

“*inMotion* Saved My Life”

by Nancy Carroll

In January 2000, Richard Kaderli, 46, wasn't feeling up to par. He went to his doctor for a routine physical checkup and received a clean bill of health. He was also having bouts of blurred vision, so he went to an ophthalmologist for an eye exam. The eye doctor dismissed him, saying that his vision was normal for his age and that all he needed was reading glasses.

Despite two favorable diagnoses, Kaderli was unconvinced. “If I was so okay, why was I having terrible leg spasms in the middle of the night, urinating excessively and drinking a quart of water at a time? I knew in my gut that something was wrong,” he says.

One night Kaderli was reading an arti-

cle in *inMotion* that listed the symptoms of diabetes. “As I was reading,” he says, “I remember thinking, ‘I’ve got every one of these symptoms.’”

Determined to follow his instincts, Kaderli made another appointment with his doctor and brought *inMotion* with him. “I showed him the article saying, ‘Look at this. This is me. I have every symptom on this list.’”

The doctor ordered more tests, which revealed that Kaderli’s blood sugar level was 400 (normal level is 80-120). How could this happen? How was this not detected in the previous examination? “Maybe they just weren’t looking for it,” Kaderli reasons. “Maybe they didn’t take a blood sugar reading; maybe because

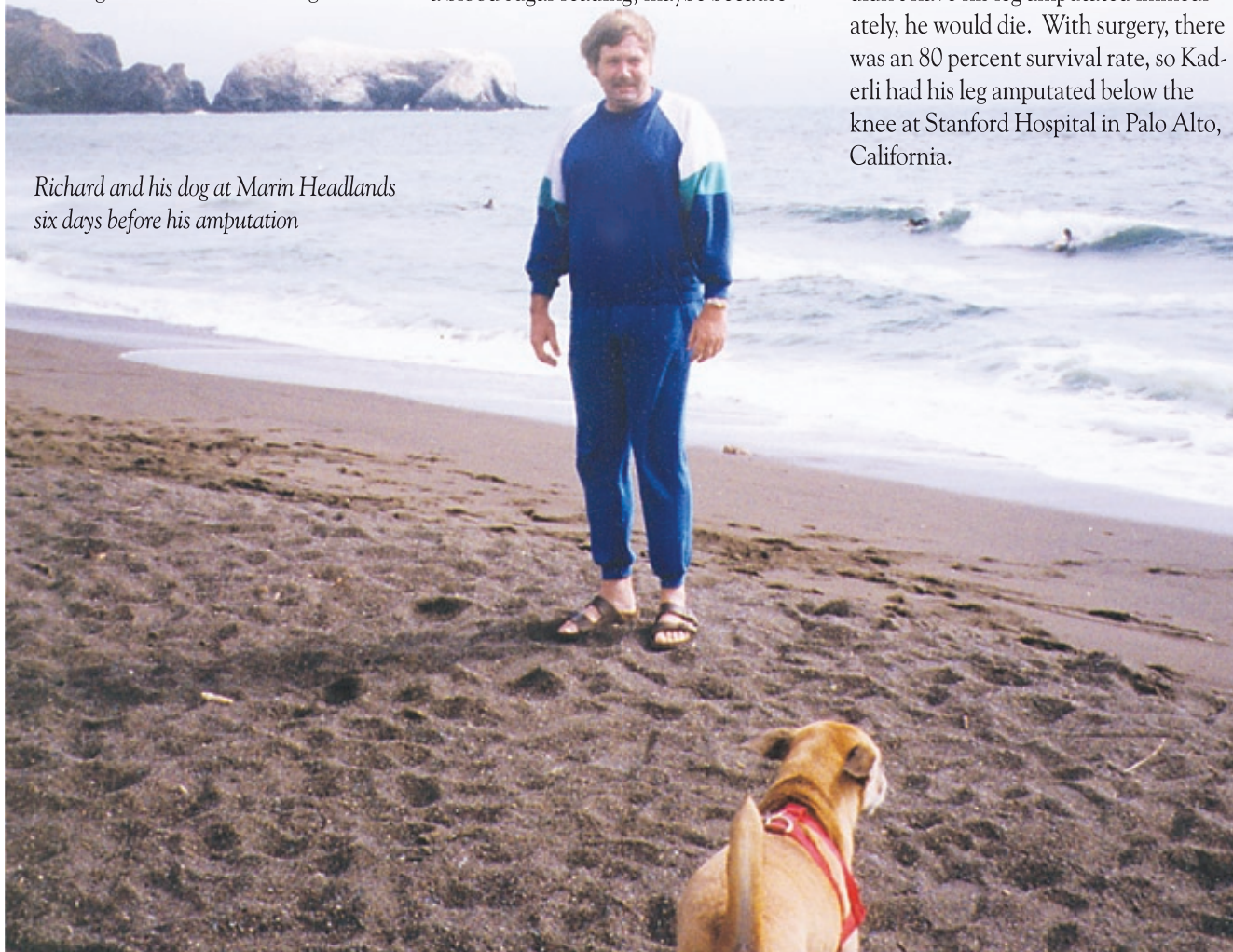
I hadn’t eaten that day...who knows.

