

Duane Mulvaney survived a 1977 automobile accident that rendered him a quadriplegic. This book chronicles Duane's life experiences from his pre-accident young adulthood up to 2007. Duane has related these colorful accounts in a straightforward, humorous, and philosophical manner.

From Legs to Wheels: The Memoirs of Duane Mulvaney

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/3231.html?s=pdf>

From Legs to Wheels

by Duane Mulvaney

with Linda McCachran-Brown

Copyright © 2007 Misty and Courtney Mulvaney

ISBN-13 978-1-60145-330-3

ISBN-10 1-60145-330-2

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Printed in the United States of America.

Booklocker.com, Inc.

2007

Foreword

On October 7, 2005, my wife, whom I called "Babe," passed from this world while I held her hand. Before she passed she asked me to make some promises to her. One was that I make sure to take care of our children like we did when she was here. Another was that I fulfill a wish that she had for quite some time-- that I write a book. She always said that she knew, from letters I had written to her, that I had the potential to do it. I never thought I would be able to, but I told Babe that I would do my best, so that is what I will do.

Babe thought that it might be of help to others to read about some of the things we had been through for the past twenty-six years. Babe was that kind of lady. If she thought that something was worthwhile and true, she would keep at it until she accomplished her mission. She was always trying to help others, no matter what they asked. She had to at least try, and when she tried, she always tried her best. I am writing this book to honor her and her wishes.

On October 2, 1977 at 4:00 AM my life changed dramatically. I went from being a healthy twenty-six-year-old man to a young man who had to depend on others for everything, and who would continue to be dependent for life. I was in an automobile accident that left me paralyzed from my shoulders down, and it was something that neither my doctors nor I thought I would survive.

This wasn't caused by some dramatic accident, like my recklessly driving 120 miles per hour and crashing into a tree. I wasn't even driving the automobile. A friend, whom I have not seen to this very day, was driving. After the accident I called and asked him several times to come to my parents' house to visit, because I had no hard feelings whatsoever toward him. It was simply what it says--an accident. My friend was doing nothing wrong, unless you call driving while trying to light a cigarette wrong. Many of us smokers have done

Duane Mulvaney

that hundreds of times in our lifetimes. I was only twenty-six years old at the time, and today, at fifty-six, I am still here.

Now that may not seem relevant to some people, but when you have been read your Last Rites three times by a minister, pronounced dead more than once, and actually told by your doctor that it would be a miracle if you made it through the night, it is miraculous.

Most of the things the doctors told me didn't happen as expected. No one was complaining about the situation except me. I no longer wanted to think about living in that condition, although I really didn't understand exactly what that condition was going to be. Some of the things that I saw and heard, or thought that I saw and heard, seemed very different from physical reality. I guess that at the time I shouldn't have been making decisions at all, but I relied on those things in order to make the best decisions for myself.

I had always heard stories about people going through a tunnel of light and seeing relatives, friends, and others they had known throughout their lives. I had heard people talking about sitting and watching themselves being worked on by doctors and nurses while seeing and hearing, in gory detail, all that was happening. I thought that even though people thought they saw and heard those things, they could not possibly be happening at all. I would not talk about the many things I experienced for fear that people would think I was "talking crazy," or maybe even think that I had even more wrong with me than was noticeable on the outside.

Now I have become one of those people. If I had not seen those things with my own eyes, I would never have believed them in a million years.

Chapter Fourteen

It was late September, and 1977 was almost gone. It seemed like the whole year was moving quickly, like it was important that I hurry to get to 1978. If it had been left up to me, I would have slowed it down quite a bit.

I was in no hurry for anything. I liked everything just the way it was, but I guess we don't get to make any decisions about that, do we? I was still wondering where the time went. It just seemed that yesterday I was a graduating from high school, and then all of a sudden I lost a few years somewhere.

Cruising through my small town, I thought it looked as if it was getting ready to close up for the winter. My friends were getting scarcer than ever, but the crowd at the nightclub was still going strong. That is where I would usually end up after work, when I wasn't working on that Mustang.

I wanted to at least get the engine running well enough so it would make it through the wintertime, and I only had a small amount of work to do on that, so it wasn't really a problem. The problem would be painting the car, because it is virtually impossible to come out with a nice paint job when you try to spray paint in cold weather. It takes the paint too long to dry, and also if you had any kind of windy condition, you would lose 75% of your paint in the wind. But I guessed the painting could wait for a nice day. Like I said, I didn't want to rush on this job. If you rushed on a job like that it took all the fun out of it, and I also didn't want to start something that I wasn't going to be able to finish. I wanted to at least get a primer coat on the whole car before winter got here and it was too cold to paint.

I was working third shift this particular week when my friend Bill, who owned the nightclub, asked me if I could possibly open up the place every morning for the next seven days. He said he had to go

out of town for something. I told him that I could open it at 11 AM, which was the regular time he opened it, but that I wouldn't be able to stay past 5 PM, because I had to get at least four hours of sleep before I went to work at 11 PM. He said that would be great, because he had someone who could come in to take over at 4:30 PM.

So I did that for that whole week. I would open the bar at 11 AM and leave at approximately 4:45 PM, be home by 5:00, and get into the bed by 5:30 PM. I would sleep until 9:30 PM, and leave for work at 10 PM. I needed extra time on night shift, because I always took a shower before work so that I would be wide-awake when I got there to relieve my man. That way I wouldn't have to rush. We always let each other off about fifteen minutes early if we could, especially the ones on second shift. Most of those guys were old fellows, and they needed their beauty sleep.

After opening the nightclub for my buddy that week, things went pretty much back to normal. I was working day shift because I traded with a guy who wanted to work second shift. I think he was doing something to his house, and he had to have plenty of daylight hours to get it finished. So, I worked the day shift from 7 AM until 3 PM all that week. That wasn't one of my favorite times to work, because there were too many white collars with clipboards running around during the daytime, and you couldn't do some of the things you would ordinarily do on the other shifts.

