



GIMPY

SPRING 2004

Hope you had some Happy Holidays,
and best wishes in the coming Year! - Stumps



Werner Luxbacher (Stumps member from Germany) sends all his picturesque greetings!

HandicapSkating for Mobility Challenges

By Troy Wilkes

Last June marked the 20th anniversary to the most defining event in my life, an accident whereby I was left with multiple pelvic fractures and a cracked sacroiliac joint. At that time, Biomechanics wasn't available to help the mobility challenged deal with catastrophic injuries and the only thing my Orthopedic Surgeon indicated to me was to avoid the pounding of ballistic motions such as Running. Furthermore, it was indicated to me that since I was a Yoga practitioner it was best for me to heal myself.

In 1991, I started commuting to work on the train while using skates (MetroBlades) to get to/from the train. Instantly, I knew that skates were a viable mobility aid for my mobility impairment. Unfortunately, everyone thought I was insane and said "How can skating be easier on you than walking?" I would give my testimony and people would shrug it off. In 2001, after an accident, I contacted Public Transit trying to facilitate my ability to get to the Doctor by using skates on the Bus. I was resoundingly refused by them citing that it would only be acceptable if I were in a wheelchair, this resulting in me enduring many hardships due to their obstinacy.

In 2003, I got pissed because prior to my accident and briefly afterwards I regularly ran 4+ miles and the runner's spirit flows through my veins. Since 1991, I had regularly skated 10+ miles because it simulates the running feeling, but reduces up to 90% of the compression force on the pelvis and sacroiliac joints. During the summer of 2003, I experienced a Friday Night Skate (The Midnight Rollers) and was hooked. Since Public Transit is the only way for me to get to this event and their refusal to give me equal access is discrimination. I am now hosting <http://www.HandicapSkater.com>, which discusses the Biomechanics of walking, running, and skating and demonstrates it through kinematic models (moving diagrams).

My objective is to get skates recognized as a "common wheelchair", to which I have many organizations whereby I have sole permission to use skates in this manner. Of course, I have many notes and several badges that I must carry with me at all times to achieve this distinction and it is a problem. I want testimonials from people with mobility challenges that use skates to get around, so that I can expand the knowledge base of how skates help people with mobility challenges. I was amazed when I heard James Prial is a Midnight Roller with an amputation challenge and would love to have testimonials of amputee victims successfully overcoming their challenges. On my website I will shortly have a Registration page that you can fill out that will help expand this knowledge base and possibly be incorporated in a class action lawsuit.

From the Guestbook, a message board at www.stumps.org:

Hello everyone and Merry Christmas. I would first like to thank you Dan for this glorious web site good idea. This message is for anyone out there struggling to find out how they are going to pay for a prosthesis. There is a program it should be in every state run by your local Department of labor in whatever state you are in. It is called Vocational Rehabilitation. They will purchase you a prosthesis and help you find a job. Since we all know when you have an amputation you are out of work for a few months unless you are able to work from home or they will send you to the school of your choice for training. It is funded 80% Federal and 20% State taxes. Since we are all taxpayers please check out this program in your state. Just some helpful advice. I know that prosthetics are very expensive. Happy Holidays...Carmen

Jan Barlage – Amputee Skater

I “met” amputee Jan Barlage through his email request about amputee skating technique..let Jan tell his story in his own words:

