

# Boundless Determination

After the amputation of his right leg, Johnnie Smith never thought of slowing down.

Article and photos by Savannah Mandeville

**J**ohnnie and Kathryn Smith are enjoying their retirement.

After living and working in Joplin all their lives, the couple have settled on a serene, secluded property nestled in the woods between Anderson and Southwest City, Missouri.

Each day, Johnnie rises early to feed his cattle, tend to his garden and run errands in his trusty standard transmission truck.

Johnnie and Kathryn love walking hand-in-hand around their acreage, admiring the wildlife that come to visit. When they get the chance, they hit the road in their camper and explore new places.

Next year, they will celebrate 50 years of marriage.

One might never guess that Johnnie lives his active and busy life with a prosthetic leg.

In March 2014, a fall left him with a broken bone in his right foot. Over the course of the next several months, he underwent six surgeries to try to repair the injury. Johnnie is diabetic, and each surgery was met with complications. His injury developed infections, and soon there was only one option left.

In December 2014, his right leg was amputated from the knee down. Johnnie refused to be held down by the loss of his leg. Giving up was never an option.

“The way I saw it, being the outdoors person that I’d always been, there was no way that I could sit on the porch for eight hours a day and have someone wait on me. I just couldn’t do that,” he said. “I was going to get back up on two feet and walk again.”

Johnnie was resolved to succeed, but he admits that the early months were hard. Mentally, he was ready to get back to work, but physically, he had a journey of healing and physical therapy to go through. After a year in a wheelchair, he was finally fitted with a prosthetic from a company in Joplin. He was soon walking, but something wasn’t right. The prosthetic caused him a lot of pain and he couldn’t wear it for very long.

That changed in 2016 when he discovered Grand Prosthetics and Orthotics, 5 E. 14th Street in Grove, Oklahoma.

Grand Prosthetics owners Dave and Beverly Helms provided Johnnie with personalized care through the entire process. The casting, fitting, adjusting, physical therapy and help learning to walk with the prosthetic were all customized to Johnnie’s specific needs.


Within a couple days of receiving his custom prosthetic, Johnnie and Kathryn went on a camping trip and were thrilled to discover his new leg caused him no trouble or pain during their entire trip.

Today, Johnnie wears his Grand Prosthetics and Orthotics leg from morning to night, totally free of pain. For those who may be facing their own amputation in the future, Johnnie has a simple piece of advice: “Don’t give up.

“If you’re bound and determined to do something, you will do it,” he said “An amputation is not the end of the world, and if you find the right people to help you along the way, you can do anything you set your mind to.”



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