That Saturday I came home from work and my brother and sister-in-law were at my parents' house. I hadn't seen them for awhile, so I sat down and talked to them for a couple of minutes. My big brother said, "Little Brother, I need some of your mechanical advice on my sports car." He had a little two-seater Triumph. I never cared much for foreign cars, but he and his wife had always wanted a Triumph. I asked him what kind of advice he needed. He said, "Let's go for a ride."

From Legs to Wheels

So we went down a road where there wasn't much traffic. He said, "Get her up to at least fifty miles per hour and tell me what you think." So I kicked it a little bit, until we got to fifty. He said, "You feel that?" I said, "That shaking?" He said, "Yes, the faster you get it going, the worse it shakes," and he was right. I hadn't hit sixty, and it was shaking really badly. I said to my brother, "Well, you need a new set of universal joints." He said, "Where in the hell do I get that taken care of?" I told him that I could take care of it, if we could find a place open that had the parts for a foreign car. So we went up to a parts place that was just getting ready to close. Coincidentally, they had the exact thing that we needed, which surprised me, because you usually have to order parts for a foreign car. He was very lucky, simple as that. He asked how long it would take for me to put those things on, and I said that I could do everything for him in about forty-five minutes. He asked if I was serious, and I told him that yes, I was.

Usually the worst part was getting the old parts off, because you had to drop the whole drive shaft out from under the car before you could replace the universal joints, and the old parts underneath would be rusty since they had been on the car for so long. If they were really rusty, they could be pure hell to get off. I started on them, and luckily they weren't that hard to get off, which surprised me again. Anyway, I took off the old ones, put on the new ones, and reinstalled the drive shaft. Then we took her for a spin. I went up to seventy-five miles per hour, and you couldn't even feel a shake. So, Big Brother was happy.

We went inside for awhile, and I rolled a ball up and down the hall with my little niece until Mom had dinner ready. Then we ate, and I got ready to shower and go out for awhile. Well, not for a long while. I did have to work the next morning.

It was Saturday night, and the nightclub was going to be packed to the rafters because they had a band playing there that was pretty well known. Actually, I was surprised that they would even play in that small of a place. It was Myron and the Van Dells, a real popular group

Duane Mulvaney

back in the seventies. So I got ready to go and told everyone I would see them all later, and I was off.

As soon as I got there, Bill asked me if I could help them out behind the bar because the place was packing in already. It was only 7:30 PM and that was very unusual, since the band didn't start playing until 9 PM. I told him I could help them out, and I got behind the bar and started working. I had thought I was going out, not going to work. Anyway, just like we thought, we had to turn people away because of the fire code. I think the place was only allowed to have about two hundred people at one time. We had to have a guy at the door with a counter to keep up with that. The drinks were going like crazy, and it was absolute mayhem in there. I knew this band was popular, but I didn't realize how popular.

I was working like hell just to keep up one end of the bar, and there were two other bartenders on the other end. Needless to say, business was really hopping, especially for those poor barmaids who took the drinks to the tables. We were making drinks as fast as we could, and they were delivering them as fast as they could. There wasn't enough room for another bartender to be out there to help, because all of them were needed behind the bar to keep the drinks coming fast enough. I was making drinks three ahead, because I knew the ones that they would be coming for. There wasn't even a chance for the ice to melt before another order came in. Those poor barmaids were running themselves to death, but they were also picking up some nice tips, which is what they wanted. And I wasn't complaining, because the faster they went the more money they made, and they certainly earned every penny that night.

I was looking forward to 2:30 AM just like everyone else, because I hadn't even had a chance to take a drink myself. That was the biggest crowd that was ever in there, and that was probably a good thing, because I don't know if the staff could take much more of working that hard for that long. But like I said, everyone would be counting their tips for quite some time. I was getting several tips

From Legs to Wheels

myself. I was putting them in the girls' fishbowl, a large brandy snifter that they had sitting behind the bar.

Well, 2:00 AM finally came around, and it was time for the last call on drinks. The band had stopped and were putting away some of their equipment, while the crowds were trying to get in that last drink before they had to leave at 2:30 AM when things would finally come to a screeching halt and the doors would be locked. Then everyone could come out from behind the bar, drinks in hand, and sit down at a table somewhere to take a breath. The barmaids were counting their tips, and the bartenders were just sitting there.

Someone said, "To hell with that kind of crowd." I know I made well over 150 drinks myself, not to mention how many were made by the other two bartenders who were behind the bar. Bill wasn't even counting the cash register drawers yet; he was just sitting there catching his breath like all of the rest of us. My arms were too tired to even lift a drink.

After the guys in the band got all of their equipment almost ready to go, they came down, sat with us and said, "Where could a drummer and some guitar players get a drink around here?" I said that I would get them all drinks if they promised to drink slowly, and they said they didn't think they could do anything else at that point. I believed them, because they had played non-stop from 9 PM until 2 AM. I went behind the bar and made them drinks, and they said, "Thank you Man, you're a saint." I replied, "Far from that, not even close," but everyone was happy. They had their pay in their hands, and they were exhausted. I told Bill that it was a good thing that he didn't have to pay me, because he would be broke if he had to pay me by the number of drinks I had made. Fortunately for him, I worked there for nothing. He said, "Thanks, all of you can have anything you like." I said, "How about a cold Budweiser?" He said, "As many as you want." I said, "Who is going to give it to me? My arms are too tired to lift it to my mouth."

Everyone sat around for awhile, and the barmaids started to leave. All that were left were the bartenders, the bouncers, and the band. After sitting there for awhile, a guy in the band said, "Where can you get something decent to eat around here?" One of them said to Bill, "Where is that place you were telling us about that had the killer barbeque?" Bill replied, "It's about thirty minutes from here. How about if I go and get us some? And it will all be on me." Everyone said that sounded like a good deal. Bill said he'd have to get someone to go with him to get it, because it would be one big order. So he wrote down what everyone wanted and said, "Who wants to go with me?" No one said anything. And he said, "Come on, somebody has to go with me," so I said, "I'll go with you. We can take my car."