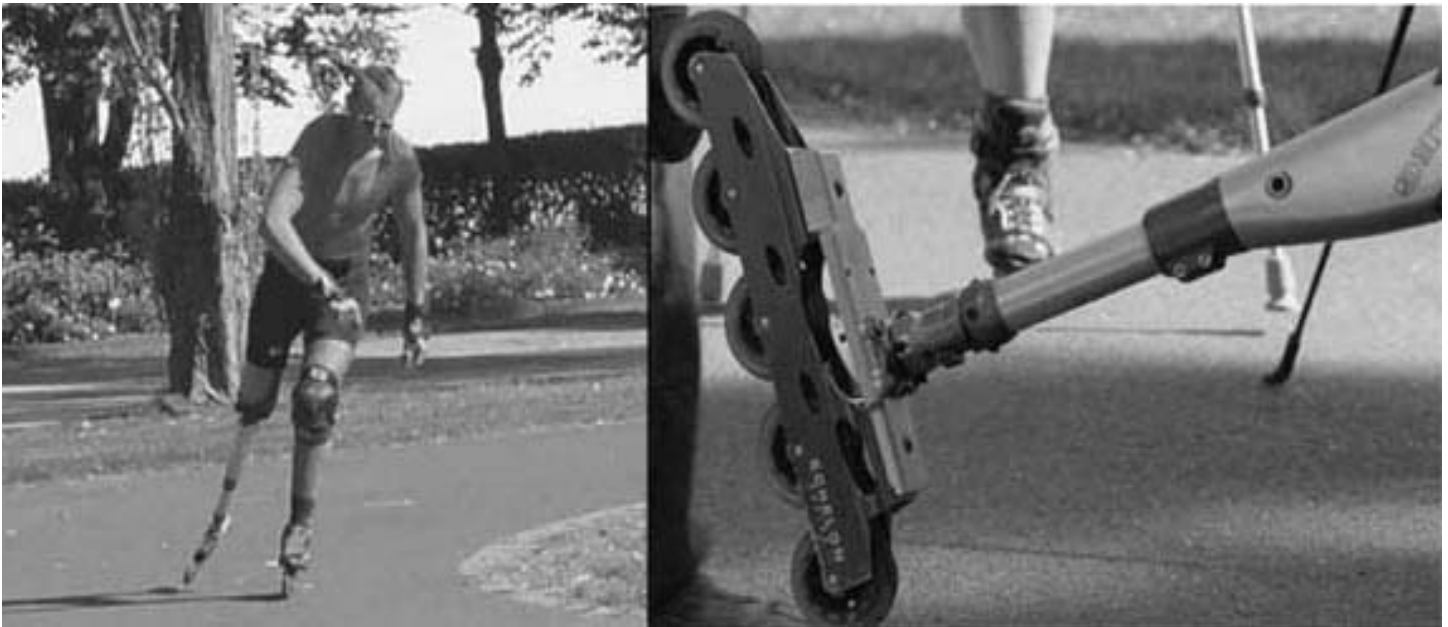
“Here some short facts about me: Age 36, Management Consultant. Above knee amputee after motorbike accident in may 2001. Because I suffered a nerve damage in my left leg at this accident too, I had to stay 1 year in hospital and rehabilitation. In December 2001 I received my first prosthetic with a Total-Knee and I can stay vertical first time after 7 month. My hard training enables me that the nerve damage is today nearly cured. In february 2002 I received the C-Leg. In may 2002 I continued working as consultant in the same way like before the crash. I always made intensely ice speedskating and inline speed-skating. In my last inline skate race I have a marathon time of 1h8min. Now I wanna do something with the artificial leg. So I started mountainbiking in July 2002 and made my first trip to Crete in October 2002. This means riding 7 days through rough terrain with 30-70Km/day and 6000 hm (high meters; (up an down)) this week. That was not so bad, so that I sometimes must wait for the other guys. During 2003 I made several mountainbike-trips to the Alpes and other lokations. But my really sport profession is inline speed skating. So I cogitated how I can manage it. The construction at that pix are the really first result. In September 2003 I skated 70 rounds at the 300m circuit. The speed increased up to 25 Km/h. Now we know (my prosthetics “Andre Szabo” and I) what we have to do. For ex. without any foot hinge its to risky because you must hit the right angle placing the skate at the ground, otherwise you get overbalance to the back. Next steps are finding a good position on the skateframe and the right angle of the knee up to that point its possible giving max. pressure in the knee and the skate. Because it is most important being in a more inflected position.

That's it :-), more pix and albums you'll find here...

<http://www.pixum.de/viewalbum/?id=997310>

thanks, jan

And thank you, Jan for such an inspiring and remarkable story! Skate on!!



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No Handicapping This Field

by Steve Rushin

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SOME YEARS ago, while waiting on the 1st tee of a Minneapolis golf course, my threesome was joined by a man with one arm, which he used as the front arm of his practice swing, sweeping the club forward in a graceful parabola, in the manner of Steffi Graf hitting a backhand, or a matador throwing open his cape. When the amputee spanked his first drive 225 yards down the fairway, my brother turned to me and whispered, with a deep sense of foreboding, "We're about to get our asses kicked by a guy with one arm." And so we did.

