

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Active Amputee to Mark Accident Anniversary with Tennis Game**

MANCHESTER, NH – Manchester attorney Bill Tucker, age 58, may mark an auspicious anniversary on June 28 with a tennis game. Ten years ago on that day, he had a game planned but nearly severed his right foot and began a journey that would lead him to live the next decade of his life as a below-the-knee amputee.

In looking back on that last Sunday in June 1992, Tucker's memories of the day are quite clear. He was mowing down sumac on the hill behind his barn, about 400 yards from his Goffstown home. A tree limb blocked his path, so he put the 1940s vintage brush hog into neutral and stepped around it to pick up the limb. The machine jumped into gear, knocking him down and running across the top of his right ankle. His foot was attached by a one-inch piece of skin and a single artery. The machine cut his other ankle, too, but two steel plates inserted after a rock climbing accident 12 years before minimized the damage.

Tucker dragged himself 75 yards up the hill to his car and drove himself to his house with his left foot on the gas pedal and a hand on the horn. As luck would have it, his friend Bill Steele, a former EMT, had just arrived to play tennis with Tucker on his outdoor court. Steele attended to Tucker while Tucker's wife, Susan, called 911.

In the hospital, the doctors worked eight hours to save and reattach the leg. They drilled a hole through the bottom of the heel and inserted a steel rod. To regain some use of his limb, Tucker would need 15 operations over three years, but his ankle would be fused and the nerves might never regenerate.

"This didn't make sense," says Tucker, who liked to play tennis, ski, white water canoe and lead aerobics at the Greater Manchester YMCA. "I led a fairly active lifestyle. I thought it would be better to cut it off and have a prosthesis."

The doctors thought otherwise and sent him home to think about it. Tucker immediately began researching prostheses. An amputee client of one of his law partners at Wadleigh, Starr & Peters introduced him to Peter Couture, C.P., President/Clinical Director of Next Step Orthotics and Prosthetics in Manchester.

“Tuck basically interviewed me,” says Couture. “He asked a lot of questions about how a prosthesis would work and the kind of life he could lead. We like to see this. We told him he could live a very active life with a well-fitting prosthesis.”

The local doctors encouraged Tucker to go to Boston for a second opinion. “I think they were worried about fooling with a lawyer and doing an amputation,” says Tucker with a chuckle. A highly respected Boston surgeon told him he would be better off with an amputation.

Less than three weeks after nearly severing his foot, Tucker returned to the hospital in Manchester for his amputation. The afternoon before, Couture and Frank Potter, P.A., from Next Step came in to mark Tucker’s leg with a magic marker. They wanted the doctor to leave a 10-inch residual limb so Tucker could effectively use a prosthesis. Three days later he was home.

Couture fit Tucker with a prosthesis a short time later. “Peter knew I was active, so he picked a prosthesis that would allow me to play tennis, run and do about everything I’d done before.” In the fall, Tucker was playing tennis again.

Now, he plays every Monday night, in the winter at the YMCA’s Allard Center in Goffstown and the rest of the year on the tennis court in his yard. Couture is now a regular in Tucker’s tennis group, and Tucker jokes that he gets around the court better than Couture, who needs a knee replacement.

“The only way my prosthesis has affected my tennis game is it’s made me concentrate more on where I’m hitting the ball,” says Tucker. “I’m being more scientific about the game instead of just running after everything and hitting it as hard as I can. About the only thing I have a hard time doing is going straight back to get a lob.”

His prosthesis has limited him little. Every year he plants 25 varieties of vegetables in his three-to four-acre garden, including six plantings of corn. He starts the seeds in his greenhouse in the early spring, as well as the seeds for all six of Goffstown’s public flower gardens. And when he isn’t tending his garden on summer weekends, he might be using his specially designed cooking apparatus to put on a clambake somewhere for 125 people. And each fall he makes a 55-gallon barrel of his famous Tipping Rock Tonic, a hard apple cider that he claims tastes close to a chardonnay with a hint of apple.

Tucker didn’t get a chance to play his intended game of tennis on that Sunday 10 years ago, so he may mark the anniversary with a game this year, followed by a taste of his Tipping Rock Tonic. Or maybe he will tend to the thousands of plants in his garden. Or go for a hike. For a 58-year-old guy with a prosthesis, the choices are pretty much limitless.

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