After we got outside, he said, "Are you driving, or do you want me to?" I threw him my keys and said, "It looks like you are. I'm too tired. I worked all day, I worked all night, and I also put some universal joints on my brother's car before I came here." So he said, "All right, let's go." I got into the passenger side, he rolled into the driver's side, and we were off. He said, "You want the radio on, or are you tired of hearing music?" I replied, "I've heard enough music to last me for quite some time, but if you want to hear it, turn it on." He said, "Forget it." So we went our merry way down the hill toward my little hometown.

We made a right turn onto Round Bottom Road, which is where my parents lived. We stopped at a stop sign, and he started to make a left turn while lighting a cigarette. I had my knees on the dashboard. Suddenly, everything started looking strange, and I've felt weird before, but not like that. It looked as though the trees were going to fall on my window, and I started sliding out of my seat. I said, "What the hell is going on?" And I heard Bill say, "Oh my God!" It seemed like it went on forever. The car was turning on its side, and I tried to stop sliding, but I could not stop. I was sliding onto the floorboard of the car, and Bill looked as though he was hanging on to the door. Then suddenly the car came to a stop.

From Legs to Wheels

I tried to get up, and I could not move. I said to Bill, "What happened?" He said, "I don't know for sure. Are you all right, Man?" I said, "Yes, I think so, but I can't get out of this position." He said, "I'm going to crawl out of this window and see what is wrong." I said, "How did you get up there?" I couldn't turn my head, because it was pressing against the underside of the dashboard. I could see him crawling out the window, and he said again, "Are you all right, Man?" And I said again, "Yes, I guess so, I just can't get out of this position." He said, "I'm going to get some help." I asked him what was wrong, and he said, "Your car is on its side. My side is up in the air, and your side is against the ground." So I said, "Take my hand and pull me out." He said, "I can't do that. I'm sitting on the outside of the door, and I can't reach you from here. I've got to get some help." I said, "Okay, hurry back."

It seemed like he was gone forever. I heard a voice calling my name, and I said, "What?" The voice said, "Are you all right, Man?" I said, "I'm not sure. Who is that I'm talking to?" The voice said, "It's Lee Dale. Your car is turned on its side, right across the street from my house." I said, "Where are we?" He said, "You're right by my house on Valley Avenue. Remember me?" I said, "Yes, I remember you." He asked who was driving my car, and I said, "A friend of mine, where did he go?" He said, "He's gone, I don't know where he went. I'm going to call somebody for help, okay?" and I said, "Yes, I can't get out of here."

So he left, and I was all alone again. I couldn't even hear a car go by. I waited and waited forever, it seemed. I even tried to get a cigarette, because I could see my pack from where I was lying, but I could not get my arms out from my sides. I got hold of a cigarette butt that had spilled from my ashtray when the car turned on its side, and I lit it and smoked it. Finally, I heard some sirens and saw some flashing red lights.

Someone called in to me and said, "Duane!" I said, "What?" and the voice said, "It's the fire department, Man. We are going to get

you out of there, okay?" I said, "Yes." I just kept hearing guys talking and kept seeing the flashing lights. Then another voice called in to me and said, "Duane!" and I said, "Yes." The voice said, "This is John from the fire department. Remember me?" I replied, "Yes, I remember you, can you get me out of here?" His voice replied back, "We're working on it right now. We might have to bust your windshield out of your car." I said, "No, don't you dare, I'm restoring this car." He said, "I know that, but that's the only way we can get to you. We have to get in there and see if we can pull you out." I said, "Okay, but do as little damage as possible." His voice replied back, "Don't worry, we'll do as little harm as possible to your car." I replied, "Give me a cigarette." He said, "You aren't getting any cigarettes. There's gasoline all over underneath your door, and that's exactly your location." I said, "All right, get moving."

Finally, I heard someone crawling on the outside of my car. He looked into the window and said, "Man, we are going to have to cover you up with a tarp so we can keep the glass from falling on you." I said, "Okay, whatever you have to do to get me the hell out of here." He replied, "I'll be right back." So I lay there, trying to dislodge my turquoise chokers that were digging into my chest. I finally got them loose, and I was trying to move myself so they could get to me.

The door above my head opened up and someone crawled into the backseat and said, "Do you think we can take this passenger seat out?" I said, "I don't know if you can get to the bolts on the front side." He said, "That's what I thought, so we are going to have to get that seat out before we can pull you out. But first, I have to cover you with this tarp so that the glass will stay off of you." I said, "Do whatever you have to do, I'm starting to cramp up in here, Man." So he covered me with the tarp and said, "Hold on Buddy, we're here for you." I said "Thanks," and then his voice replied, "Here goes." I heard a pounding sound and felt little pieces of something hitting the tarp that I was covered with. I thought to myself, "There goes all of that interior work that I've done, not to mention a windshield gone." Those were strange things to think when I was in that predicament, but I wasn't injured

From Legs to Wheels

badly at the time. I just remember cramping in my legs, and that was hurting like hell. All of a sudden I felt bigger pieces of glass falling on that tarp I was covered with, and finally, the whole windshield was gone. Another voice said, "We're going to try to pull you out of there now, Buddy." I said, "Okay," and I asked who was in the back seat now. A voice replied, "Don't worry Man, we're going to pull you out of there." I said, "Ready when you are." They said, "We're going to put our hands under your arms and try to pull you out on the count of three, all right, Pal?" And I said, "Yes, all ready to go." I remember a voice counting "One, two, three..." and then everything went black.

For awhile I was in and out of consciousness, I guess. When I woke up a little bit later I was in the back of an ambulance, with the sirens going like crazy. I thought I was talking to someone, but they weren't listening to me. After that I don't remember anything else until they were taking me into a doorway that got very, very bright. I think I remember someone saying, "We can't handle a case like that. You have to take him to..." and then I heard nothing.

