

## Ren Gallet



**I lost my left leg below the knee in a motorcycle accident just over 40 years ago in the U.K, 2 weeks before my 17<sup>th</sup> birthday.**

Like all amputees of that era, unless there were any surgical complications, I was sent home 2 weeks after the operation and given a note to take to my G.P. and also details of the limb-fitting centre where I was to have a replacement limb made. Amputees were not given any Physio or Occupational therapy treatment, just a pair of crutches to get around on. All limbs were made from wood or pressed metal they were the only choices.

I hobbled around on crutches for six months before I got my first wooden limb. Its not until your mobility and independence are taken away that you appreciate how much that first limb means to you. Getting my leg just meant so much to me. I could walk again, get a job, and go out with my friends. Simple things we take for granted, but when they are taken away from you they become very important.

Prior to loosing my leg I used to ice skate and did some speed skating and I was quite good at it. I was told I would not be able to do that again. (Later in this story you will see the significance of this).

Back in England I tried Horse riding, and except for the fact that I had to mount the horse on the opposite side to everyone else, I loved it to the point where I rode at show jumping events and also rode in four Hampshire Fox hunts (no Foxes were caught, thank God). When I arrived in Australia I continued my hobby of horses but converted to Western Riding and for a number of years I trained and showed Quarter Horses and won a number of trophies and ribbons.

I lost my passion for horses and took up golf and got my handicap down to nine and over the years I have played in two Australian Amputee Golf Championships, two British tournaments, one Canadian tournament and one U.S. tournament. Playing in

these tournaments has given me the opportunity to meet and become friends with some fantastic people with various forms of amputation, some having lost both arms or both legs, and seeing them overcome their disabilities and watch them play golf is amazing. The biggest highlights to my playing golf, besides the tournaments I've played in, was playing at St Andrews in Scotland, the home of golf and at Royal Troon. At Troon I played the old course in the morning, 18 holes, had lunch with my wife and played the new course in the afternoon, another 18 holes, and I did that carrying a full set of clubs and walking it. I will admit I was really tired and sore but I recovered the next day.

Getting back to a comment I made at the beginning of this story where I used to ice skate is the next chapter in my life. Eight years ago I took up Roller Blading and kept getting up every time I fell down, determined not to let it beat me. So now my new passion is Ice Hockey. At the moment I am playing Inline Hockey in 'C' grade with the Lilydale Rats and also at Bayswater Home League division. Getting Ice time in Melbourne at the moment is very difficult so inline compensates. This year Canada will introduce Amputee Ice hockey in the standing position at the winter Paralympic Games as a demonstration sport for the first time, endeavouring to make it a permanent feature. They want Australia to put a team together and so far, with myself included, we have 5 players and are continuously looking for more recruits. I can ski all the blue runs at Falls Creek on two normal skis but because its necessary to have to be able to sprint quickly, stop quickly, turn sharply and back check as well as puck handle and shoot (while your opposition are leaning on you) ice hockey would have to be the most demanding and hardest discipline to overcome. This is probably why we have found it so difficult to find new recruits. At 59 I might be too old to play in a Paralympic ice hockey team but I've never given up on anything yet. And, if I can't play, I'll help out some other way.



I hope this story will inspire some of you as Amputees (especially the young ones) to never give up trying to achieve your goals, especially in sports. Whenever your told you cant do something because of your disability, do what I did, ignore them and do it anyway, and if you need help or some moral support give me a call.

My job for the last 9yrs has been as a Prosthetic Technician, and I have tried numerous components and tested them for some of the manufacturers, so I have a reasonable knowledge about what is available to Amputees and what works and doesn't work when it comes to a person's activity level. I would be only too pleased to share this knowledge with any Amputee and give advice from an amputees point of view, which is somewhat lacking in the industry.

No one better than another amputee can possibly understand an amputee's needs and psychological trauma that goes with the loss of a limb. Only an amputee can describe how painful and annoying phantom pains are. This is why Melissa and her team have made enormous inroads in helping amputees move forward after loosing

a limb and in providing information and help where in the past there was none or very little. Limbs 4 Life is a must for all amputees. Keep up the good work.

*Ren Gallet.*

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