I thought of that man last week, at the National Amputee Golf Championship, at which I met the one-armed, one-legged, four-fingered Bob MacDermott, who was shocked by high-tension wires on his Edmonton farm 16 years ago. "The worst part wasn't taking 15,000 volts," he said. "On the way to the hospital the ambulance blew two tires and threw me out the back. *That's* when I thought, Game over. I'm playing that big golf course in the sky."

Yet there he was last week-drinking a Harp, not playing one-, at Hazeltine National Golf Club near Minneapolis. A seven-handicapper before his accident, MacDermott, who plays with a prosthetic arm and leg, is now a one. This summer, he shot a six-under 65 to win the championship at his club, Belvedere. He even qualified for the Alberta Open. The 47-year-old really *has* become a one-legged man in an ass-kicking contest. "Hands", he told me, after a windswept round of 74, "get in the way of a golf swing." "I used to spray the ball all over the place." said 49-year-old Dan Caputo, a railroad switchman, of the years *before* he lost his right arm between two boxcars in 1984. "Now I'm right down the middle." Indeed, in the first round last week, Caputo, playing with a prosthesis, aced the par-3 17th at Hazeltine and hightailed it off the course immediately after putting out on 18. "We were worried we'd have to buy a round for everyone," said his wife, Kim. Have you seen the price of drinks at this place?"

All manner of athletic marvels were gathered at Hazeltine. "What this thing does to a football is *awesome*, said spectator Dave Reinhart, thumping his prosthetic leg on a folding chair. "I get hang time in the three digits." To Reinhart, I was a TAB, a Temporarily Able-Bodied person. To Patrice Cooper, the left-arm amputee and seven-time Hazeltine club champion (six with one arm) who lured the tournament to her home club, I was a "normie" ironic shorthand for normal person. And single-leg amputees, who generally shoot the lowest scores at this tournament? "We call them normies-with-a-limp, said Cooper. "They don't get *any* sympathy on the golf course."

The 55th National Amputee Golf Championship was contested among 165 men and women from every limp of life. "This tournament is usually played in a warm-weather spot," said Cooper, 50, who lost her arm to cancer 16 years ago. "And at the hotel, around the pool, all you see are these prosthetic legs, leaning against deck chairs." Though the golfers came from 32 states and nine nations, they shared a sense of humor that was - there is no other word for it - disarming. The one-legged Reinhart said he *literally* has one foot in the grave. But he's also missing two fingers, and so, when I asked him his age, he paused for a very long time before saying 53. "I'm not good at counting," he explained. "I can only count to 13. [Smile.] Fourteen on a good day."

Moe Clayton of Richmond lost his golf scholarship at Vanderbilt ("bad grades") and then both legs in Vietnam (in 1970) and now buys a new pair of prosthetic gams every year. "And every year," said his buddy George Willoughby, a leg amputee from North Carolina, "Moe *gets* an inch taller. He was 5' 8" when the military took him. Now he's 6'4"."

(cont'd next page)

When the PGA Championship was played at Hazeltine last year, Tour players were tended to by on-site equipment repair specialists. So too, last week, were the amputees, who availed themselves of a prosthesis-repair tent at the turn. "People are coming in for lube jobs, said Cara Koski, tournament publicist, escorting me into the tent. "They'll ask, 'Can you duct tape this for me?' "

The men's and women's winners of the three-day, 54-hole tournament were two normies-with-a-limp. Twenty-one-year-old Kenny Green of Clarksville, Tenn. (73-76-74), had his left foot amputated below the ankle at birth and said of the field, "I am just in shock at the skills of some of these players." Twenty-two-year-old Kim Moore of Fort Wayne, Ind. (76-89-77), who lost her right foot at birth, said, "Doctors thought I wouldn't walk, until I started walking on my stump, pushing a Fisher-Price shopping cart." She was two at the time. Last month the aspiring pro missed the cut at Q school by five strokes.