When I came to I heard noises, and people were talking and running all around me. There were blinding bright lights in my eyes, but I could not feel anything that they were doing to me. I do remember the people rushing and talking, talking, talking forever. I was trying to say something, but they kept interrupting me. I kept trying to ask them, "What is wrong with me, why aren't you people answering me?" But no one replied back. They just kept on working and running around. I heard things like, "Oh my God, he is bleeding out", and I said, "I'm all right, leave me alone, and turn those lights out of my eyes, please." I remember someone saying, "No way he is going to make it. He is bleeding out profusely, and we can't get into him without cutting his throat." I remember thinking, "They're going to kill me, I wonder why? I didn't do anything to any of them. Why are they trying to hurt me?"

They had me all tied down everywhere, and I couldn't move anything. Even my legs would not come loose. I tried and I tried, but nothing was happening. I couldn't move any part of my body. They

must have had my head tied down with something as well, because I could not lift it up. I wanted to see what they were doing, but they wouldn't let me see anything. I felt someone cut off the five turquoise chokers I had around my neck, and that was the last I saw of them.

Finally a lady came up to me and said, "Sir, Sir, can you hear me?" and I kept saying, "Yes, yes, I can," but she just acted like I wasn't even talking to her. Suddenly a big tall man came up to me and I remember him saying to the other person, "I am going to have to put a couple of holes right in the temples." I didn't know what he was talking about. I was wondering to myself what in the world they were going to do to me. Then that big tall man came up to me and said, "Sir, I'm going to have to drill a couple holes in the sides of your head, but I can't give you anything for pain." Then he started a drill of real silver, and he said to one of the other people, "Put this piece of leather between his teeth before I start, and get another person to help you hold his head." I remember the sound of that drill. I had used one earlier that morning at work, and I knew what it was. Someone put the leather piece between my teeth, and the silver drill was coming into my head. I remember pain, that's all I can remember, pain--and then there was nothing. Complete silence filled the room, and I couldn't hear anyone talking anymore.

I remember getting up from that thing that I was lying on; that hard, hard thing that I had been on forever. I was finally free, and then suddenly, once again, I was in total darkness. And somehow, I don't know how, I got back to that hard table once again. It was strange, because I didn't think they could see me, but I could see them clearly. They were talking to each other, but they wouldn't talk to me. Somehow it seemed like they were ignoring me, and I didn't know why, because I hadn't done anything to them. I thought that maybe it was because of all the blood all over the place, even all over the nurses. Maybe they were mad because of that. I told them that I was sorry. Now I was gone again, and no one was there. Complete darkness was all I saw.

From Legs to Wheels

Suddenly everything is brilliantly bright, and I am flying at supersonic speed. I have to close my eyes, the light is so bright. But I feel better. I don't hurt at all, anywhere. I guess I am flying. I don't know where I'm going, but it must be to some place far away, because I have been flying forever. Now I see the real bright light again. It hurts my eyes, even though they are closed. I can't handle it any more. I am going faster and faster. It is very warm, and I am still flying. I must have flown a million miles already, and I am still going faster and faster. Again, I don't hurt anymore at all, and even though my eyes are wide open now, I don't see anyone or anything. It's really kind of beautiful, but I keep wondering where I'm going.

I don't know, but I think I'm slowing down now. I feel a breeze, real cool and comfortable. I can hear voices now. They sound familiar, but I don't know who they are, because I can't see anyone. Nobody is around me--nothing but that bright light. I am going slower and slower, but I'm not stopping. Yet I feel real good. It's really peaceful, flying like this. Very, very, peaceful. I wonder again where I'm going. I hope it's to some place I know. I know it will be nice, because there is a real feeling of relief inside me. It's almost like I am hollow inside, and nothing is hurting me. No one is saying anything at the moment, but there was talking before, because I heard the voices. I've never felt this peaceful before in my entire life. I would like to stay here, wherever I am, but I am still flying slowly. Maybe I will stop soon. I hope so, although it feels very good flying like this. I don't have to do anything but relax and do nothing. I am so peaceful with myself. I wonder where all of those people went? I hope they are not still upset with me.

I am stopping now. The ground is nothing but smoke, or maybe steam, but it's not hot, and it's not burning me. I can't see anything that looks like water, but that steam is still all over the ground. I can't see anything now, but I think I hear someone talking. Yes, I do hear voices. They sound familiar, but I can't see anyone anywhere. I do see a big, beautiful lake. It must go for miles. It is real deep blue, and a white steamy color is all around it. I think I will stay here if it's all right with whomever owns it or lives here. Maybe they will let me stay. Now I am

Duane Mulvaney

completely stopped, but when I look down all I see is that real bright light again. I can't move now; I have to stay right here until someone comes by so I can ask if I can stay here forever. Maybe they will let me fish in that beautiful lake. It looks like there would be some really big fish in there. I wonder who owns it? I would be really grateful if they would let me stay. I sure hope so; it's beautiful, so tremendously lovely. It's one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen in my lifetime. Oh, I hope I can stay here--I really, really do.

I hear those familiar voices again, speaking from a distance. I don't understand why I can hear their voices so clearly, yet they are not anywhere to be seen. I wonder where I am. I can't stop wondering, because I have a feeling that it's a place no one knows about, except for the people who are here. I keep wondering if this place is where you go after you have had some kind of experience like I had when I came up through that bright tunnel. I can still see it, but I have no way of moving up or down, left or right. I am completely out of control of my body. I have no way of knowing what is wrong with me, or even if there is indeed something wrong with me. That might help to explain things.

I'm surely not going to find anything out unless I get to talk to someone who knows what is going on, and who will be able to answer some questions. On the other hand, maybe I am not supposed to know anything yet, at least until they are ready to let me ask questions. I wonder if it is possible that I could be dead. But then on the other hand, if I were dead I wouldn't be able to see and hear the things that I have been seeing and hearing with my own eyes and ears. I hear the voices coming again. They are getting closer and closer. I hear a voice that sounds so familiar, yet I cannot put my finger on whose it is. I do know that this can't be a bad place.

