

One Man's

Journey

to the Mountaintop

By Darcy LaDue-Vargas



As William (Bill) Franke and his daughter approached the summit of Quandary Peak (elevation 14,265 feet) near Breckenridge, Colorado, they knew this Labor Day hike was one they would remember forever. They had been hiking a 14'er in Colorado every Labor Day for years, but this hike had special significance. Bill had a Birmingham hip resurfacing procedure only 13 weeks prior to their hike on June 3, 2009. This time they savored the views from the summit just a little longer as they reflected on the long journey to this mountaintop.





Bill had endured hip pain for years, but the avid outdoorsman was progressively more limited in his activity level. By December 2008, Bill was no longer able to run or get a good night's sleep because of the intense pain in his hip. On a skiing trip, Bill took a tumble and as he struggled to get up, he knew his time had come to seek medical help. His first visit to Dr. Palmer at St. Croix Orthopaedics confirmed there was osteoarthritis in his hip. Bill attempted to salvage his ski season with a cortisone injection, but after a few months he called to schedule surgery.

Dr. Palmer and Bill had discussed his options—a total hip replacement or a Birmingham Hip Resurfacing (BHR). Because of Bill's age and his desire to continue his active lifestyle, they agreed that BHR was the right procedure for him. Two months prior to Bill's surgery, he attended an orientation program at Lakeview Hospital designed to answer questions and set expectations. "I did all of the exercise regimen that they recommended prior to surgery,"

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explained Bill. "I wanted to do everything in my power to be ready for surgery so I would be able to return to my life as quickly as possible."

Bill's surgery was performed on a Wednesday and he was able to walk with a cane by Thursday. One surprise after the surgery was how much "good" pain he felt. "The intense pain in my hip was immediately gone after surgery," noted Bill. "I still had pain for a few days but it wasn't the same pain I had endured for years." By Monday, Bill was driving and back to work. He was even able to go to his cabin the following weekend and enjoy some light walking. Bill admits that his recovery was slow and gradual, but he remembers distinctly at three weeks gently swinging his golf club, chipping and putting. He was walking and golfing 9 holes by seven weeks and 18 holes by nine weeks. Bill did many of the same exercises that he had done prior to surgery and physical therapy aided in his recovery process.

As Labor Day 2009 approached, Bill prepared for his first post-surgery hike by walking on ATV and snowmobile trails. He knew his biggest challenge in climbing would be range of motion in his hip and being mentally prepared. On September 5, 2009, Bill, his daughter, and a friend climbed Quandary Peak on a beautiful clear day. The hike up that mountain is difficult because of the vast amount of boulder fields one must traverse. "Actually, coming down the mountain was the hardest part of the climb," recalled Bill. "I think I was mentally fatigued and trying to protect my hip. All my muscles were reacting to my body being just a little out of sync."

Bill is very pleased with the outcome of his surgery. "I would choose to have the surgery again in a second," he explained. "I am sleeping good again, my hip is pain free, and I am able to do all the things I love – golfing, hunting, hiking, surfing, and skiing." Bill was a collegiate long jumper and triple jumper at Drake University, but he is no longer able to run. "Sometimes in life you have to make choices. I don't run anymore, but I walk four miles per day at a good pace. I'm happy with all that I am able to do." And that includes standing on a mountaintop!

HIP RESURFACING:

Hip resurfacing arthroplasty is a type of hip replacement that replaces the arthritic surface of the joint but removes far less bone than the traditional total hip replacement. For more information on hip resurfacing, visit www.stcroixortho.com and click on the Education tab.

