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Bill Scherrer

Home For The Holidays!

By Ann M. Ciotoli

Public Relations Coordinator,
HealthSouth Hospitals of Pittsburgh

Bill Scherrer describes Christmas of 2008 as one of his "best ever".

The 6'7 amputee was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident over 30 years ago where he suffered significant trauma to his right leg and faced multiple surgeries including the fusion of his right knee and ankle. For the 20 years following his accident, Bill continued working as a maintenance mechanic despite severe leg pain. Unable to bend his knee, Bill began putting extra stress on his shoulders and left leg causing additional pain issues. In 2001, Bill reluctantly made the decision to retire at the age of 51 due to persistent difficulties with walking and pain management.

For the next several years, Bill accepted his fate and went on with his life trying to overcome his impaired walking. In July 2008, Bill was informed he had a serious bacterial infection in his right leg. Despite multiple failed attempts with antibiotics, the infection progressed and on September 19, 2008, he agreed to have his leg amputated just above the knee. Bill describes his operation as almost a "relief". "Dr. Watson from St. Margaret's Hospital was my surgeon and recommended that I also have nerve blocks done at the time of the amputation," said Bill. "I am very fortunate in that I have not experienced any phantom pain, just some mild sensations."

Following his surgery, Bill was admitted to HealthSouth Harmarville's Amputee Program for a 2 week period of pre-prosthetic training and rehabilitation which involved learning how to care for the amputated limb, beginning to walk, using a walker and crutches and performing self-care



activities including transfers, dressing and bathing. Bill then returned home where he continued exercising and preparing for his prosthetic device to arrive. According to James Kreshon Jr., D.O. and Director of Harmarville's Amputee Program, "Following an amputation, the limb requires shaping in order for the prosthesis to fit properly. We need to ensure the limb is adequately healed and certain no breakdown occurs during prosthetic training. The patient is issued a shrinker that

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shapes the limb and can also decrease any pain the he or she might be experiencing.” Dr. Kreshon further explains, “Bill continued his exercise program at home to promote strength and increased range of motion. This allowed him to transition back into rehab and begin prosthetic training without any delay or setbacks.”



In early December 2008, Bill was readmitted to Harmarville and ready to begin rehabilitation using his new prosthesis. “My therapist told me not to ‘over-do it’ using my new leg,” said Bill. “Of course, I was so anxious to start walking again, that I made my way around the entire hospital and then hit the ‘brick wall’. The most challenging part of my recovery was learning the proper way to walk again and to pace myself.” Just ten days later, Bill returned home in time to celebrate Christmas with his family. “It was one of the best holidays ever,” said Bill. “I could have waited until the New Year to return for my therapy, but I wanted to get stronger and feel good for the holiday season. I was able to do more things with my grandchildren

and not rely on help from others. It was the best!”

Bill continued with Harmarville’s outpatient therapy program for the next several months. “When Bill started outpatient physical therapy, he had his leg and a positive attitude,” said Dale Reckless, PT “His muscle strength was still weak and he had to continue with a walking program as he hadn’t had a knee that could bend for 30 years.”

As Bill continued to progress, he began resuming his prior hobbies including camping, home remodeling, exercising, traveling and babysitting his two grandchildren. When asked how he maintained such a positive attitude, Bill replied, “I never let what happened to me get me down and continue to look forward, not behind.”

Bill participates in a program at Harmarville where he acts as a classroom subject for physical therapy students. He is also a member of the Western Pennsylvania Amputees Unlimbited Support Group and volunteers as a peer visitor, speaking to those who have recently undergone or are considering amputation. Bill leads by example demonstrating the return to an active and quality lifestyle is possible through hard work, dedication and motivation.

HealthSouth Hospitals of Pittsburgh wish you and your family a healthy and happy holiday season!

