



My name is Bob Ayres and this is my story:

My parents taught me right from wrong and that all people should be treated equally. They detested the ignorance of not accepting people because of nationality, skin color, mental or physical disability. As the years passed, I may have drifted to the wrong side of the road from time to time; however, I never lost their fundamental teachings or the awareness that everyone should be given the opportunity to be equal in the sight of all.

But then, the early seventies brought quite a devastating change in my life so quickly, that even today it sometimes seems surreal. At this point I feel blessed that I am able to tell my story.

I suppose the way to begin is by saying that I was at the wrong place at the wrong time. As I was driving my car on a pleasant and calm evening, when the steering wheel began shaking violently and I quickly pulled off onto the shoulder of the road to investigate what the problem was. The front left tire was flat and I began to change the tire. I had done the procedure before, and I was reminded of the impending dangers possible as other cars sped by and I could feel the trembling of the road. And then, in a split second, destiny knocked and challenged my soul. I was hit by a speeding car and thrown over a hundred yards from the scene. Let me just interject now by saying that the will to live in the human spirit is omnipotent.

I was in a coma for several months, with compound fractures primarily in my legs which were in traction, broken pelvis, fingers, and arms. Basically, I was a broken body with a broken spirit. I was informed that I would have to wear a leg brace [something like a polio brace]. As all this was happening, I kept focusing on the fact that running which had always been a part of my life, would never be an option again. That really took the wind out of my sails. I could not imagine

life without running. No more football, soccer, or track. I kept remembering my track coach having me set the pace for our team on long distance running. "Just run like the wind" he would say. My parents had moved to in Mexico City shortly before I was born and because of the high altitude I had experienced in Mexico, my coach figured my lungs were better adapted to long distance running. I just ran for the sense of freedom I got.

There were many more years of surgeries, painful and endless physical therapy, leg braces and ultimately, it came down to an above the knee right leg amputation. It is difficult for me to relay my thoughts and feelings; however I can say that at the very moment I awoke from the anesthesia, I was consumed with anger, fear, and the feeling that I had been condemned to a life of eternal punishment. "Where was God.? Why me?!"

In the following twenty-five years my zeal for life, adventure, society, friends, family, trust, and spiritual beliefs dissipated. In their place, I substituted pain pills, liquor, lies, cheating, fear, anger. Self esteem was non-existent. Basically, all of the values that I was taught as a child and from life itself were totally obliterated from my being.

I was twice confined in alcohol rehab centers, and hospital detox floors. During my final hospital stay in which I had to be restrained to my bed, I was told by the doctor in no uncertain words that one more drink would kill me. When I demanded of him, "why me?" he responded "why NOT me"? I was just a pebble in the sand. "I had to get off my pity potty and step up to the plate." I couldn't blame anyone but myself. Over the years, I had made the choice to give up.

I heard somewhere that the odds are that you will never get a hit in life if you don't keep on swinging. Quitters never win and winners never quit. What happened to me next, I cannot explain fully, except that I asked for help. God answered. I knew I had been beaten by drugs and alcohol. It would only be with the help of support groups, family, and friends that I was able to accept who I was.

Am I comfortable with part of my body missing? I accept that what happened was yesterday. I am not embarrassed about my scars. So, what is my purpose now? I have a power greater than myself whom I choose to call God. I have had a true spiritual experience.

I read that adversity introduces a man to himself. To me that means I must stand up and face fear in the face and do what I thought I could not do. I feel like I owe life a run. I would venture to guess that not many people get a second chance to learn to do something they love over again. I have set my standards higher than people expect of me and excuses are not acceptable. I knew the instant I came out of this last coma, what it was I was meant to do. Miracle Limbs-Courage in Motion was born at that moment. My wife says that when I opened my eyes I just kept saying "I know why I am here now!"

I believe that physical imperfections are a false representation of attitude. I have become stronger and confident to be able to converse with others about what it is like to push the mind and body harder and farther than most people think is possible. Through Miracle Limbs-Courage in Motion, we will pass this on.

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