

MEET DION FREEMAN:



Greetings to all members & friends of the Canterbury/Westland Amputee Society. I was born in 1965, the year of greatness, in Lower Hutt but I was raised and ran wild in the then quiet backwater of Paraparaumu Beach. I spent my days picking wild blackberries and disappearing all day into the farmland that Paraparaumu used to be. I was the middle child of 5 and Mum still lives in the same Paraparaumu house that I grew up in from the time I was 6 months old. I attended Paraparaumu Beach School then the local college before I took off to work for NZALS, who have probably regretted that decision ever since. In 1982, I started work at the Wellington Limb Centre, back then it was not a degree course but an apprenticeship spread over 6 years. The first 3 years were part-time at the Central Institute of Technology where I gained my certificate in Orthotics & Prosthetics in 1985 then in 1989, I graduated from CIT with my advanced certificate in Clinical Prosthetics. I wore a very shiny suit with the sleeves rolled up to the graduation, just like Don Johnson from Miami Vice whom only the lucky who grew up in that era would remember. I moved to Christchurch later in 1989 when the South Island beckoned me to explore it. Looking for a challenge, I moved to Brisbane in 1997 where I worked for a private Orthopaedic company until 2000 when the then CEO of NZALS phoned me to say NZALS couldn't do without me and asked me to come home! Luckily for him, the mountains of the South Island were also calling out for me so I moved back to Christchurch where I still am. My work agreement states I can never leave! I like people who also love dogs, nature and who like being GOOD people. Please, do not talk to me about Trump..... I can't stress enough how much I love dogs, big fluffy & fast dogs. Food wise, open a bag of Heartland premium chips and I'm anyone's. Salmon, MMMMMM...salmon & avocado...mmmmm. We have been lucky enough to travel extensively and my favourite place is definitely Africa where I still have places to visit even after 8 trips there. Otherwise, a mountain biking, tramping or camping trip anywhere in NZ as it's the best, most stunning & coolest place in the world.

When it comes to activities/hobbies, anything that takes me into the mountains, hills or beautiful places of the world for time spent mountain biking, trail running (when I'm not injured) or tramping. I did get my skydiving licence when I was younger but now it's more benign activities but throw me a big hill to climb, some sunshine & views and I'm a happy man. Music wise, my age is showing here but Pink Floyd is ageless. Anything that comes from the 80's just brings back sweet memories of youth and muscles that didn't ache and skin that didn't wrinkle. Movies, how many times can I watch "Dances with Wolves" & "Legends of the Fall"....real movies. My favourite book has got to be Larry McMurtry's "Lonesome Dove"...oh to have been a cowboy.

My travels are kind of varied. An actual holiday for me is to head to the States, Colorado, Utah or the Sierra Nevada mountains to bike the sweet trails or otherwise challenge myself in Africa. My very best experiences come from there, from spending 2 months in Tanzania teaching in a seaside town to mountain biking along Morocco's Atlas Mountains to slowly drifting up the Niger River in Mali towards Timbuktu. To negotiating with the Kenyan Police for an escort through areas with armed insurgents in the northern regions to sitting in a stinking hot hut at Lake Turkana watching the

devastating effects of the drought extending down from Southern Sudan. Having AWFUL coffee with the Daneesh tribe in southern Ethiopia in the Omo Valley while swapping my western shorts for a male dress with no common language but having a feeling of timeless national

geographic humanity. I travelled the western Egyptian desert not long after 8 Mexican tourists were accidentally killed by the Egyptian Air Force and we had the ENTIRE desert to ourselves & our guide. Africa is always feels very real & raw and beckons me to return. I simply love the challenge and the rawness of the more remote parts of the continent and also the slight danger that takes away the cosy Western safety net. Last year was a "soft" year for me with hiking & parapenting in Chamonix Mont Blanc, eating cheese there then a stopover in India to head to the Kashmir Valley (apparently a no-go zone) then a very long bus journey to the Indian Himalayas for some solo hiking, very high up. I currently live on the Port Hills surrounded by tussock covered trails which are my playground and I live with my "poor" unfortunate girlfriend who somehow puts up with me. I don't have any children, thank goodness but have had the pleasure of 3 big fur babies for the last 16 years that have ruled my life but all grew old and as of this year, I am dog less. I am most happy when Matthias approves my leave applications!!!!!! Going home to my dogs always made me very happy and I find it very difficult to sit around when the sun is out and the hills are beckoning me to visit. Editor's note.

Dion, thanks so much for allowing me to publish your profile which will give our readers a really interesting insight into your life away from the Limb Centre. Your travels through Africa are simply enthralling and what a fantastic photograph you supplied. Many thanks Dion.