Lawrence was fitted with a regular C-Leg outside of the VA, and Benveniste later fitted him with an Ottobock X2. Lawrence eventually also received an ST&G VGK knee, which he is impressed with, although it does not offer the same cosmetic benefits as the X2. He uses a system Benveniste made him with this knee and a waterproof foot for swimming and kayaking. Benveniste also fitted him for the first time with a pin suspension socket. Benveniste would prefer that Lawrence use a combination pin with proximal suction ring suspension, but early attempts at an experimental version were not successful. Getting the right fit was problematic as Lawrence’s residual limb changes volume more than most patients, Benveniste says. To mitigate his chronic pain, Lawrence has an implanted nerve stimulator, which presents an additional problem for socket fit. When the stimulator fires, it contracts the muscle and makes his muscle mass larger.

“The pin suspension system alone is not my favorite, but with this system, his leg stays on, and it gives him confidence, and he prefers it over skin suction,” Benveniste says.

Through the years, the pair has developed a close bond.

“He saw me and he said ‘Mark, you’re not in great shape. If you want me, I’ll train you,’” Benveniste says. Soon enough, Lawrence was commuting an hour and a half to be a personal trainer to his prosthetist. “He’d meet me at the gym and keep me there for two to three hours,” Benveniste says. Lawrence was so good at training that the gym staff asked him to stop training there because he made the other trainers look bad, says Benveniste.

After working out, the pair would often go to a restaurant for breakfast where Lawrence would tell the stories of his life to an astonished Benveniste.

Through the years, the trials of Lawrence’s life have caught up with him, Benveniste says. Lawrence is battling heart disease, cancer, celiac disease, and chronic pain, as well as the effects of Agent Orange exposure, which include diabetes. He’s gotten used to life with his prosthetic leg and it’s the least of the health issues he deals with, Benveniste says.

The challenges he’s faced in life have not brought him down though. He tells Benveniste that, instead, they helped. Lawrence says, “I have a greater appreciation for life and I am a kinder person.”

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