

**Meet Carol:**

Amputation Level: Above Knee  
Hometown: Northern Michigan  
Age at amputation: 45  
Cause: Trauma—Automobile  
Activity Level: High

My name is Carol and I've been an above-knee amputee for 11 years. I'm an avid outdoors enthusiast and one day while running, I was hit from behind by a car that left the road. I was completely devastated and was sure that my life as I had known it, was over. My circle of friends was made up of many running partners—but how would I be able to run with them again?

The amputation surgery left my limb very tender and I had extreme phantom pain—how would I be able to walk without pain, let alone enjoy the running and outdoor activities that I did before? Would my friends accept me? Would I want to or be able to maintain the relationships? There were so many unanswered questions...



Rehabilitation quickly became my focus and I hoped and prayed for answers—acceptable answers. I first saw Jan Stokosa for my initial consultation in May, 1992. A client of his (who also lived in my town) recommended him highly. Living in northern Michigan meant a long drive to his clinic, but after meeting with Jan, I chose the long travel time over closer prosthetic offices. Jan took a great deal of time with me—appreciating my needs, understanding what I wanted to do in my life, and providing me with the direction and challenge that I needed to move on with my rehabilitation.

During my consultation, Jan educated me to what could be possible and presented me with the many options that are available with respect to suspension systems, interface materials, foot, ankle, and knee components. To complicate matters, Jan explained that the pain I was still experiencing following the amputation would probably require reconstructive surgery—something that I didn't enjoy hearing and did not look forward to—more surgery and more delay. I could either begin my prosthetic fitting right away, or I could have reconstructive surgery. It was quite possible that I would need reconstructive surgery within 24 months anyway, so I ultimately made the decision to consult with Dr. Ertl in Illinois. I elected to have the reconstructive surgery first and the results were better than I could have anticipated! Less than 10 weeks later, Jan fit me with my first temporary prosthesis.

Since that time, I have been able to resume the activities that I enjoyed prior to my amputation, as well as participate in many new ones. I'm still an avid runner and have participated in many racing events in my area. I also enjoy walking, aerobics, bicycling, swimming, snow-shoeing, downhill skiing, hiking, and sailing. Right now, I have a prosthesis that I use for my everyday activities—like working, taking care of my house, running errands, etc., but I also have three others that provide specific needs, depending on my activity. I have one that I use while downhill skiing that protects my leg and has a detachable lower section so it does not interfere with my skiing, but is easily reattached for walking. I've got a second one that I use while bicycling—I no longer require another rider on a tandem! And because I spend a lot of time swimming, I also have a "shower peg" that I use to get to and from the pool and through the shower/locker room areas.

My experience with everyone at the clinic encouraged me to go on with my life—something that I did not think was possible. When I found myself encouraging a man in my hometown—pointing out that he was just as terrific as he always was—I guess that was my turning point. It takes time to heal, but one needs to concentrate on what one can do, not what they cannot do.