I can still hear the voices, and I can see shadows of people walking toward me. The voices are getting clearer and stronger, and then suddenly I see my grandfather. I go to him, but yet I have not walked. I reach my arms out for him and he says, "What are you doing

From Legs to Wheels

up here, Sonny Boy?” I reply to him, “I don’t know how I got here, where am I? Am I in heaven? I must be, if you are here. I knew that you would be going to heaven when you left us down on earth.” He said to me, looking right into my eyes, “You don’t have any idea of where you are, but let me tell you this, my Boy, you do not belong here at all. I know that you have been here for quite awhile waiting to see where you are, and I completely understand all of the things that are going through your head. But believe me, even though this is such a beautiful place and you want to stay, it’s not your time to be here.” I replied, “But I want to stay here with you. How many of our relatives are here? Are your brothers and sisters here? I remember them just slightly, because they went to heaven a long time ago. So this is where heaven is? So it is up, just like everyone thought? Is there room for everyone? Can we fish in that beautiful lake like we used to do together, every week? I have so many questions for you, can we go somewhere and sit down so you can tell me all about this place?” And he replied, “You do not belong here now, it is not your time.”

All the while my grandfather was talking, he was lightly touching me in the center of my chest with his index finger. He wasn’t poking me, in fact he was barely touching me, but his touch was enough to make me move backwards toward the tunnel with that real bright light. I asked my grandfather, “Well, am I right? Is this heaven?” He says, “You do not need to know anything more, except for that you are here ‘way too early. You shouldn’t be here yet.” I told him that something happened to me that made me come here. I asked if he came up in the big tunnel of light, and he said, “Never mind how I got here. I was an old man when I came here, remember?” I said, “Yes, but we still didn’t want you to go anywhere. Grandmother misses you a lot, and so does everyone else in the family. So can you at least tell me if this is where I will go when I die?” He said, “That is a question that can only be answered by someone with much more power than I have up here, or anyone else, for that matter.” It almost seemed as though he was being a little mean to me, so I asked him, “Grandpa, how come you are pushing me away? Don’t you want me to stay with you?” And he said, “Son, when you have finished your job where you came from, I

will more than welcome you with open arms, and I assure you, that will be quite some time from now.” I said, “But you don’t understand, something happened to me that I can’t explain, and I think I must be dead.” He answered with a smile, “Son, if you were dead, do you think you would be standing here talking to me like you are right now?” I replied, “No, I suppose not, but I don’t understand what is going on.” He said, “In due time, Son, in due time, you will be informed of the reason that you cannot stay here. You have things where you came from that remain undone.” I said, “I don’t have anything that I haven’t done.” He said, “You will never realize how many people down there need you, and it will be awhile before you find out who some of them are. And there are some things you are going to do that you would never believe you are capable of doing. Just remember there are some things that you have to do. You will discover that they have been waiting for you to do them for quite awhile, and you cannot leave until you finish what you have started.” I told him that I had nothing started, that I could stay there, and that I had left nothing undone down there or wherever. But my grandfather just kept walking toward me, backing me up, although I felt like I was floating instead of walking backwards. I said, “But Grandpa, can’t I stay just for awhile?” We got right by the end of the bright tunnel of light, and he said, “You go down there where there are people who need you to do the things that only you can do.” All the while, he still had his finger on my chest, and he spoke again: “Son, take care of business like you always did, and do your best. That is all that anyone can ask for.”

I felt like I was getting closer to the edge of the tunnel. It couldn’t be very much farther before I started falling again, down this time, I guess, instead of up. Funny thing is, I wasn’t upset, afraid, or anything like that. I was comforted by this voyage and I guessed I was in heaven, but like my grandfather said, I would never know until it was my time.

I always thought it would be so much different when you died, so now I was confused. I thought that I probably had to be in heaven if my grandpa was there, because he was a very good man, and I know

From Legs to Wheels

that God would not leave anyone behind who was like him. He was a wonderful man, kind and gentle to everyone. He had no enemies, and everyone liked talking to him and listening to his stories. I know I certainly did. Then suddenly he said, "Goodbye, Son, for now, and you get down there with the people that love you, and the people that will love you, even though you don't know some of them yet. You have a lot of work to do, so get down there and do it like you always did before."

Suddenly I was at the very edge of the bright lights in the tunnel, and he said, "It was good to see you, Son, and I will see you again in due time!" I said, "But Grandpa, can't I stay up here with you?" The whole time I was starting to fall I was saying goodbye, and he was saying, "I'll see you when the time is right, but until then, do as I say and get down there and finish your life." I started falling faster and faster, and I was still thinking that I certainly had seen heaven, because my grandpa was there, and wherever he was, that had to be heaven.

All the while I was falling I was thinking, wondering if things would be the way they were when I left, although I didn't know where that was. It had to be some kind of place where people were trying to fix something on me, but I didn't know what. I did not remember anything that needed fixing, because I felt real good, and I didn't have anything wrong with me. I thought to myself, "I guess I'll find out when I stop."

I came to a stop at the end that tunnel of bright light, and I could see this big room where a lot of doctors and nurses were working on me. I could see myself lying on the same table where I was lying before I went up through the tunnel. They were rushing around at a tremendous speed and trying to do things to me, apparently in order to keep me alive. I guessed that none of them even noticed that I was gone for awhile, traveling through that tunnel of light and talking to my grandfather and everything. I wondered what they had done while I was gone.

Now I had this metal contraption on my head to keep it from moving. They called it a “halo.” They were also putting a long tube down my throat and blood was coming out of my mouth, just like a fountain. Blood was going all over the place. They had bags of blood hanging on bars trying to get it inside of me, but so much was coming out that the blood going in was having trouble keeping up. I thought this was really unbelievable, my sitting and watching the doctors and nurses working on me. I could see that I was in tremendous pain, but where I was, I could not feel any pain whatsoever.

