

LOSING A LEG...BUT GAINING A SENSE OF PURPOSE



Jack and his daughter Reagan

Jack Richmond was driving a forklift at work when the vehicle overturned onto him, crushing his leg below the knee. His daughter, Reagan, was just 2 months old at the time.

“Initially, when they told me I would lose my leg, I was in denial and disbelief and kind of like, “What, why? Can’t you fix it?” “But it just couldn’t be saved.”

“And you had a brand new daughter...me,” says Reagan, now 25. “What were you thinking?” “I thought about you a lot,” Jack says “Sometimes I worried about how you would feel growing up with a father who had an artificial leg.”

“I always thought it was pretty cool,” she says. “I didn’t really know any different.” Having a young family motivated him to “get up and get going,” says Jack, now 57. Two months after the accident, he went back to the hospital. “I said, well, you know, I want to talk to other amputees and tell them it’ll be OK.” And they said, “Well...that’s a nice idea and we appreciate it, but, you know, you’re really not trained as a counselor or anything like that and we can’t just let you come in and talk to patients.” Jack recalls. But as he was leaving the hospital, the chaplain, who remembered Jack, asked him why he was visiting.

When Jack told him his idea, the chaplain asked him to come back on Saturday. “And I said, OK,” not really knowing what was gonna happen,” Jack said. “He trained me as a volunteer chaplain and he gave me a badge and said, “Now you can go and talk to everyone the hospital.”

Jack remembers a young patient who, like Jack, had lost his leg below the knee. “I came in and just started talking to him and said, You’re gonna get through this. You’re gonna survive.” And he just started to get red in the face. “He said, “Look, I’m tired of you people coming in here and telling me that I’m gonna be OK.” That’s when Jack realized he was wearing long pants. The young man had no idea he was an amputee. “ So I put my leg over on the side of his bed, pulled my pants leg up and said, “About two years ago, I was in a room across the hall.”

“He didn’t say anything else, but he tears just started rolling down his face. And he thanked me and I left.”

Jack became a marathon runner after losing his leg. He ran the Boston marathon in 2001. Now he works for a company that designs and tests prosthetic limbs.

“My whole life growing up, I saw you always helping other people,” Reagan says. “I know that you’re not very boastful about it, but I guess it’s really taught me a lot. So, thank you.”

“You know, you are truly blessed when God gives you the opportunity to help someone else,” Jack says.

That’s our purpose in life.”

