

# G I M P Y

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF "STUMPS `R US"

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## Column One: AMPUTEE SURVIVAL KIT

### Spotlight: KAREN CHU

My name is Karen Chu. I've been a left leg below the knee amputee for twenty-five years. I lost my leg when I was riding on the back of a motorcycle and a car hit me.

Two thirds of the skin on my stump is grafted, so finding a prosthesis that fit me and didn't cause pain seemed to be what I spent most of my time doing the first fourteen years I was an amputee.

I moved to the bay area eleven years ago. At the time I was not working, and needed a new prosthesis. I was lucky enough to find Leo Beaudoin of Dan Muth Company. He made me a suction limb that fit me so well that I started working full time.

What a difference! I was actually working and playing all day without pain. Just finding the right prosthesis for me changed my life. I started cycling, learned to kayak and last year I got my scuba certification.

Leo is now retired and I am in the process of getting a new leg made for me by Wayne Koniuk of S.F. Prosthetics. Before picking Wayne, I got a lot of feed back from "Stumps" members (one of the many things our organization is good for).

If anyone out there is struggling with a bad fitting prosthesis, don't give up. For years I was made to feel that it was my fault if my prosthesis didn't fit well. I now know better.

### By Richard L. Riley

All amputees have a basic dilemma. No matter how well fitting their prosthesis may be, their residual limb doesn't stay the same. It swells, shrinks, gets pimples, callouses, muscle cramps, blisters, and any other maladies that afflict normal skin. Adding insult to injury, this skin is placed in a warm moist, and dark environment and placed under pressures that it was never designed to withstand. This is the situation for the residual limb.

How do amputees cope with this dilemma? Most of us utilize some type of survival kit. This article describes some of the items that amputees have found useful when their residual limb has problems. This information is based on my personal experience as an amputee (twenty-two years) and having been a certified prosthetist for fifteen years.

First we must keep the skin clean. Soap and water work great on a daily basis for most of the body. However, you've got a part of your body in what is essentially a petridish, growing bacteria. Even if you utilize an antibacterial soap, within a short time most of the bacteria has regrown. Products that kill lots of bacteria are rubbing alcohol, Phisoderm, Hibiclens, and Betadine. These are all over-the-counter cleansers. Alcohol will dry your skin out, so be cautious using it. The other antibacterial soaps

kill most of the bacteria yet provide little long lasting antibacterial protection. Any skin rash or itch should be a signal to discontinue use of whatever you utilize to clean your skin. Take particular care to dry out any skin folds, dimples, or any place that can trap moisture.

Skin protection materials is a topic I have lectured on for years. Bagbalm is a lubricant that provides a friction reduction element that can soothe skin. One of the most common errors that amputees make on skin care, is the use of bandaids or gauze bandages on abrasions. Often times abrasions are created by excessive pressure on a limited skin surface area. Bandages only increase that pressure often times doing more damage than good.

Second Skin has become (over the past thirteen years) a main staple in my amputee's kit. It is a thin (1/16 inch) piece of perforated

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# Special Events and Notices

## *Western Amputee Golf Association*

The Western Amputee Golf Association (WAGA), established in 1968, helps amputees and other physically challenged people build a sense of personal pride and confidence. The goals of WAGA are: to promote golf (as a relaxing form of recreation and rehabilitation); to build skill (open to all skill levels); and to help others (through scholarship funds and an information network). Tournaments are held year round and one will be coming up soon. For more information on joining or participating in the WAGA please contact Jim Stein @ (415) 898-1202.

## *Trauma and Injury Support Groups*

### **San Francisco General Hospital (SFGH) Trauma/Injury Support Group.**

SFGH group meetings are twice a month on the first and third Wednesday afternoons from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. Meetings are held at SFGH, in the medical library -- Building, 30, Room 3101. The group will be facilitated by Yigal Ben-Haim, Ph.D., and Laurie Barkin, R.N.

### **Alta Bates -- Herrick Hospital**

#### **Survivors of Burn, Trauma, and Injury Support Group**

Group Meetings are every month on the second and fourth Thursdays, 7:30 to 8:45 p.m. To be on the mailing list, please call Dr. Ben Haim, (415) 753-1000, or Sally at (510) 582-8581. Most of these meetings will be in Conference Room 1 (next to the cafeteria). The group will be facilitated by Dr. Yigal Ben-Haim, Ph.D., a Therapist who specializes in the field of post traumatic stress and recovery, and Sally Brandoff, Therapist and Burn Survivor.

These Support Groups provide information about care at home after being in the hospital. The groups also provides a useful opportunity for members to talk with other survivors and get emotional support towards healing and full recovery.