"All golfers are after the same thing," said the unsinkable MacDermott, who finished third (74-75-77) among the men. And we all find that Eden equally-eternally-elusive. "People ask me if I throw my clubs, said Patrice Cooper, after removing her golf-specific prosthetic arm, which locks onto her club shaft. "I always tell them no. By the time I get it out of the clamp, I've calmed down."

Letters, We Get Letters!

Dan,

I just found your website and had to write. My brother Dan (age 36, father of 4-year-old Jake & husband of Shirl) just had his right leg amputated below the knee yesterday at Lancaster General Hospital in Lancaster, PA. Dan's friend was driving when his corvette was hit by a semi truck on Saturday night (or they hit the truck, still unclear what happened). Both were thrown clear of the car, which was crushed, and would probably be dead if they had been wearing seatbelts, according to police. Dan has a great attitude -- he says he should be dead so why should he be upset about losing his leg? Shirl, too, has a very positive attitude. She feels lucky he is still alive. Dan owns a garage and has three mechanics working for him. He also feels lucky it wasn't a hand -- hard to be a mechanic with no hand. Anyway, I just wanted to tell you how happy I was to find a website that is positive. I am a therapist but have never dealt with this kind of situation before. Do you have any advice or websites you can suggest that would help me help Dan & his wife deal with the changes ahead? Thanks in advance for any assistance, & again, it's so great to see such a positive attitude! - Jeanne

Jeanne,

Your brother Dan has the right (and only) attitude he can have. He is obviously an optimistic, bright realist who navigates through life effortlessly. We all do that here at Stumps 'R Us. I founded the organization in 1988 because I could not find anything positive out there for amputees like me so I created this whimsical global support group. It has grown like Topsy. Since the founding of Stumps 'R Us another national organization came in to being. They have an on line Web site home and produce two monthly publications SPECIFICALLY for amputees. They are the ACA (Amputee Coalition of America). Their monthly magazines are IN MOTION & FIRST STEP. Their toll free phone number is: (888) 267-5669 Their E-mail address is: editor@amputee-coalition.org. Their Internet address is: <http://www.amputee-coalition.org>. Be sure you have Dan read my story published on the Stumps 'R Us Web site. If I do say so myself, it is as whimsical and inspiring as are our global membership. Looking forward to hearing from you again, Dan Sorkin, www.stumps.org, Chief Stump

"When the eagles are silent, the parrots begin to jabber" - Sir Winston Churchill

Silicone Liners and BK Suction Sockets

By James Prial

In 1982, my left leg was amputated below the knee after a motorcycle accident. SF General Hospital did the surgery, and sent me to the Dan Muth Company (now closed) to be fitted for a prosthetic. Years later, I realized how lucky I had been to be sent there! The Dan Muth Company was owned and run by the late Leo Beaudoin, also a BK amputee. Leo developed and pioneered a type of suction socket for below knee amputees. Many above knee amps use suction to hold their sockets on, but Leo was one of the first prosthetists to use that method for attaching a below knee socket. I was lucky enough to receive this type of leg... To use a bk suction leg with a silicone liner, first of all, the fit has to be exact. There are no socks to help adjust either a tight or loose fit – your socket must fit right, else grinding or padding the socket will be necessary. Assume you have a good fit, and it's time to put on your leg. First, lube your stump, with something you can put on your skin all day – I use Aloe Vera gel. Baby oil (without fragrance!), hand lotion, and many other lubricants may work, you would have to experiment for a while and find out what works best for you. Then, slip on your silicone liner, making sure it is on securely and aligned correctly. Misalignment of even a ¼ inch could cause an uncomfortable wearing! Then, liberally squirt some rubbing alcohol into your socket to lubricate that, and slide your stump and liner into the socket, usually while seated. Stand up, put full weight on your pros., and roll up your suspension sleeve. The suspension sleeve (also made of silicone) is necessary because even the best fitting socket will lose suction at times, usually at extreme range of motion. That's it; you're now ready for 8 to 12 hours of activity if you fell up to it!

