

Live, Laugh, Love

Despite a childhood amputation, Kathy Bowling jumps into life with both feet with the help of Grand Prosthetics & Orthotics LightWeight Artificial Limbs & Braces

Article and photo by Savanah Mandeville

Kathy Bowling loves life.

Personally and professionally, she has always been one to go after her dreams.

She had a successful 30-year career with Picher-Cardin schools, and she is currently the multi-term elected Ottawa County treasurer. She and her husband of 50 years, Larry, have two children, six grandchildren and now chase around three great-grandchildren. She loves to go to the beach and swim, hike at national parks, and, in her younger years, she was a water-skier, horseback rider and biker chick.

Kathy has led a fun, interesting and active life anyone would be proud of.

So, it may come as a surprise to learn she has done all of this with a prosthetic leg.

When she was six-years-old, an electrical power line fell on her and she lost her right leg about seven inches below the knee. That was in 1959 and prosthesis technology wasn't what it is today.

"I've had a lot of experiences with the changing of technology over the years," she said. "My first artificial leg was shaped out of what looked like a block of wood. Until I was older, probably in my 30s, I never had a right foot with toes. The foot was always rounded, not very natural feeling or looking. I still wore sandals when I wanted to, even though my feet never 'matched.'"

Kathy wore sandals when she wanted to and really, for that matter, always did whatever she wanted.

"I rode a bike, ran and played like everyone else, except for the fact that my leg would almost come off when I'd run. I'd stop, tighten the strap and take off again," she said.

"When I was younger, in the '70s, my husband and I rode motorcycles all the time. Not just on the street, we loved dirt bikes. I am the only one I know of who could ride up Red Clay chat pile in Cardin and have your leg come off as a lot of my friends and a lot of people I never even knew watched on. All I could do was crawl down the chat pile, grab my leg, put it on and get back on the motorcycle and ride it back down. I think that incident shocked a lot of people. We definitely had a lot of fun!"

Kathy has never let her leg get in the way of living her best life, and when she found Grand Prosthetics & Orthotics LightWeight Artificial Limbs & Braces in 2007, the advanced prosthetic technology and convenience of care helped her out even more. Grand Prosthetics is known for its personalized treatment and custom prosthetics, and they were able to fit Kathy with a leg with realistic skin and an adjustable foot that allowed her to wear high heels for the first time.

"What I love about Grand Prosthetics is that it's small-town people with personal, professional care," she said. "When I am there, they treat me like I'm their only patient. I always feel comfortable and at home."



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