I had not been in the hospital much in my life, except for when I visited people, and when I got some stitches after having been in a couple of scuffles. There had also been a couple of minor automobile accidents here and there, and I did get those seventy-two stitches after sticking my hand inside that bucket of ice with the broken glass in it. That one kept me from working for so long and drove me crazy. Then there was that car accident where my left arm went through my windshield, but that is another story altogether. Anyway, I don’t ever remember seeing anything like this emergency room stuff. It was the kind of thing that you would see on a television show or something like that.

It was really some experience sitting or floating in the air at the end of a tunnel of light, and then watching yourself being worked on by so many people. The only thing that disturbed me was that I didn’t see anyone I knew. There was no one from my family--no parents, brothers or sisters, or anyone like that, and no friends, no nothing. That was strange.

I sat there forever watching them work on me, and then suddenly I found myself out of the tunnel of light. Now I felt like I was lying in a bed, and I was in tremendous pain all over my body, except for one thing--the fact that I could not feel my arms and legs. I remember thinking that I must be going crazy, because although I was in excruciating pain all over my whole body from my head to my feet, I still could not feel my limbs. I wasn’t aware 100% of the time that I

From Legs to Wheels

was going in and out of consciousness, so I guess that would explain the weird things that I was feeling. One minute I felt as though I was going to be all right, and the next minute I felt like I was going to die. I know that more than once I was in the state of death in some way. It was really weird, and awfully hard to explain.

Chapter Sixteen

One morning my nurse came in and told me that they were thinking about moving me upstairs to the fifth floor, because they thought I was stable enough. That was the floor for spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, and things like that. Later on that afternoon my doctor came in and said, “Did you hear the good news?” I moved my lips to say “Yes.” The doctor went on to say that they weren’t trying to get rid of me; they just thought that I would be all right on the fifth floor. They thought I would be in good hands up there with the specialized nursing, so what did I think about that? Trying to speak was very frustrating, because no one could understand me by reading my lips. But they would still ask me questions like that, knowing that I could not answer them so that they could hear me.

Moving sounded good to me, because I must have been in that place for at least a week. The next morning my doctor came in and said, “You’re moving today. They will be here to take you upstairs to the fifth floor. You’ll be right across from the nurses’ station, and they’ll be able to keep a close eye on you.” He went on to say that the staff was really good up there.

So I waited and waited until early afternoon, and here came about four people to move me. Two of them were young girls who were nursing students, and the other two guys were orderlies. They started getting things ready. They had to get a specialist to get the respirator ready to be moved to another location. They couldn’t unhook the machine, because it was breathing for me, and I wondered to myself how they were going to move all of this stuff into one elevator. I have to say I was pretty nervous about being moved anyway, and I would’ve felt much better if one of the big shot doctors was going to go with us. Unfortunately, it was only going to be me and those four young ones, which seemed a little scary to me. Anyway, they finally got everything unhooked and ready to roll, and we started moving. The two guys were

From Legs to Wheels

pushing the bed, one girl was moving the IV's, and the other girl was moving the respirator. The respiratory specialist also accompanied us.

Finally we got to an elevator, and we waited for a couple of minutes before it stopped and they started moving everything on, including me, which I thought was a good idea. Once they got everything loaded onto the elevator, they pushed the button to go to the fifth floor and the door started to close. Then, just like that, it stopped, and everyone was looking around trying to see why. Someone said that the bed wasn't in there far enough, and someone else said that it was in as far as it was going to go. Then someone said, "This halo thing on his head, is that what is stopping it? We only need about two inches." So they tried to maneuver the bed around a little bit, trying to make a couple more inches of room, but nothing doing. Then one of the student nurses came up with the brilliant idea of taking the steel halo thing off of my head until we got upstairs, so that the door would close. I was trying to say "No, that isn't a good idea at all," while they were saying, "I'm not sure, we might get in trouble if we remove it and we can't put it right back on as soon as we get off of the elevator." Then they actually started to unscrew the bolts that were holding the thing that kept my head straight. One of them said to the other, "There's blood coming out of this hole, is there any coming out on your side?" Then they took it off, and someone said, "Now try it." Someone else said, "That's good, the doors will close now." So they pushed the button to go upstairs, and my head was hurting like pure hell where they had removed the halo thing.

Anyway, as soon as the elevator doors opened, there were two registered nurses standing there waiting for me. They asked what had taken us so long, and my helpers said they had to take the steel thing off of my head so we could fit the bed on the elevator. Those nurses said, "WHAT! You actually removed the halo from this man's skull?" They said, "Yes, that was the only way we could get him to fit in the elevator." You've heard people talk about really reading the riot act to people. Well, these two registered nurses actually did read the riot act to them, very loudly and clearly. I was thinking to myself that it

actually felt good to have that thing off of my head, and that at least I was out of some pain.

Then those nurses said, "Now we'll have to call his doctors up here to put the halo back in his head." I thought, "Oh my God, they're going to put that damned thing back on my head, as good as it feels being off." So I was in once again for a wonderful time of agonizing pain, because all you had to do was touch that thing, and it hurt like hell.

Well, we made it to the fifth floor nursing station. They were saying to me, "Mister, are you all right?" knowing that I could not answer them. I heard one of them say to another nurse, "That poor man is going to have to go through having that halo put back on his head, and you know how painful that will be for him." They couldn't stop talking about the ones who took it off. I never saw them again after that.

Soon my doctor came in, and another doctor was with him. They said, "Sir, we are going to have to put this back on your head. It should have never been removed in the first place." Like I had anything to do with that. They told me to just try and bear the pain for a couple of minutes. Then they started, one doctor on each side, putting in their screws at the same time. Talk about tremendous pain--that was it. Those nurses actually felt sorry for me. They were ranting and raving, and they just could not believe that those student nurses actually removed that thing from my head. They all were completely furious. I hoped those poor girls didn't get into too much trouble, but the way things sounded, it wasn't likely that they got off of the hook that simply. I found out later that there was a bigger elevator, for large loads, right next to the smaller one where all of this had occurred.

