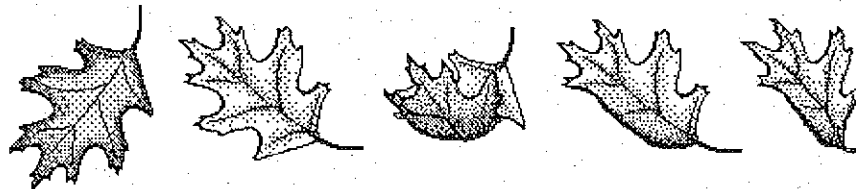




# Capabilities

Communicating the Science of Prosthetics and Orthotics

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 1, APRIL 1992



## A Crystal Moment on an Autumn Day

by Carol Young Scholar, R.N., M.S., C.N.C.

Fall is my favorite time of year. I love the earthy smell and crunchy rustle of leaves underfoot. I still remember the thrill of jumping into the mountains of leaves that my dad had raked into a big pile for me.

One of the things I missed most when I lost my right arm above the elbow, at age 35, was my ability to rake leaves. For over seven years I wore a conventional hook-type prosthesis. It allowed me to clamp onto a rake handle but the rake would wobble around and the grip didn't offer enough stability or force to be able to pull the rake easily toward my body. I tried the hook in all positions but nothing worked very well. Another problem was that the motion of raking made the socket and harness slip around too much. This caused pain to the tissue of my remaining limb and the area around my shoulder where the edges of the socket dug in. The increased pull of the harness also caused muscle strain in my neck. Every year I felt disappointed. I would rake a little but the effort and discomfort prevented me from really enjoying it. I envied my husband's ability to rake so effortlessly. He, too, was jealous of my position a few times when I had the nerve (or the stupidity) to sit on the deck with a cup of coffee, "supervising."

This past fall held a different story. I had received my myoelectric arm (a myoelectric hand with proportional control and a conventional elbow) in August. A few

months later, when our yard was covered with gorgeous leaves, I started wondering. I jumped in the car and raced to the hardware store where I bought the lightest bamboo rake I could find. Even in the store, the grip I could get on the handle felt great. I couldn't wait to get home.

I raked with passion. I was sweating to death, but I couldn't stop. It felt like such a victory! I was absolutely elated at the way my new arm worked. The partial-suction socket held onto the remaining limb really well. My arm felt much more like a natural arm. It was securely attached, stable and functional. My hand had such a good grip that I could get a good pulling action going. This was the best functioning I had experienced in seven years!

My husband was thrilled as he watched me rake the entire yard. He was happy that I was happy, and besides, his coffee was tasting mighty good. Just as we were reflecting on the significance of this event, our eighteen-year-old daughter came outside. She spotted the big pile of leaves and exclaimed, "I love to jump in the leaves. Can I mess them up?"

I smiled. Her timing was so perfect, the scene so familiar. As she leaped into the air with the exuberance of a child, the sense of freedom that I, too, was feeling that day was brilliantly captured and etched in my mind. Truly a crystal moment! ♦

*Carol Young Scholar is a member of Northwestern University's Rehabilitation Engineering Program's Consumer Advisory Panel, and is the Associate Director of ARISE, Inc., the Syracuse Center for Independent Living in Syracuse, New York.*

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### You're Not Alone.

by John Sabolich, CPO, © 1991 J. Sabolich

Order from Sabolich Prosthetic and Research Center, P.O. Box 60509, Oklahoma City OK 73146, or call 1-800-522-4428. \$7.95 plus postage and tax. 356pp.

"I often think, 'What would I tell someone who is going to become an amputee?' Someone once told me to do the best I could despite the fact that I lost a leg. But I think that attitude sells you short. I believe you can do anything you want to do, keeping in mind you may have to do it a little differently or it may take a little longer. But once you learn how, it will mean more to you." —*Female amputee*

"After 17 years of living with two artificial legs, the best advice I can give to anyone with a physical challenge is very simple: don't listen to anyone except yourself. You are limited only by your attitude and determination..." —*Male amputee*

"At the time of my accident, [my parents] wished the train had killed me—not because they didn't love me, but because they did. They couldn't imagine how I would be able to do anything and didn't want a life of helplessness and dependency for me." —*Female amputee*

"I just thank God that I am alive. I think getting to know other amputees has helped me realize we're not so different from anyone else." —*Male amputee*

The snippets above just begin to sample the collective wisdom, experience, and stories of 38 amputees in the book, *You're Not Alone*. From tiny children (whose stories are told by parents) to older amputees, the message is simple: acceptance begins with yourself, acceptance leads to success—not just as an amputee, but as a person in the world community. Over and over, the people in this book looked for things in which they could excel, and then did them. Peer support was critical in learning to manage their amputation and their prosthetic care. The relationships they had with physicians and prosthetists—who invariably worked together—contributed to their success. Their persistence in asking questions and recognizing their right to have information was another factor critical to their personal adjustment. Communication with doctors, family, prosthetists, and others is emphasized again and again. The stories are moving and heartwarming. These are not just amputees speaking—these are *people*.

