

Music Is His Passion ... And Enjoying All That Life Has To Offer

When Chuck Holmes picks up his trumpet, sweet sounds fill the air.

As you become engrossed in the music, you don't realize that Chuck is missing four digits on his left hand and the thumb on his right.

"I really have to hold on tight with my little fingers to make sure I don't drop the horn, but it's not a real problem. I support the horn with my left palm," he said.

Chuck is the founding member of "A Touch of Brass" quintet, a group formed in the 1980s. Chuck plays the flugelhorn, piccolo trumpet, and B-flat trumpet. The musical group is "in residence" at

First Presbyterian Church in Endicott and that means playing at special services throughout the year as well as Christmas and Easter.

The holiday season is especially busy as the quintet plays at various venues. "We've worked so hard this Christmas season and we have all this great music so we will be making a CD in January," Chuck said.

Chuck is not only defined by his music, although it certainly is his lifelong passion. He also is an avid boater, scuba diver and snorkeler, traveler, and has many interests outside the home.

"I'm a very active amputee," he said. Chuck is not just referring to the loss of his digits. He also is a bilateral below-knee amputee.

Chuck's amputations came as a result of frostbite 35 years ago when his car went off a snowy road on a cold January day. He was not discovered for two days.

After the accident, Chuck received a medical discharge from the Air Force, where he was a member of the Second Air Force Band. Except for a brief time in recovery when Chuck wasn't sure about the future, he has an upbeat, never-say-die personality.

A STRONG CONNECTION TO REHAB TECH

Mike Hall, CPO, has known Chuck for more than 30 years. They met when Mike was an assistant to Chuck's first prosthetist. "We have a vast history," said Mike. "It's always interesting working with Chuck."

Mike has guided Chuck through prosthetic options as technology has progressed through the decades.

"As new things have come out in the market, Chuck has always been one who is willing to try new products and technology. He always gives us good feedback on how things work," he said.

However, there have been challenges, particularly since Chuck wants to maintain a high level of activity. "Chuck has some skin issues from his initial injury that makes him challenging to fit with a prosthesis. There is a lot of scar tissue so he's always been hard to maintain good fittings," Mike said.

Chuck recently received the Harmony® P3 System, which uses elevated vacuum suspension to prevent volume loss and



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improve limb health. Because of its superior linkage and its

maintenance of limb volume, vacuum suspension eliminates pressure and shear forces a residual limb is subject to in other socket systems. Vacuum suspension also allows open wounds to heal while wearing the socket. Studies also have shown that the vacuum stimulates blood circulation in the residual limb.

"Since I've been wearing the Harmony, I've noticed that my skin breakdowns are much better and I feel more comfortable," Chuck said.

Because Chuck also has a low clearance issue, Mike also fitted him with Ottobock's Axtion® foot.

Mike noted that although Chuck still has limited endurance, he ambulates very well. "It's difficult to tell he's an amputee," he said. "Chuck is often around when we have sessions for therapy students. He will walk around and the students have to guess whether he is a right or left limb amputee. Some will say they can't figure it out and others will give reasons why he is a left leg or right leg amputee. Then Chuck returns wearing shorts and he is obviously a bi-lateral and you can see the students' jaws drop. Chuck has fun with this!"

Chuck has been happily married to Pam since 1969. "We were dating before the accident, but she stuck with me. I told her to move on, but she refused," he said. "I'm blessed to have her."

Through the years Chuck and Pam have become close friends of Mike and Terry Hall. The Halls have enjoyed outings on the Holmes' boat, the Cha-Pa-Do-Ki, and they enjoy swapping stories about cross-country road trips. Mike admires Chuck's musical ability. "He really can play that trumpet," Mike exclaimed. "A Touch

of Brass is a group of exceptional musicians."

SPECIAL PROSTHESIS FOR WATER SPORTS

Because Chuck enjoys water sports, particularly scuba and snorkeling, Mike fitted him with the ActivAnkle, which is designed to be used in the water with or without fins. It's constructed of non-corroding

Delrin and stainless steel. It also has a protective neoprene cover to keep sand out.

"I simply turn a lever and the foot drops down and locks in a pointed position where I can put fins on and do some scuba," Chuck said. "We've scuba'd off our boat, in Lake George, in the Caribbean and Cayman Islands, and the Great Barrier Reef. It's a very exciting sport but I'm not doing it as much now. We intend to do more snorkeling than scuba."

