



Perspectives on Long Term Rehabilitation: How I made a better recovery from spinal cord injury than anyone expected

Stacy Holmes

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After my first year of life I was walking. I used my biped facility to play baseball with great enthusiasm but little skill. I walked thousands of school hallways and campuses as a student, then teacher, principal and superintendent. I walked out of Walpole (NH) Congregational Church with my new bride Lynn on my arm. I carried my baby daughter Emily. We walked through London's Piccadilly Circus, the Coliseum in Rome, the Eiffel Tower, Costa Rican Indian villages, Denali, Cozumel ruins and many Caribbean beaches. I hiked the Appalachian Trail with my wife, son, brother, niece, nephew and lots of my students and summer campers. And Dad. I walked all over the New England and Arizona trails with Dad. In my 61st year of life I walked into the neurosurgery pre-op center at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. I removed my clothes and got into the hospital gown. I laid down on a gurney, never to walk normally again. In a few hours I awoke from unsuccessful surgery on an intradural melanotic schwannoma at T-11 (about the level of my navel) inside my spinal cord. I was able to use my legs only to wiggle my toes weakly and feebly press my foot down as if on an imaginary car accelerator pedal. In the ensuing five years, I progressed from riding a gurney to walking at about 1/3 normal speed for men of my age with a cane and total attention to my jerky barely balancing legs for distances of up to half a mile and durations up to 45 minutes. This book shares what I, with the many who helped me, did to make a far greater recovery than any physician or physical therapist expected. Some of my physical rehabilitation may have specific relevance only to those with physical disabilities. All of my mental rehabilitation will have relevance to everyone. I write this hoping to give all of you kind enough to visit these pages some valuable insights without your needing to experience paraplegia to discover them.

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