Anyway, the doctor gave me a shot of insulin right away and I’ve been taking diabetic pills orally ever since.”

This was not Kaderli’s first experience with a major illness. In 1993, cancer was found in his right ankle. “My ankle was swollen and I just thought it was a weak ankle – maybe I had sprained it,” Kaderli recalls. “I was an avid bike rider for 22 years. I thought maybe it was arthritis or an old injury that had come back to haunt me. But the pain didn’t go away; it hurt for too long.”

Upon examination, doctors discovered a rare form of ligament cancer in his ankle and the prognosis was grim: If he didn’t have his leg amputated immediately, he would die. With surgery, there was an 80 percent survival rate, so Kaderli had his leg amputated below the knee at Stanford Hospital in Palo Alto, California.

Richard and his dog at Marin Headlands six days before his amputation



Born in Kansas City, Missouri, Kaderli moved to Green Valley, California, with his family when he was 5. A free spirit and a perennial student, he knocked around from job to job before finally receiving his credential as an English teacher from San Francisco State University in 1992. He met Linda, a social worker; they married and had a son, Dylan, now 8.

When Dylan was born, Kaderli took some time off from teaching to care for his son. "I was a househusband for a while, so when the cancer struck, I had no tenure, and I wasn't covered by health insurance." Though he returned to work as a substitute teacher in 1994, by then the illness had taken its financial toll on the young couple.

Looking back, Kaderli still finds it difficult to make sense of it all. "I exercised regularly, ate mostly a vegetarian diet, didn't smoke, drank moderately – I thought I was doing everything right. There was no diabetes in my family except for a great uncle, and no cancer at all – still, all this has happened to me," he says with a shrug.

He recognizes, however, that a weight gain after his amputation may have triggered the onset of type 2 diabetes. "Before my amputation, my wife and I were real nature lovers. We went on hikes, camping trips, and did a lot of walking. After I lost my leg, my lifestyle became much more sedentary. I was spending more time on the computer, reading, and watching videos and less time exercising."

His mood swings and inactive lifestyle were having a detrimental effect on his marriage. "I would get up in the morning and my stump would be swollen and I was crabby a lot," Kaderli confesses. "I'd come home from work and all I wanted to do was take my prosthesis off, sit down and not get up. My son and my wife wanted me to go places and do things and I didn't want to move. Naturally, they didn't like my new role as a 'couch potato' and it caused problems."

Recognizing that something had to give, Kaderli began to exercise regularly, swim twice a week, ride his bike every day and walk as much as possible. "I don't push it," he stresses. "I try to do things in moderation. I'm a physical coward and don't mind admitting it. I don't want any more pain than necessary."

Still a vegetarian, he occasionally eats fish. "I don't eat anything that plays with their babies," he jokes, adding that he would eat meat in a minute if it would make him well. "I recently lost 15 pounds, and the exercise has produced a new and healthier me. The benefits of exercise are well worth the effort, and exercise keeps your sugar levels down."

Life is still far from perfect but it's getting better, Kaderli notes. He is still a substitute teacher, writes book reviews –

mostly for science fiction novels – and despite an occasional relapse on chocolate chip cookies, he works hard to stay on a healthy diet and exercise regimen.

"*inMotion* saved my life, and I'll always be grateful," he says. "I'm still crabby," he adds with a smile, "but I have more good days than I used to." ■



Richard with his dad, William Kaderli, and son, Dylan



Richard and son, Dylan