



Father Stephen Whaley plays soccer with his son, Matthew.

Father Stephen Whaley Finds Pastoral Care at MPO

"It was a great blessing."

That is how patient Stephen Whaley describes the assistance he received from Muilenburg Prosthetics and Orthotics when his prosthesis broke while on a Florida vacation.

When Stephen uses the word blessing, he doesn't mean it lightly. He is an ordained priest and the assistant rector at Christ Episcopal Church in Nacogdoches.

MPO came to the rescue when Stephen's prosthesis broke while at Disney World with his wife, Kate, and their children, Matthew, 8, and Mary Kathryn, 6.

"The first day, which was a Saturday, I took a funny step and the pole inside the bottom of my leg snapped. I thought the earliest I could get it fixed would be Monday," Stephen said. "I left a message with MPO's

answering service. Even though it was the day of MPO's company picnic, Andre Martinez, CP, checked for messages and then MPO went to work, calling around Florida for somebody to fix my leg. I met with a prosthetist that Saturday night - and

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he fixed me up with a temporary foot until I could get back to Texas. When I got back to Texas, MPO took care of shipping it back to him.

"Every time I go to MPO and they work on my leg, they are warm and hospitable. I leave with my stress gone and a sense of comfort and peace that my leg is in good condition," he said.

Al Muilenburg was a caring practitioner

Stephen has been a patient of MPO since his first leg was made in 1978 when he was 5-years-old by the late Al Muilenburg, CPO, the firm's founder. "MPO has made six or seven legs for me since then," he said. "All of them were made by Mr. Muilenburg except for the last two."

He recalled Al Muilenburg's interest in his eighth grade science fair project – a design for an artificial leg. "He encouraged me to work on it," he said. "He was so friendly.

"I didn't know what it was like to work for him, but I knew what it was like to be his patient. He was gentle, yet firm when delivering news you didn't want to hear, such as you need to get healthier or lose weight. He never spoke in judgment, but with concern. He knew how to be honest and caring and kind when hard things had to be said. That's my lasting memory of him."

Stephen, who is now a patient of Earl Fogler, CP, LP, was born without a tibia and patella. As a toddler, surgeons attempted to implant a bone to compensate for the tibia, but the surgery wasn't successful. Before Stephen entered kindergarten, his surgeon amputated at the thighbone, but left the growth plate intact.

Because of financial considerations, Stephen went without a prosthesis from second through eighth grade. His mother, he said, did not seek help from Shriners Hospitals, whose health care system helps children with orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries and other pediatric conditions, regardless of financial need.

"I used a single crutch and put my stump in between the V of the crutch," he said.

Just before his freshman year of high school, the family's financial situation improved and he received a new prosthesis. In a strange twist of fate, just as he received his new leg, his brother, Scott, was in a construction accident where his legs were

run over by a backhoe, resulting in an amputation. Scott also is an MPO patient.

"It was very ironic at the time; I got a leg and he lost a leg," Stephen said.

As is the case with many young, active amputees, Stephen was a recurring visitor to MPO to fix a "broken" component. He always got a kick when the practitioners would ask how he had managed to break the prosthesis in such a particular way. "It made me feel that I was using my leg creatively," he said, chuckling.

While attending college at Texas A & M, Stephen continued to find creative, although inadvertent ways to break his prosthesis. Stephen recalled another close call involving a trip away from Houston. While a sophomore at Texas A & M, he was scheduled to travel with the Men's Chorus to Hawaii. Four days before departure, he was playing street hockey and sheered the metal frame that held his piston in place.

"That was on a Wednesday night and I was supposed to leave the following Monday. I called MPO on Thursday morning and drove to Houston. They fixed me up with a loaner knee and I was able to make the trip to Hawaii. I appreciated that."

To accommodate Stephen's activity level, Earl Fogler fit him with a suction socket, swing and stance hydraulic cylinder knee, and Carbon Copy 2® foot. "The hydraulic knee offers a variable resistance to flexion and extension, which allows Stephen to walk at different speeds, as well as improved stance control to prevent the leg from buckling," Earl said.

A very special calling

Although Stephen received his degree in architecture and worked for the Houston firm CDA for four years, he always felt a calling to do more. "I wanted to volunteer in the hospital because I spent so much time there as a child," he said. It was while volunteering at Texas Children's Hospital Patient Pals program, he read in the hospital newsletter about a chaplaincy program through St. Luke's Hospital Community of Hope. He trained and became a lay chaplain; 18 months later he entered the



Stephen's daughter, Mary Kathryn, left, and her friend Maisi, enjoy a big push from dad on the tree swing at the Whaley home.

