankle function in his left prosthetic, Crow needed to find a way to operate the gear shifter. Hand operated, electric shifters were available, but Crow wanted his riding experience to be as natural as possible. A friend installed a heel-toe shifter on Crow's BMW K1100LT, but its design was difficult to operate. Determined to make it work, Crow tried re-positioning the shifter several splines up the transmission shaft. This allowed him to tuck his toe under the toe piece and lift up with his knee for up-shifting, and put his foot on top to down-shift. He then attached a length of copper tubing to the shifter so he would not have to "hunt" for it every time he changed gear. These modifications proved to be a lasting solution for Crow. "If you were riding next to me it would look like I was shifting normally. Where regular people shift with their ankle and move their ankle up and down, I lift my knee up and down to do the same thing," he says. In 2006, just seven months after his amputation, Crow was on his motorcycle riding from Olympia, Washington, to Key West, Florida, 3,700 kilometres away. That same year, he won the Grand Tour Award at the international BMW rally's riders' mileage contest after clocking up over 72,000 kilometres in about four months. This record still stands and it is one that Crow aims to beat at the next international rally in 2016.

While Crow was initially hesitant about getting back on his bike, giving away his favourite pastime was not an option. "I still had the riding skills in my head. Once I got everything adapted to my leg, I was fine. All I had to do was get out there and ride and become accustomed to it. Riding with the prosthetic was just another learning process," he says. For Crow, there is nothing as exhilarating as being on his motorcycle and he encourages other disabled riders to persevere in finding the right modifications for them. "Get back on your bike," he says. "You're only limited by your own limitations."

BILL LANGENHORST WALKS FOR FIRST TIME AFTER PROSTHETIC LEG IMPLANTED INTO HIS BODY

by Grant McArthur – Herald Sun (with acknowledgement to the C/W Society)

A 50-YEAR-OLD father has taken his first steps in seven years thanks to a revolutionary new prosthetic leg implanted into his body. Eight months ago, Bill Langenhorst became one of the first Australians fitted with a permanent prosthetic leg, fused inside his body to the tiny piece of leg bone near his hip in a ground-breaking new procedure. The Swedish pioneer of the procedure was flown to The Alfred for the surgery, which was followed by months of painful rehabilitation and strengthening exercises. The Pambula diesel mechanic was repairing a giant machine used to rip trees out of the ground when it sparked into action and ripped his leg off. Mr Langenhorst's injuries were so severe he couldn't be fitted with a prosthetic leg.

Based on a procedure developed by his father in the 1960s to implant false teeth, Swedish surgeon Rickard Branemark pioneered an operation that saw a titanium fixture implanted inside Mr Langenhorst's remaining femur, which was then left for six months to allow living bone to regrow and incorporate the metal as part of his body. In a second operation in December last year Mr Branemark returned to oversee a titanium abutment added to the fixture, extending out of Mr Langenhorst's body where it is bolted to a prosthetic leg capable of replicating a normal human walk. Outside his body, the rest of the leg is similar to other hi-tech prosthetics - where pressure applied to the toe at the start of each step triggers movement in a complex knee joint. Plastic surgeon Michael Leung said seeing Mr Langenhorst walk was a victory for The Alfred's entire surgery and rehabilitation team, although the cost and complexity of the operation meant it would be restricted to cases conventional prostheses cannot help. We are the only team in Australia who could do it, and it is not something that has come in the last year. It is something we have worked towards for the past 10 years," Mr Leung said. There has not been a template to fall back on so we have had to struggle through, so it is gratifying to see."

Mr Langenhorst is expected to develop his walking over the next two months so he will never need crutches again, no matter where he plans to venture. "I haven't forgotten how to walk, but it is something I have to re-learn," he said. "It's the freedom of going back to the handyman-type of life I lived without restriction. "I am looking forward to standing at a workbench and being able to do what I want to do without having to put down crutches. "It's all these little things - I can finally stand up and have a coffee, carry a plate, or even hold a beer in my hand. There's not a word for it really, it's just weird," an ecstatic Mr Langenhorst said. "I didn't know what to do because I hadn't stood on it for seven years, and I didn't know what was going to happen. It will mean freedom again."

AFFILIATED DISTRICT SOCIETIES

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Wellington Regions & Wairarapa	Sue Collins 139 Makarini Street Paraparaumu 5032 Phone (04) 902-4048

**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.**