The level of activity possible with a suction socket is remarkable, so let me remark on it. Since the fit is so close, your range of motion vs. a suspension socket is much greater. Along with the increased motion range comes a vastly increased comfort level. Without the socks, straps, and belts frequently used with suspension sockets, I can move with greater freedom and less soreness. I try to limit my wearings to 12 hours max, because the skin needs to “breathe” a bit of such a long enclosure. An hour breathing time is ideal, but can be shortened occasionally. Are there cons to wearing below knee suction? Hmm. Well, some people experience skin irritation more with silicone liners than with socks. The “breathing time” may not be acceptable for some people. Sweat buildup inside the liner may cause slippage; this is not a problem for me living in the San Francisco Bay area. (I have even done hour long advanced aerobic classes and sweat was not a problem).

Although Leo and the Dan Muth Company are no more, development and fabrication of below knee suction sockets is still being done at San Francisco Prosthetics and Orthotics, owned and operated by Wayne Koniuk. Wayne worked at the Dan Muth Company when they began making below knee suction legs, and has been making my legs and liners for several years now.

The legs were first manufactured using a liner made out of Pelite, which was fixed into the socket. My first few legs had Pelite liners. Pelite was fairly comfortable; it's kind of like stiff foam. Actually, small patches of Pelite were customarily used to pad sore spots or add thickness to sockets, and then someone probably thought, “Well, why don't we make the whole liner out of Pelite ?” Pelite works well enough, although its stiffness eliminates the ability of the liner to “merge” with your stump. Changes in stump size during the day could cause major changes in comfort level. Pelite is semi-porous, so the liner is difficult to keep clean. Pelite isn't used too much anymore, due to the availability of silicone liners.

Silicone liners are usually transparent, and are not fixed to the socket. They are extremely pliable, and can accommodate changes in stump size by “squeezing”. The liner fits like a second skin, and can be worn comfortably all day. They are easy to keep clean, I rinse mine out with rubbing alcohol daily. Wayne has recently developed an advanced blend of silicone, with an extreme increase in pliability. The fit is so good that I have to peel the liner off when I remove the leg. There is no slippage between stump and liner.

I am glad that research and development of BK Suction Sockets / Silicone Liners is still going on, as the prosthetics that I wear have continually improved over the years, and I hope that this continues!

Focus on Support Groups by Julie Wiest - Using Humor to Heal: Stumps `R Us

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"We're a nonprofit corporation dedicated to aiding and uniting slightly inconvenienced people around the world," says Dan Sorkin, "Chief Stump" of Stumps `R Us, a support group that uses humor to help amputees. The group's unique approach seems to help.

It started in 1989 and already has 275 members who live in the San Francisco Bay area, as well as members who live in 22 other states and 15 foreign countries. It all began with Sorkin, who saw the need for this kind of support group and used his positive attitude to show other amputees that they can still have a lot of fun after an amputation. "I've learned since my own amputation that I had a choice," Sorkin says. "I could either feel sorry for myself or be a pain to everyone, or I could choose to have a positive outlook and get on with my life. That's the whole substance and purpose of Stumps `R Us." Sorkin lost his left leg in 1968 in Novato, California, when he crashed a motorcycle moving at about 1000 miles per hour and broke almost every bone in his body. After five months in the hospital and numerous attempts by doctors to save his leg, he asked them to amputate. Though they refused because they thought there was a chance to save the leg, Sorkin knew that, even if his leg were saved, it would be uncomfortable, if not painful, for the rest of his life. So he found a doctor in Seattle, orthopedic surgeon Ernest Burgess (who invented the Seattle Foot and has since passed away), who would amputate. "I booked an airplane, got up there on Wednesday, he sawed the leg off on Thursday, and he had me up and walking on Friday," He says.

While in the hospital, Sorkin began comforting and encouraging other amputees and those who were facing amputations. "Because of my attitude in the hospital - both before and after the surgery - they asked me if I would visit amputees in the hospital to let them know what it was like," he says. "I just assumed that every hospital or every city had people like me doing things that I was doing, but I found out much later that just wasn't the case." He did find, though, that most hospitals and cities had support groups, and when he visited one, he had a very bad experience. A broadcaster for 50 years, he described the meeting on a radio show he was doing at the time. "I was talking about a support group that I had been invited to that was the most depressing, boring thing I'd ever been to in my life," he says. "The people, only about nine of them, sat around in a circle just whining and complaining." Soon after that, he and his wife drove past a Toy's "R" Us toy store, and Stumps `R Us was born. When he tried the name out on his show, he received mixed opinions about the name from listeners, but Sorkin says, "I stuck with Stumps `R Us because I thought it was as whimsical as I wanted the organization to be."

