

Frank I Am: Volume II - 9 Years Later

By The SCI Outpatient Group

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That Frank I Am,
Remember that
Frank I Am



It's good to see you again that Frank I
Am
 Frank I Am, That Frank I Am
Are you still happy to be that Frank I
Am?

YES!! Most days
I'm happy to be
that Frank I Am



Why are you not
happy everyday,
Frank I Am?



Since I fell from the tree, it's been difficult adjusting for me.



Could you tell me what happened when you adjusted from here to there?



It happened suddenly, but then it hit me finally

I got from here to there while sitting in a wheelchair.

Without it I'd be stuck in bed only able to move my head





How do you survive with what I see? Can you please explain to me how you live with the changes from falling from a tree?



Although I'll never be like you but there are still many things I can do!



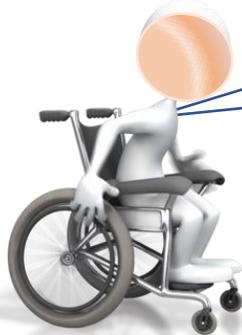
Would you could you be just like me? As healthy as can be?



YES! Healthy, wealthy and happy I can be, if I pay attention to my Doctors and me. For me, I have to be vigilant and use my brain constantly.



What is the difference between you and me? That you use your brain frequently?



I must eat, drink and watch how my clothes lay, and exercise almost everyday. If I don't I'll have to pay! Paying attention to the water I drink helps make sure my blood pressure doesn't sink. Sticking to a very healthy diet makes sure my body won't riot!

Are you all alone sitting at home?



NO! I go out and about with people who won't let me pout!

I keep my friends and participate in current trends.
I have a partner now and here's how:
I asked questions and we talked together and enjoyed the weather
It was scary and I was wary
Now I know that disability is just one part of all the things that can fill a heart





Wow! That's not for the faint! Your partner must be a saint!



She is not my maid nor paid to be my aide!
She is not a martyr; she's, my partner!
If you look closer, you might see; I can't fudge it I do
the budget. I'm on wheels but I plan the meals.
It's not just a one-way street; as a team we can't be
beat!



Frank I Am; why would your spouse not
take care of you and the house?



My aide completes required tasks, but my spouse will help
when I ask
My aide helps me dress to alleviate my spouse's stress
My aide prepares food I like; bathe and help me transfer
before taking a hike.



For others I know, their spouse runs the show. They do all their care and handle affairs.

Sounds like your aide does more than a maid?



Yes! Other things on the list: driver, companionship, and basic medical checks; you get the gist!

Are your aides and spouse your only company?



No, I also spend time with friends doing things that are fun for me!

Activities offered by your local VA and PVA often don't require you to pay. Bowling and shooting shan't be missed, archery and golfing are on the list! These activities help vets with disabilities connect and exercise with a positive effect.



I participate in wheelchair sports near here, but the cherry on the top is the National Veterans Wheelchair Games once a year. I have traveled around the country and made friends from near and far; using the star to guide the car. As you can see, there have been opportunities for me.



You have come a long way since I've seen you last. You are experiencing life and having a blast.



I am experiencing life and having a blast; now it's time to go on a new path! There are still so many things I can do, like get a job or volunteer too!



But first I have to see if my qualities meet some of the job needs. The Veteran Readiness & Employment at the VA and Veterans Career Program through PVA will get me up to speed! These programs help me break down the barriers, so I can be the best version they can see of me.



Now I see, you and me, don't act so differently. Even though you fell from a tree, you are still an active member of society...just...like...me.





Active in society, I am glad you see that in me, and challenges with my disability does not stop me from living vivaciously! I have overcome obstacles and have come full circle, you see. I am now living a beautiful life and have become the best man I can be.

Hey Frank, I see you have come full circle, and you are the best man you can be.



Just wait and see what I can do, I am going to have a baby too!

I just can't wait until I see you to start your family!



4 years later Frank meets Sam again





Good to see you Sam! I am as happy as a clam!

Last time we met you were talking about having a family! If you have the time, I'd like to hear what you've been doing these past four years.



You bet! I have two kids that are five and one! They make me laugh and are tons of fun.



Excuse my lack of knowledge; they didn't teach us this in college. Learning you have kids was a surprise; could you please advise? How easy was conception with your current debilitation?





Do you want the whole truth or do you want it like candy coated fruit? If you want the truth, I'd like to go somewhere soundproof!

Down the street there's a coffee house or two. Could we stop in and have a brew?



Let's pop into Mama's and see if they can accommodate me! An accessible place will have enough space and a handicapped parking place!



Can you have your children naturally or do you have to do it artificially?





We tried to do it naturally to create our family. But that was a bust. So we got a special vibrator for us. To start this off I need to say: where there's a will there's a way!

What was the process that was done? I am sure it wasn't any fun.



I tried many ways; it was a bear. It seemed like it was trial and error. Who do I ask, where do I look, you can't find this stuff in just any book! First, I went to the VA to see if they would help me pay.





The VA would help with info and DME but wouldn't cover IVF for me. Service connection disability is what must be to get IVF for you or me. Some insurance helped me out so I wouldn't sit and pout. IVF worked for me because we couldn't do it naturally.

Thanks for sharing with me how you came to have a family. It's amazing to me that you can have kids even with your disability. With your lack of mobility do your kids treat you differently?



They see and love me as their dad. The differences aren't always bad. Baseball we used to play; now board games is how we spend the day. They only know the Frank that is me. They see my adaptability. They learned to help me with things they can; my little boy is going to be an open-minded man.



Your family seems to have adjusted well. I'd like to learn more so please do tell.



My kids see me as I am. Not disabled or unable but like your kids see you Sam. Parenting is about love and care; that's why my wife and I make an awesome pair. Even though I sit in this chair; my family knows I will always be there! I can't put up the cub scout tents but I'm in charge of homework, chauffeur, and school events. My wife and kids are actually on the way. Can you stay and say hello today?



That sounds great! I'd love to meet your wife, kids, family. I would have thought your disability is a bigger problem in parenting than it seems to be. But it seems normal to your family.



I never realized all you had to do to get through daily life-but you don't see it as strife! Your courage and strength amazes me and how you get through daily activities. I hope we can meet again someday so we can talk the day away. I love to hear about your family and appreciate how you answered my inquiries. You helped me you helped me open my eyes to see and now I wish to promote disability advocacy!



I'm glad you heard what I had to say. Each day it amazes me when I run into people who don't see or understand disability. I've learned to express myself and show my colors, and now I wish to share with others. Now that you see what we go through; a voice like yours can advocate too! I hope this isn't our final farewell. I hope to meet again as I have more to tell.....

