

HOW I OVERCAME MY PHYSICAL HANDICAP

My handicap is a result of wounds received in Italy in 1945 while serving with Company I, 85th Infantry, 10th Mountain Division.

In brief, I was hospitalized from April 14, 1945 to July 29, 1948, and received treatment during this period for the following - fracture of the right humerus, clavicle and scapula; infection and stones in right kidney resulting in removal of that kidney; pulmonary infarction; fracture of the 5th cervical vertebrae and injury to the spinous processes from C-3 to C-8 resulting in paralysis of all extremities and temporary loss of bowel and bladder function; stones and infection in left kidney.

Rehabilitation for me started with learning to walk again, to feed myself, to write left-handed and ultimately learning to partially dress myself with one hand which was void of normal feeling. These achievements were accomplished partly because of my dogged determination to get well, but equally responsible for my resurgence was the sympathetic understanding and encouragement I received from my wife, my family, hospital personnel, and people from my hometown who generously contributed over \$1500 so that I might undergo treatment by an orthopedic specialist.

The most difficult obstacle faced along rehabilitation road was returning to civilian life. I possessed the feeling of security and pride which accompanies the wearing of a uniform, and the abrupt transformation from soldier to civilian left me with an indescribable, helpless feeling. Without the uniform, I was just another physical oddity to those who did not know, and this change from hero to spectacle made me shy from social contacts with anyone except intimate friends and ultimately left an imprint of inferiority which is not yet entirely erased.

This helpless feeling, real or imaginary, was somewhat erased when I returned to college in September, 1948. Going to school was difficult, for

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my right arm was not functioning at all and the left only partially; hence it was necessary that my wife accompany me to take notes, carry books, and write those examinations which I could not take orally.

The following year the Veterans Administration furnished me a recording machine which I use to pick up lectures; also provided me with a special typewriter with a left hand keyboard which I now operate quite rapidly.

Though I am jokingly referred to as "part man, part machine" by fellow-classmates, nevertheless, I have maintained a grade average of 2.67 out of a possible 3.00 in Law School. In February, 1952, I will graduate, receiving combined A.B. and L.L.B. degrees.

Besides attending school, I am an elected member of the House of Representatives in the State Legislature. Serving in the Legislature has been of tremendous value in restoring confidence and speeding social rehabilitation.

Though rehabilitation is an endless task, I feel confident that the most difficult period has passed. I have not made any appreciable economic gain, but I have salvaged happiness and security out of bitter disappointment by rebuilding shattered dreams and reshaping aspirations. I give thanks to God for this opportunity which was denied the many who made the supreme sacrifice.

Robert J. Dole