

When Life Throws You a Curve Lean Into It

With the help of Grand Prosthetics and Orthotics, Charles Skilling got back on the Hog

Article and photo by Savannah Mandeville

A biker through and through, nothing in the world can stop Charles Skilling from riding his motorcycle.

“I’ve always loved riding,” he said. “There’s nothing like hitting the road in the morning and spending a day with the wind in your hair and the sun on your skin.”

But when a motorcycle accident left Skilling with an injury that would eventually lead to the amputation of his right leg, it looked for a time like Skilling’s days on the open road might be over. Luckily, with a little help from his friends at Grand Prosthetics and Orthotics, 5 E. 14th St. in Grove, Oklahoma, Skilling got back to life on two feet and two wheels.

The accident happened in January 2013. Skilling’s right ankle had to be rebuilt with metal plates, and it appeared at that point he was on the road to recovery. Unfortunately, it turned out Skilling was allergic to the metal and his body was rejecting the plates. He would go on to spend the next four years battling infections as the incisions from the initial surgery never healed properly.

“It was excruciatingly painful,” he said. “The skin around the ankle was next to dead from infections, and I finally said ‘enough is enough.’ My doctor, Dr. Wooderson of INTEGRIS Grand Lake Surgeons Clinic, said amputation was going to be my best option.”

Skilling’s right leg was removed from the knee down March 28, 2017.

“When I woke up from surgery, I was afraid to lift the sheet and see where my leg was gone. But the other thing that was gone was the pain. The relief was immediate,” Skilling said. “To this day, I call Dr. Wooderson my hero because he finally put an end to four years of suffering.”

A friend of his traveled from Wichita to Grove to assist Skilling during his recovery process. The most difficult part of recovery for him was the period before the stitches and staples healed – not because of the pain, but because Skilling couldn’t wait to be independent again. His friend stayed in town for 6 weeks, and before she was even gone, Skilling had already figured out how to get around in his wheelchair on his own and was even driving independently with one leg.

“I have always been self-reliant,” he said. “It’s who I am, and that wasn’t going to change. “My last appointment with Dr. Wooderson was scheduled for June 20, 2017, and my goal was to walk into that appointment.”

David and Beverly Helms, owners of Grand Prosthetics, helped him achieve that goal.



Beverly taught Skilling the proper way to wrap his leg, which he said greatly reduced some phantom pains he’d been experiencing. David built him a custom leg, making tiny, detailed adjustments until it was perfect.

“My prosthetic wouldn’t fit anyone else. It’s made specifically for me,” Skilling said. “What the Helmses do is unbelievable – they gave me my life back. I like to say I can put on my leg and forget about it. I don’t look at myself as handicapped, I’m just a little bit different.”

Today, Skilling is a member of an amputee support group where he passes along his positive, can-do attitude to others.

“My philosophy is ‘live each day like it’s my last,’” he said. “I would tell anyone facing an amputation to hold onto their strength and positivity, and they will be able to get through it and live life to the fullest again.”