**For more information and exact dates, please call Dr. Yigal Ben-Haim, (415) 753-1000 (10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.).**

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silicone gel that applies directly and adheres by its own viscosity. It totally eliminates skin friction, allows the skin to breathe, and can actually promote healing. It can be utilized for prevention or if an abrasion or blister appears. It is expensive and can only be used once, but for anyone who has been in pain, it is worth it.

Second Skin does not work well on above the knee suction sockets unless held in place with their adhesive strips. There are some products that will work; Bioclusive, Tegaderm, Op-Site, and Acuderm. These products provide a thin, adherent membrane that prevents friction and allows that skin to breathe. Use the products as directed or consult your local physician.

What constitutes a good amputee survival kit? I am a below knee amputee and my kit consists of: Second Skin, a tiny pair of scissors (for cutting holes in socks), Hydrocortisone (will lubricate and kill an itch), duct tape (I have hiked many miles on feet taped together), a foot bolt wrench and any other Allen

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## GIMPY

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## SORKIN'S CORNER

By Dan Sorkin\*

"Stumps" Founder and President

### SIMPLE WAY TO MAKE TEMPORARY SOCKET ADJUSTMENTS:

--> A small hole cut into the sock will provide temporary relief to skin that has been damaged by either an abrasion or a pimple, especially when there is associated tissue swelling. This works best with a five ply sock, (the thinner the sock, the less relief), and the trick is to cut as small a hole as possible. Use an older sock if you have one, and pull it onto your residual limb, take a pencil and draw a circle around the affected area. Remove the sock and cut a hole about half the size of what you drew. When the sock is put back on, the hole generally stretches giving plenty of relief. If not, then carefully open up the hole a little more. Too big of a hole does not provide good relief.

\*Made possible by contributing members of "Stumps"

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wrenches that my leg utilizes. I also carry a wash cloth or bandana to wipe perspiration off my residual limb and my sleeves. I carry my kit in a fanny pack with a water bottle.

Above the knee amputees will use slightly different materials in their kits, depending on whether they utilize suction or a sock. Tegaderm, or one of the other adherent membranes may be substituted for Second Skin. Vaseline is an excellent lubricant for when your skin rubs against any surface. For active suction socket wearers I recommend some auxiliary means of suspension like either a silesion or neoprene suspension belt (see your attending prosthetist).

Upper extremity amputees rarely experience the friction and pressures of ones body weight on a prosthesis. However since pressure and friction can occur, a kit including scissors, Second Skin, and Vaseline can be of use.

Each amputee will find the specific combination of skin protection materials to create their own amputee survival kit. Remember, if you are an amputee and you don't have some type of survival kit, then it is like driving around without a spare tire in your car.

# The Lighter Side...

By "The Gimpster"

*Sharing a few personal moments with  
The Gimpster (our resident amputee)...*

When asked about what type of disability  
The Gimpster has he always replies,  
"I'm stumped."

The Gimpster always has to smile to himself  
when people pick him up for rides and say,  
"hop in."

The Gimpster has a friend Kneel who lost  
both of his legs when a MUNI bus ran him  
over. The sad truth is that he cannot sue...  
"In court he doesn't have a leg to stand on."

## Feedback

*"Stumps 'R Us" Support group???*

This coming March a support group for the loved one's (spouses, siblings, parents, significant others, etc...) of our "Stumps" members is being organized. The time, date, and location will depend upon the level of interest in this group. *Interested persons should contact Laurence N. Kaldor @ (415) 905-5614.*

**SPORTS \* SPORTS \* SPORTS**

Attention amputees interested in exploring their full athletic potential: If you are interested in learning how to participate in any type of athletic activity such as: skiing, rollerblading, tennis, racquet ball, golf, etc... please contact Laurence N. Kaldor @ (415) 905-5614.

**About this newsletter...**

It is my intention, as editor, to create and provide a vehicle by which members can be contacted and informed of upcoming events and news from the handicapped community. Furthermore, by this medium we can reach out beyond our fast growing membership to others who may need us but are, as of yet, unaware of our existence.

I encourage you to contribute articles of your own personal experiences and achievements plus any information you feel is relevant to the handicapped community (e.g. helpful tips, hints, anecdotes, prosthetic advancements, etc.). Additionally, any comments, inquiries or criticisms to the editor will be published upon request.

**All correspondence should be sent to...**

Laurence N. Kaldor, *GIMPY* Editor, 1340 38th Avenue, San Francisco, California 94122. Or, e-mail me at Phenix7@MSN.COM. Or, Fax me at (415) 681-4855. Or, Call me at (415) 905-5614. In order for *GIMPY* to flourish it will depend on the support of all of you, our "Stumps" members. Thank you for your ongoing support & enjoy!

--Laurence N. Kaldor,  
Gimpy Editor-in-Chief



**THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF "STUMPS `R US"**

*"A nonprofit corporation dedicated to aiding and uniting  
slightly inconvenienced people around the world"*

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