Chuck and Pam both share a love of power boating. "We probably spend 60 to 70 overnights on our boat every season," he said. "I like to swim and Pam is a skier. Our daughters also like water sports," he said. Chuck also volunteers in the Coast Guard Auxiliary and has held posts of Vice Commander and Commander.

FROM TEACHER TO PERFORMER

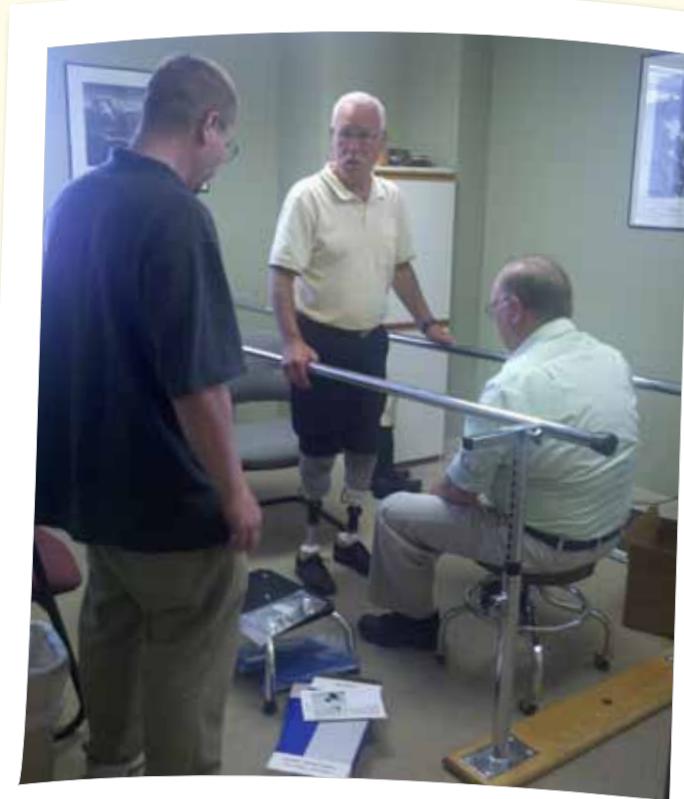
Chuck is a graduate of Syracuse University and received his master's from Ithaca College. Teaching music and being the band director in the Endicott School district followed, as well as taking on students for private lessons.

But after a few years, complications from standing all day became too much and Chuck suffered skin breakdown and sores. His prosthetist at the time recommended he retire from teaching or face life in a wheelchair at an early age. "He told me I had to make a decision about getting into a wheelchair at 50 or at 70. If I preferred the latter, I was to stop teaching. The

district wouldn't allow me to teach part time, so I had to make the decision to pick retirement."

However, he continued teaching students at his home until about 15 years ago. "I was performing with two bands then and I realized I wanted to concentrate more on performance," he said.

In addition to A Touch of Brass, Chuck performed with an 18-piece dance band, but found the rigors of standing for a three-hour set, even with short breaks, was becoming painful.



Chuck doesn't play with the dance band any longer, but A Touch of Brass continues to be strong and vibrant, and regularly rehearses at Chuck's home. "Pam enjoys brass music and I'm lucky she does because we have rehearsals here every Wednesday night from 7 to 9," he said.

Pam also is a musician and plays strings, but doesn't perform now. However, when the quintet plays a Christmas event, she will join in for Jingle Bells.

Several years ago, A Touch of Brass went on tour to England and Scotland with vocal group Sister Spirit, and put on several concerts as well as spur of the moment performances in outdoor venues. The group also traveled to Vermont for a two-day engagement in 2010.

"Traveling as an amputee is difficult, but people understand and are helpful," he said.

Chuck estimates he can walk about one block comfortably and when he and his wife Pam travel, that is always "in the back of our mind. When we travel, Pam likes to walk and I go along in my electric Rascal."

