



John German and The Michelangelo Hand

In the late 1980s, fresh out of high school in the upper peninsula of his home state of Michigan, John German was a young man just starting to figure out what he wanted to do with his life. Working in the food service industry seemed like as good a career as any. Teaming with an older couple, he opened a restaurant and, although he had not been scholastically inclined in high school, was contemplating attending culinary school to further his career as a chef.

His life took a turn when he developed symptoms that affected his dominant left hand. The doctors struggled to determine what was causing the symptoms and a medical course of action to alleviate the worst of the condition. By the time a vascular surgeon determined that John suffered from thoracic outlet syndrome, it was too late. His hand was gangrenous and he had already endured many surgeries to try and relieve the pressure that a small congenital defect, a vestigial small cervical rib near his clavicle, was placing on a major artery going to his left hand. One of these surgeries was incredibly traumatic, as John almost lost his life.

He regained consciousness three days after that troubled operation. This crucial event marked the beginning of a new chapter in his life, with an alternate destiny and enormous gratitude at surviving his ordeal.

"Whatever they need to do to get me stable and if they need to take the arm, that's fine," Mr. German said of his thinking at that time. "I never looked back or said that there was anything that I can't do. I've done more with one hand than I ever dreamed I could have done with two."

In April 1987, during his 17th surgery, doctors amputated John's left arm, mid-forearm. He was immediately given a temporary prosthesis and was enrolled in an in-patient rehab program. He was soon kicked out of rehab for trying to make his prosthesis, a hook, operate as his dominant hand. John rejected the

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Patient: John German

Location: Altoona, PA

Family: Married to Lisa, has two daughters Lauren and Maddie

Occupation: Specialty medical salesman, clinical technician

Clinic: Care provided by Handspring, Middletown, NY

Product: Michelangelo Hand

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idea that he couldn't still be left-handed and subsequently taught himself to perform everyday tasks, limited only by the restrictive nature of his prosthesis.

At one point, John wore a passive silicone hand that he liked the look of, but it was not functional enough for him and did not suit his active lifestyle. The silicone coverings on his previous hand were constantly ripping, causing aggravation and incurring expense. On a routine fitting with his long-time prosthetist in Detroit, Michigan, he discovered a life-like cosmesis created by LIVINGSKIN. An appointment with the owner of LIVINGSKIN, a clinician named Tom Passero, led to more information about LIVINGSKIN but also to his discovery of the latest in myoelectric prosthetic options. John's relationship



Handspring is an ensemble of highly knowledgeable medical professionals who are focused on providing a holistic approach for patients needing specialized care in upper limb prosthetic rehabilitation. Our uniquely experienced team of prosthetists, therapists, fabrication specialists, and insurance experts have worked with patients around the globe to provide innovative, highly customized prosthetic devices that assist patients in living their daily lives to the fullest.

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with Tom has continued for many years and has led to John being a client with Tom's specialized clinical division, Handspring.

"Handspring treats me like the complicated individual that I am," says John. "This is a much less clinical feeling environment and is very comfortable and comforting to be here. They realize that I have many different prosthetic needs. Their responsiveness is important and they have helped to change my life."

With 20 years of experience with upper-extremity prostheses, a career working with specialty medical devices, and always in pursuit of cutting-edge technology, John has expertise and a specialized interest in developments in prosthetics technology. John thoroughly believes that it's time for prosthetic technology "to blossom" and his latest device is helping to move John and other amputees down that path. The Michelangelo Hand from Ottobock is the most innovative and unique prosthetic hand ever developed.

"I'm very impressed with the Michelangelo Hand. The speed, strength, durability, and overall aesthetics of the Michelangelo are in my opinion better than any other existing technology," explains Mr. German. "I am very pleased with the hand."

The loss of his arm altered the course of John's life. Without this defining life event, he might never have gone to college, where he excelled academically, or graduate school, where he met the woman who is now his wife. He might never have entered his current career.

"Ironically, losing my arm pointed me in the right direction," Mr. German said. "Without that experience, I don't know who I would be today. I'm blessed with what I have. I'm happy, I'm not limited. Life is good."