After the doctors were finished and I was lying there in excruciating pain, they moved me into the room right across from the nurses' station just like they said they would. There was another man in that room, but his bed curtain was drawn shut so that I couldn't see him

From Legs to Wheels

when they brought me in. The nurses were trying to make me as comfortable as possible. They were really nice and sweet, but I'd seen the way they could be. Anyway, they said they had to ask me some questions. They told me to blink my eyes once for "yes," and twice for "no." Then they started asking me question after question. They needed to know everything there was to know about me. When they were finished, they said, "Sweetheart, if you need anything, we will not be far, and so don't you worry about anything." They said that I didn't look real well, and I said with my lips, "I'm sick to my stomach," but they couldn't understand that.

Suddenly, blood started shooting out of my mouth like a fountain, and they called another Code Blue for me immediately. There were more doctors and nurses than I could count, and they started working on me. I had no idea what they were doing. Anyway, after they got the bleeding stopped they said that my ulcer was causing more problems, but apparently they had it under control, because everyone left except for my nurses.

I looked at one of them, and her white dress was completely red with blood. I apologized to her for getting blood on her dress and she understood what I was saying. She told me not to ever let her hear me apologize to her or anyone else for something like that, because that was not my fault, and that is what they were there for. "It's our job," she said, "Is that a deal?" And I said with my lips, "Yes." She said, "Thank you," and that was my first lesson. I told her that I had been downstairs forever, I thought, all night and all day. She said to me, "Honey, you have been downstairs in intensive care for six weeks." I said, no, that I had just come in last night, and she said, "Sugar, you have been here for six whole weeks. Believe me, I would not lie to you."

The nurses stuck their heads in my room every time one of them would go by. They would ask, "Do you need anything, Sir?" and I would say "No" with my eyes and lips. Being a nurse is one of the most

Duane Mulvaney

demanding jobs in the world. They work constantly around the clock, and most of mine worked twelve-hour shifts.

As I was lying there thinking about how long I had been in intensive care, thinking that it had been overnight when it had actually been six whole weeks, I was really shocked. I had never really thought about it before, I was mainly just lying there and wondering when they were going to be done with me. Apparently, I was 'way off course with that.

One of the nurses came in and said, "Would you like to watch some television?" I told her with my lips and eyes that I was not able to see the TV, because I was lying flat and I wasn't allowed to have a pillow under my head. She said, "Let me see what I can do," and I said, "That's all right." She said, "Just let me check into something." About an hour later she came back in and said, "Do you know what these are?" and she held up a pair of weird-looking glasses. I said, "No." She said, "They are called prism glasses. I will put them on you and they will reflect the television screen back to you so that you can watch it." So she put them on me and said, "What would you like to watch?" I kind of looked as if I didn't know, which I didn't. Anyway, she said, "Tell me when to stop." She started changing the channels on the TV, and finally I said with my eyes "There," but I really didn't know what it was. Anything was fine with me. It happened to be Charlie's Angels.

The guy in the next bed said, "Oh yes, we know he's all right, because he's already looking at women." That voice coming from the other side of the curtain sounded so familiar to me when I had heard him talking to his nurse. He knew my name, because my nurses would come in from time to time and said to me, "Mr. Mulvaney, are you all right?" And I would say, "Yes."

One day, that guy on the other side of me said to my nurse in a loud voice, "Could you come here for a moment, please?" My nurse went over there and said, "Can I help you, Donald?" He said, "That man lying in the bed next to me, could you tell me his first name?" She

From Legs to Wheels

said, "I'll ask him." So she asked me, and I said, "No problem with me." I did not care. Like I said, his voice sounded so familiar to me. He said, "Ask him if he would mind if I saw him." I said "No," so she opened the curtains. He looked at me and said, "Just what I thought. Mr. Mulvaney, do you remember me? I was one of your teachers for about three years. You were one of my better students, and you won a lot of blue ribbons in my class." I automatically knew that man was Mr. Hogue, my old shop teacher from high school. He said jokingly, "I'm not surprised to see you here." I told him that I'd told my nurse I knew he was over there, and that was the reason I stopped the television on Charlie's Angels, just for him. They laughed, and he talked to the nurse, kind of whispering, asking what had happened to me. I thought to myself that he didn't have to whisper, I wouldn't mind hearing a little more myself, but she told him what she knew. I heard him ask her later that night if I was going to live, and she said, "We're not positive. We're taking it day by day. He has been in intensive care for the last six weeks, and we've lost him four times so far." He said, "My goodness. He is one of the good kids in the world. He was always an excellent student, but he was also one of the most mischievous, as I'm sure he would tell you. Some of the work he did in my woodshop won several blue ribbons at the Hamilton County Fair." She said, "It's a small world, isn't it?" And he said, "It certainly is." Then he hollered over and said jokingly, "Mr. Mulvaney, I'll try to keep it down over here so that you can get some rest."

Mr. Hogue was always one of my favorites when I was in high school. He was a good guy, and one of my high school buddies. He and his wife had also been in an automobile accident. They took his wife to another hospital and brought him to this one, something to do with his ankle being crushed in the accident. Although he told me the whole story several times I never remembered it. I guess it was because I was kind of worn out. When my parents came in I heard him say hello to them, and my mother asked who that was. I said, "Take a look for yourself." My dad looked over and saw that it was Mr. Hogue. My parents both knew him, because years ago my dad would bring home paper for him and Mr. Hogue would stop by the house and pick it up.

Duane Mulvaney

We got along very well, and wood shop was one of my favorite classes, of course.

Well, time went by, and they told me that I was making progress. I asked them exactly what was wrong with me, how long I would be there, and when I could go home. They were always very reluctant to answer those questions. Some of them would say, "Honey, you will have to ask your doctor about that." It seemed to me that they were hiding something from me, or not telling me the whole story, because every time my parents came over they would take them outside the door to answer their questions. I knew something wasn't right, and I just kept asking.