WHEN TRAVELING, THE HORN COMES TOO

Chuck and Pam and their two daughters have traveled extensively in their motor home. "With summers off as a school teacher, and the girls in elementary school, we bought the motor home and started to see the 50 states," he said. "We did it by regions and it took about five summers to do it all. Of course, we didn't take the motor home to Hawaii, but we did to Alaska. Our daughters were in college then and it was the last state we needed to visit to complete all 50. They didn't want to go and for a couple of weeks on the road, they gave us a hard time. I think they hoped we would put them on a plane back home. But we persevered and to this date, Alaska is their favorite state.

"We still travel. Every other year we visit friends in Florida and then head to

Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. I take my trumpet in the motor home and I practice because being a trumpet player, you can't just pick it up and play. You have to stay in shape."

3RD GENERATION OF MUSICIANS IN PROGRESS

Chuck has five grandchildren, boys and girls. The boys' interests are more sports-centric, but at least one granddaughter is playing the trumpet. Chuck offers encouragement and help with musical exercises, but he uses measured restraint.

"I'm trying not to push too hard. I don't want to turn them off," he said.

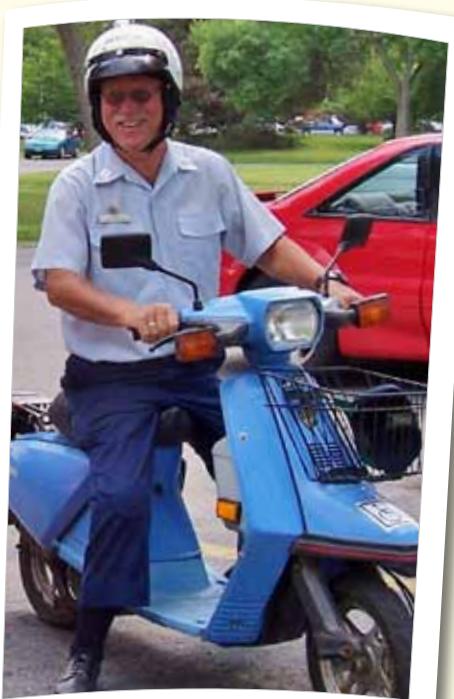
Chuck's daughters also took up music - at least for awhile.

"My oldest daughter, Dori, was very good in flute and piccolo, but hasn't played since she graduated from high school. Kimberly, my second daughter, plays clarinet and played all the way through college and also played in the Southern Tier Concert Band for awhile."

Chuck recalls when Kimberly played in the Cortland State College Band. Pam and Chuck were planning to attend her band concert when Kimberly called and asked him to bring his trumpet because

the band director was one shy. "So I did, and that was kind of fun, even if I was the oldest one in the band," he said.

I certainly do have a passion for music. I think back to the accident and the amputations and maybe God was saying ... I'll save those three fingers for the trumpet so he can go back playing."



We wish you all the happiest and healthiest
New Year and all the best in 2013.



Rehab Tech staff - Mike, Terry, Jeremy, & Bill

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HELPING OUR PATIENTS REACH THEIR GOALS

Medical Excise Tax Does Not Affect Orthotic & Prosthetic Components

Good news for our patients. The Treasury Department has ruled that prosthetic and orthotic devices, including therapeutic shoes, are exempt from the 2.3 percent medical device tax under the retail exemption provided in the Affordable Care Act.

The Treasury Department ruling resulted from intense efforts by the American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (AOPA) that O&P devices qualify for the safe harbor (protection from liability or penalty) provision "considered to be of a type generally purchased by the general public at retail for individual use." Also exempt are eyeglasses, contact lenses, and hearing aids. [Devices that require

implantation or insertion by a medical professional are not exempt.]

AOPA had several specific meetings and consultations with the IRS and Treasury beginning nearly two years ago explaining why O&P devices were eligible for this retail exemption.

AOPA also was successful that this retail exemption should apply to the manufacturers of O&P components because that tax "would just be shifted higher up the distribution chain," - meaning the patient.

This is a dramatically important and favorable outcome for O&P in this final rule. It is clear that companies that

manufacture components that are used by a patient care facility provider to fabricate an exempt O&P device (under the safe harbor rule) are also exempt.

What this means for our patients is that all custom-made orthotic and prosthetic devices that you require will not cost Rehab Tech an additional 2.3 percent to build. This will keep patient co-pay, deductibles, and cost at the same current rate (per your insurance company).

As always, if you have any concerns or questions about your prosthetic or orthotic care, don't hesitate to contact us. We are here to help.