School of Theology at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn.

After receiving his master of divinity degree, his first assignment was to Good Shepherd Church in Kingwood before the move to Nacogdoches. His duties in Nacogdoches include being in charge of campus ministry at Stephen F. Austin State University. He interacts with about 30 students who regularly show up at the ministry's center for foosball, pool, and fellowship, although not all attend the Sunday worship service. "We just conducted freshmen orientation and I hope we can grow the group this year," he said.

His ministry also is leading him to Israel. Stephen will be traveling to the Holy Land in October as part of a Pastoral Renewal Program. He hopes that the experience will lead him to guide others on the pilgrimage.

Stephen drew a parallel between his own work as a minister and the work of the staff at MPO.

"The staff at MPO functions as a ministry. They create a pastoral setting where they are helping to take care of others.

"It's not politically correct to say amputees aren't normal, but we're not," he said. "The point is that they help to bring normalcy back – that's what they bring to other people's lives. They help make people feel secure and normal."

Muilenburg Prosthetics and Orthotics

Join Us at Our 60th Anniversary Celebration



Muilenburg Prosthetics and Orthotics is hosting a week-long Open House, Sept. 15-19, to commemorate the founding of the company by Alvin Muilenburg in 1948.

Patients, their family and caregivers are invited to tour our facilities, view our photo collection, and check out the new products at our technology display INCLUDING THE REVOLUTIONARY BIONIC i-LIMB™.

During that week, we will be offering FREE EVALUATIONS to check prostheses for adjustments and repair; please call us to set up a time.

Stop in to visit, enjoy some refreshments and enter a DRAWING for a \$50 GAS CARD!*

Open House hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, Sept. 15-18, and 8:30 a.m. to noon Friday, Sept. 19.

**Gas card entries accepted only during Open House week.*

1980



From left: Ken Holland, CP; Loretta Muilenburg, OT; Bill Brunner, CP; Al Muilenburg, CPO

1970



Office Staff

1980



Earl Fogler, CP

1998



Marie Hunt

1980



Ted Muilenburg, CP



Office Staff

1991

A rare snowfall brings the MPO staff outdoors in this photo and in the group shot, above right.



Paula Marchisio

1985



Andre Martinez, CP

1998



George Lim

1987

Muilenburg Prosthetics and Orthotics, Inc.
P. O. Box 8313
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OFFICE HOURS: 7:30 am to 5:30 pm, Monday through Thursday • 8 am to Noon, Friday

Ted Muilenburg Certified to Fit Bionic i-LIMB™ Hand

Ted Muilenburg, CP, FAAOP, recently attended a training session to learn how to fit a revolutionary bionic prosthesis for upper extremity amputees - the i-LIMB™ Hand from Touch Bionics. The i-LIMB gives amputees options to use five fingers and perform numerous tasks they couldn't do before.

The i-LIMB is the first-ever prosthetic hand that offers the use of five fingers to bend and move unlike previous myoelectric devices that could only open and close. These new grip options support almost all daily activities including holding a

fork, picking up a coin, turning a key in a lock, operating computer keyboards and inserting a disc into a CD or DVD player, to name just a few. The inclusion of a thumb that can, like the human thumb, be rotated into different positions enables grip configurations, many of which have not been available to amputees before.

The i-LIMB Hand is controlled by a unique, highly intuitive control system that uses a traditional two-input myoelectric (muscle signal) to open and close the hand's life-like fingers. Myoelectric controls utilize the electrical signal generated by the muscles in the

remaining portions of the patient's limb. This signal is picked up by electrodes that sit on the surface of the skin. Existing users of basic myoelectric prosthetic hands are able to quickly adapt to the system and can master the device's new functionality within minutes. For new patients, the i-LIMB Hand offers a prosthetic solution that has never before been available.

In addition to the i-LIMB, MPO practitioners are experts in other types of myoelectric and conventionally controlled prostheses, including the DynamicArm®. They frequently attend educational programs, seminars, and clinics to keep updated in the latest technological advancements in both upper extremity and lower extremity prosthetics.

To make an appointment or for more information, please call Ted Muilenburg or Earl Fogler at (713) 524-3949.

