

# My Viewpoint



*Calc Kenney is a journalist, writing instructor, guest columnist for Regional Mobility Ltd. and "real gimp" herself. Calc's column will at times provoke you and at times humor you. Comments and reactions to Calc's*

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We all joke around about relative levels of disability. Above-the-knee amputees (ak's) will joke around about below-the-knee amputees: "B-k's are almost human." But let's face it. Sometimes even a b-k feels like a real gimp.

I once met a freestyle skier who had blown her knee out the previous season and was three-tracking during her convalescence. She liked it so much she started to call herself handicapped.

She beamed with pride when a pokey normie would point her out wistfully to his partner. "Aren't those handicap skiers somethin'?" She got free ski boots and cut the lift lines at the ski area. She asked Hal O'Leary to sign her up for the

Handicap Nationals. Hal told her she wasn't a gimp; she was a normie with an athletic injury, but somehow she found something so gratifying in being called handicapped that she chose the ignominious title most of us got by default.

One day she told me that she could already feel the phantom pain starting. I tried to explain that before you could be told that the pain you were feeling wasn't real but phantom, you had to lose a limb. But she didn't understand. So here's to you, Kit. How do you know if you're a real gimp?

Real gimps can't run, can't do flutter kicks, don't stand on both legs in the shower and have at least one foot in the grave and the other in a Dr. Scholl, or birkenstock, or some other "good" shoe.

Real gimps can't stand stairs, they don't like high barstools where you can't bend your knee and rest your foot at the same time, and real gimps never ask, "How did you incur your loss?" Real gimps get real nervous around ladders and wooden planked piers. Real gimps walk real careful over slippery tile.

Gaining a few pounds is no small problem to a real gimp.

A real gimp has an aversion to the expression "pre-existing condition" on the lips of insurance men.

Fibreglass and hairdryers are not an unlikely combination to a real gimp.

Real gimps always have more luggage to carry at the airport than their able bodied companions. And they actually carry less of it. No one can resist offering a hand to someone without a leg.

Real gimps know what it is to get hurt and not merely get better, but to get hurt and survive.

A gimps greatest privelege is a driver's license and a handicapped plate.

Real gimps hate x-rays, scalpels, needles and doctors who say I've never worked on anybody like you before. Real gimps love nurses.

Real gimps don't turn down an offer of "take a load off," "put your feet up," "give you a short lift to the gas station with that can, buddy?"

"Better living through chemistry" may have been coined by Dupont, but it lives on the lips of the real gimp.

A real gimp will never turn down a massage. Real gimps spend more money on medical and prosthetic expenses than businessmen on lunches and recreation.

Real gimps have been known to become prosthetist just to reverse the financial odds.

Real gimps always carry a spare ace bandage or a crutch in the car.

In response to the question "what happened to you," real gimps have at least one truthful answer, one technical explanation and one creative lie: "Motorcycle accident," "pseudomonis gangrene infection and subsequent amputation of left limb", and "a shark bit me."

Taking off your leg is almost as natural in company for a real gimp as taking off your tie or your belt.

You're a real gimp if you've gotten real great at one sport simply because you can't do any others gracefully.

Now there may be many of you out there reading this that thought you were real gimps simply because you could show somebody like Kit that you were different. You take off your artificial leg and show her the difference between an athletic injury and a gimp. But if you can say none of the above, you are not a real gimp.

You are what we real gimps call a "supergimp."

Next month—Supergimps I have known. ■

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