The first section in this book (approximately 50 pages), written by Sabolich and entitled *Frankly Speaking*, is a compendium of practical knowledge for the amputee.

Topics discussed range from limbs for the older amputee to the Team Approach in prosthetic treatment, to phantom pain and temporary prostheses. Financial considerations, and grieving and acceptance are also discussed. This section is written in a highly readable, positive style, and is the first I've seen by a prosthetist to cover many issues ("shoptalk" and otherwise). A glossary and Sabolich's own phone support line are also included in the book.

The book is of benefit to anyone involved with prosthetics. New amputees will find peers and friends in the storytellers. The consumer will be pleased to hear from other users. The researcher will be moved by hearing from people who actually use their laboratory developments, who often stay nameless. The student will be motivated to learn more about the people whom he/she will serve. The prosthetist will nod in agreement with John Sabolich, whose positive attitude and love for people shines through in this book. ♦ *Review by Else M. Tennessen, M.S.*

### Resource Unit

The Resource Unit for Information and Education, created in 1987, provides prosthetic/orthotic information to consumers, researchers, clinicians, and academicians. These services are available to write-in or phone-in clients (312-908-6524) free of charge. Although the Resource Unit does not function as a support group, the RU's philosophy is that *information provides support*.

Services available this year include:

*Access to computerized information through our phone counselor.* Our databases currently list prosthetic/orthotic publications, P&O manufacturers (new for 1992), support groups, organizations and information resources for persons with disabilities, and camps for P&O users. By discussing your need with the phone counselor, this information is accessed while you are on the line, or alternatively, a customized package of information is prepared and mailed to your home or office.

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*Special publications.* The Resource Unit develops pamphlets, newsletters, and bibliographies of P&O publications, all available free of charge. Pamphlets include those published by other organizations such as AOPA, ABC, and amputee support groups.

*Education.* The Unit hosts conferences, workshops, meetings, and displays. This year, the laboratories play host to the VII World Congress of the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics in Chicago, IL, where a special Consumer Symposium is planned for Monday, June 29, 1992. For more information on this Congress, contact the Resource Unit or the Congress Secretariat, c/o Moorevents, Inc., 676 North St. Clair St., Suite 1765, Chicago, IL 60611 USA.

*Consumer Dialog.* The Rehabilitation Engineering Program's Consumer Advisory Panel (CAP) consists of concerned P&O consumers who act as advocates for persons with disabilities. This year's panel includes:

Edward Eckenhoff, *National Rehabilitation Hospital*  
Wayne Gablin, *Congress of Organizations of the Physically Handicapped (COPH)*

Bill Lintz, *Access Design Associates*

Johnnie Pearson, *North Carolina Division of Veterans' Affairs*

Margaret Pfrommer, *TAAD Center*

Carol Young Scholar, *ARISE, Inc.*

Hector Torres, *University of Tennessee Medical Group*

Wayne Vercellotti, *Wisconsin Amputee Golf Association*

Rose Wilson, *COPH.*

Feel free to contact the CAP care of the Resource Unit. The CAP will be meeting in June, 1992 to advise the Rehabilitation Engineering Program on research directions for the coming year. Your input, carried through the CAP, is valuable.

*Media Kit.* A media kit is available to all requestors who would like to publish information about the RU in newsletters, magazines, or brochures. It is available free from the Resource Unit.

*Information Coupon.* Use the coupon at your left to request more information from the Resource Unit, or write/call the

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### 1990 Annual Report and New PRL/REP Brochures Now Available

The Annual Report describing activities at Northwestern University's Prosthetics Research Laboratory and Rehabilitation Laboratory in 1990 is available FREE to interested parties. To order, send a written request plus \$2.50 postage/handling for each report to: Bonnie Collard, NU REP-PRL, 345 East Superior St., Room 1441, Chicago IL 60611 USA. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. PRL/REP brochures are available free from the Resource Unit.

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*April 1992 Issue—Beginning our 2nd year!*