

TWO TOUGH GUYS MEET TOUGH TIMES... AND EACH OTHER

Jake Bainter and “Boston” Bill Hansbury recently visited StoryCorps in St. Petersburg, Fla., where they discussed losing their right legs.

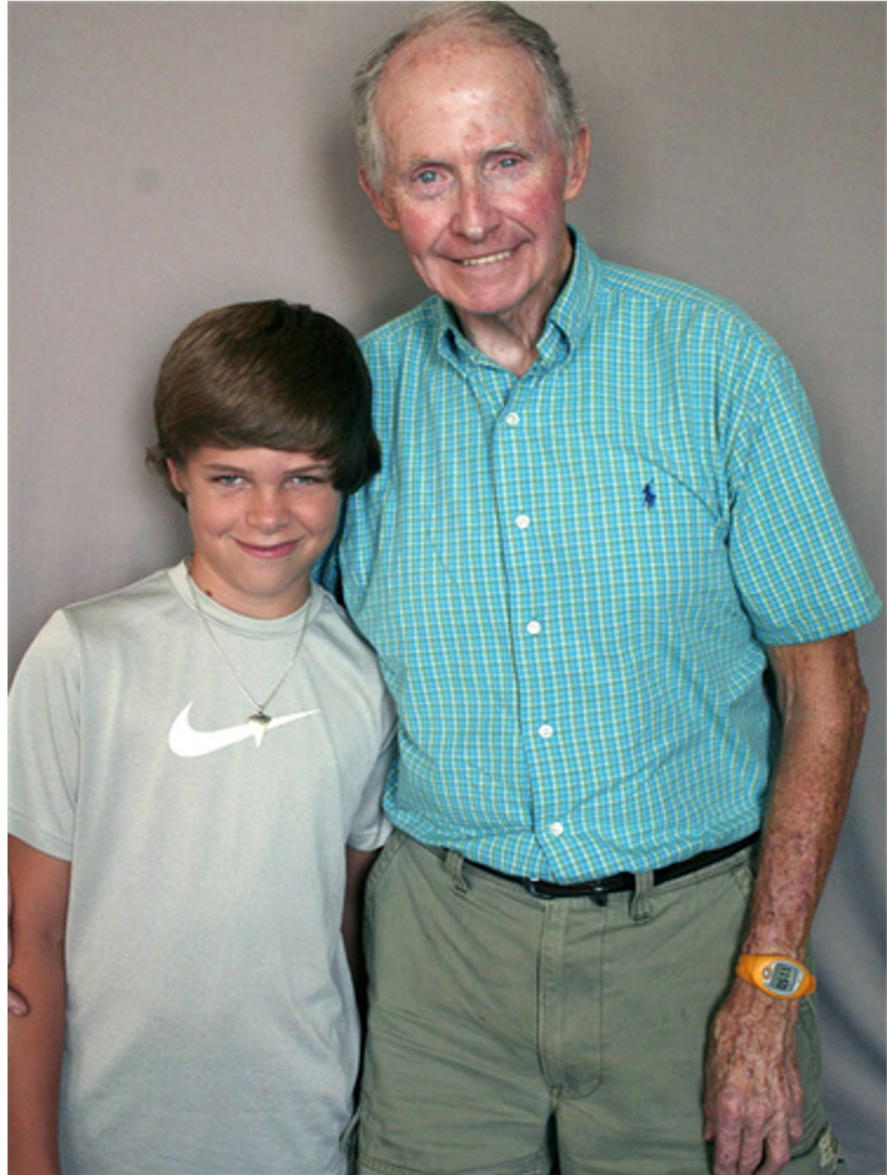
Back in 2008, “Boston” Bill Hansbury was learning to live with a prosthesis after losing his leg to an infection. That’s when he met Jake Bainter, who was about to have his right leg amputated. The two struck up a friendship, despite a wide gap in their ages ... Hansbury was 70, and Bainter was 7.

They recently discussed their friendship, and other topics, during a visit to StoryCorps in St. Petersburg, Fla.

“Boston Bill, tell me about the day that we met” said Jake, now 12. “Well, that day, I had just regained the ability to ride my bike,” said Hansbury, now 74. “And here I am, coming up to a stop sign. I don’t know what happened, but I could not get my feet out of the pedals. So I took the bicycle over to the curb. And that’s when the car pulled up.”

“That was four hours before my amputation,” said Jake. We were driving to the hospital, and we saw a guy on the side of the road, a guy with a prosthetic leg. And I remember pulling up to the curb and meeting you.”

“Your mother and father got out,” Hansbury remembers. “They introduced me to you and explained the situation about what you had gone through ---- the countless surgeries.”



Jake had been injured in a lawnmower accident when he was three years old. He and his family tried numerous surgeries before opting for an elective amputation.

Hansbury had been a marathon runner and cyclist before his amputation. He continues to run and ride a bike. “I remember saying that if I could do it at my age ---and I was 70, and you were 7---you were going to do this so fast and so well.” said Hansbury. “And I was trying to give you some hope because I knew what was coming, having been there. And when we parted, all I could think about was where you were going and how brave you were in doing it.

“Thank you,” said Jake. “That day we met, that will always be implanted in my mind.” “Yeah, I know what you mean,” said Hansbury. “A lot of people think that miracles are big things --- and they are big things---but they can have very small beginnings.”

For his part, Jake is also active in the outdoors, especially fishing. Both friends wear prosthetics on their right legs, and “Boston” Bill Hansbury has started a nonprofit to raise money to help people buy prosthetic legs if they can’t afford them on their own.