The meetings are just as creative and different as the group's name. Once a month, members get together in the San Francisco Bay area for events like in-line skating and bowling parties, instead of formal meetings. "The whole idea is to get together in a social setting and exchange information," Sorkin says. "And there's lots of laughter." Members get the opportunity to talk informally with each other about what kind of amputations they have, what types of prostheses they use, what techniques they have learned for dealing with different problems (like trouble balancing, phantom pain and residual-limb ulcers), and other topics. They also snowboard, snow ski, or just meet for lunch and listen to a guest speaker. "Last year, one of our lunches was aboard the aircraft carrier, The Hornet, and on the flight deck they have an F-18 simulator," Sorkin says.

"We had most of the amputees flying the simulator, in addition to touring the whole ship." Most of the monthly events draw approximately 40 to 45 people, except for the annual pool party, which draws about 70 to 80 people. One of the best things about the pool party is that a lot of family members attend, and the children of amputees have the opportunity to talk to other children who have parents like theirs.

Most amputees hear about the group through word-of-mouth. Sorkin still visits amputees in hospitals, as do other Stumps `R Us members. In addition, amputees are referred to the group by surgeons, social workers, prosthetists and physical therapists. New members have the chance to participate in the group's special aviation program. Sorkin is a certified flight instructor and can fly commercial, single-engine, multiple-engine and glider airplanes, as well as hot air balloons, so he offers new members their first hour of flight instruction in a four-passenger plane. "I get them out to the airport, put them in the airplane, and give the flight instruction in shorts so they really see that I am an amputee," he says. "The difference from the time they get into the airplane until the time they get out of it after the hour is just remarkable because they see they can do it with a prosthesis."

Some of the members of Stumps `R Us also make a big difference to other amputees by setting a good examples. Alan Fisk, for example, is a quadruple amputee and the athletic director for the group. And Mike Penketh, a pilot and Formula One racecar driver before losing both hands, used prosthetic hands to build his own aerobatic aircraft, which he flies in competitions. "We have such great role models," Sorkin says. "We have guys like Mike and Alan, and if you're only missing an arm or a leg, or even two legs, and you see what these people do, then you don't feel like what's happened to you is very traumatic at all."

Members pay \$30 a year, which covers the daily operating costs, the aviation program, and the publication of *Gimpy*, the group's quarterly newsletter. They also receive a membership card and an invitation to all Stumps `R Us events. Stumps `R Us also has an interactive Web site that allows amputees to connect with each other all around the world. Sorkin says the Web site receives about 3,000 hits, or visitors, each day. It was created nine years ago after Sorkin met Joe Feigon, who agreed to maintain the Web site for free. Feigon's wife had an uncle who was an amputee, and the three attended a Stumps `R Us meeting, where Sorkin and Feigon met. Feigon was impressed with Sorkin and the group. "It works because of people with positive attitudes who are willing to help and Dan's make-it-happen attitude," Feigon says.

In addition to the volunteer assistance, Sorkin appreciates the help of certified prosthetists Wayne Koniuk and Julie Chandler of San Francisco Prosthetics. Sorkin also says it would be difficult to run Stumps `R Us without his wife, Jody. "She helps with everything, and she attends every function," he says. Sorkin's primary goal for the future is to raise money for the organization. He would like to be able to pay for all of the group's activities and plan some bigger and better ones, but the group just doesn't have the money.

For now, the group members will continue to have fun while they help one another. And Sorkin will always try to get his uplifting message across to amputees in the San Francisco Bay area, across the country, and around the world. "Losing a part of you doesn't change your character. In fact, it doesn't change very much of anything. If it does anything at all, it heightens the other senses you have," he says. "We just don't take what's happened to us very seriously."

**If you have a story, an idea for a story, photograph, or even a question,
email Stumps R Us GIMPY Editor James Prial at
jamesprial@earthlink.net**

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