One night I had this little petite black nurse who was the sweetest thing you ever met, and she was so beautiful that she looked like a doll. She came into my room, pulled a chair up to my bed, and sat down. "Mr. Mulvaney," she said, "I will try to help you out with your questions, if you don't mind. You can ask me anything and I will try to give you a straight answer, because I don't think it's fair that no one has told you much, so ask away." I simply asked, with my lips and head motions, exactly what was wrong with me. She said, "Do you know what a quadriplegic is?" I told her "No." She said, "Well, you are one now." I asked if I would be in a wheelchair for some time, and she said, "Yes. I hate to tell you that, but you need to know the truth." She continued to say, "My opinion from what I have heard is that you will be in a wheelchair for the rest of your life. Furthermore, they do not expect you to leave the hospital, and they give you a short while." I said, "A short while for what?" And she said, "To live." I said, "Okay, that's something I was not aware of." Then she said, "There is always hope, and don't you give up. You have made it farther than anyone in this shape I have seen in my nursing career." We talked for quite some time, and then she said, "I guess I'd better leave so you can get some sleep. I should have left two hours ago, but I thought you needed to know all of that, and it's your right to know. I am sorry if I upset you in any way." I said, "Not at all, I appreciate your telling me." She said, "I hope I don't get into trouble, but it would be worth it. I was

From Legs to Wheels

tired of seeing you lying there, not knowing completely what is wrong with you. I just didn't think it was right." I said, "I won't tell anything if you won't." She said with a smile, "That's a deal, Sweetheart." I thanked her once more as she was leaving. So that is the story of how I found out exactly what was wrong with me. That little nurse kept me up to date from that time on. She was a sweetheart of a lady.

I knew that Thanksgiving time was coming up, because I heard all of the nurses talking about it. They would talk about whose house they were going to that year, what changes they were making in tradition, and things like that. Someone made a turkey with a beak, dressed it, and hung it from my TV set. A week or so went by and I suffered a collapsed lung, and that was another Code Blue. They had to stick a seven-inch needle into my side to blow my lung back up, and that was a big problem. For a couple of weeks they had to watch me very closely. I thought a lot about what that nurse had told me about being in a wheelchair for the rest of my life. I was only twenty-six years old, and that wasn't one of the things I had in my portfolio of life plans.

I have to admit that sometimes I would lie around and think of ways to die. I know that sounds like the coward's way out, but when I thought about it, the idea of living the rest of my life in a wheelchair was terrible. I would not be able to do the things that I had taken for granted, such as eating, bathing, walking, and a thousand other things that I would never otherwise have thought about. I wondered over and over why in the world God would let someone live in this kind of condition, but my answer was always the same--that apparently He had something planned for me. That still didn't stop me from occasionally thinking about an easy way out. I never spoke to anyone about that, but I guess it's time to talk about it now, thirty years later.

Eventually I decided that I might as well fight to stay. I learned just recently, since I started writing this book, that God didn't leave me here for nothing. He had a plan for me, 'way ahead of time. A very dear

Duane Mulvaney

friend of mine made me realize all of the things I have now that I wouldn't have had if I had died. There are several really good things I will leave behind, things that will bring joy to someone in this world or maybe to the world itself. Believe me, they are capable of that. Those really good things are my children. My last thirty years in my wheelchair and bed have challenged me to the limit, but I haven't given in yet, and I'm not planning to. If someone wants me now, they will have to take me the hard way. That is something else that this very dear friend helped me to realize, as well. She is an angel to me and she was to my late wife. If my wife talked highly of her when she was alive, then she must be a really special person, and now I know that myself. Thank you once again, Friend, you know who you are!

Getting back to what I was talking about--the holidays were coming up, and we were having one of the worst winters in the history of Cincinnati, Ohio. I think we had the lowest temperatures and the largest amount of snow. Several other weather records were broken as well, and I missed out on all of it.

I used to love wintertime, but now I can barely make it through one. I can't go out in the winter, because I have arthritis in my neck and in all of my other joints. If I get too cold I have pain all over my body. Of course I don't realize that I am getting too cold, and when I do realize it, it's too late. Then I have to pack myself in heat with microwaved pads and blankets from the dryer. It's the same thing in the summertime. I don't realize that I am overheated until it happens, and then I have to pack myself in ice. So it isn't any walk in the park, but just some things that you must go through to fight your way back.

In 1989 I had pneumonia, and that almost finished me off. The doctors actually sent me home to die, because they said that there was nothing else they could do for me. So I came home with two lungs full of gunk, and I had to sit up in my wheelchair twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. They gave me a doctor's appointment for two weeks later. The morning of the doctor's appointment, my wife put me on the bed to dress me. When she turned me over, stuff started coming

From Legs to Wheels

out of my lungs. I will spare you an explanation, due to the grossness of it. Then I took my little oxygen tank, and we headed for the doctor.

When the doctor came into his office, he looked like he had seen a ghost. I said that very thing to him. He said, "I thought I was looking at one now. I am looking at your X rays, and I cannot believe it. Your lungs are perfectly clear of fluids. How in the world did you do that?" And I said, "Doctor, if I told you that, then we would both know, right?" He told me that I had a point there. Anyway, I eventually told him that "...this lady right here, my wife, is bound and determined to keep me around, so you have to talk to her about that." He said, "Let me listen to you." After a couple of rounds with the stethoscope he told me that I was in better health than he was. I said, "Let's not get ridiculous, but it was a close call, wasn't it?" He said, "Mrs. Mulvaney, you have a handful here, don't you?" She said, "Absolutely, but I wouldn't have it any other way." He said, "I will call and cancel the oxygen, because obviously you don't need it anymore, but I bet that first breath after clearing those lungs was a hard one." I told him that it felt like someone shot a fire extinguisher down my throat and into to my lungs. He said, "I believe that you're telling me the truth. You had a sense of humor while you were in the hospital, but I think you had the feeling that you weren't going home, is that right?" "Absolutely, that is correct," I said. "So let's give it up for my wife. She lost a lot of sleep, just like I did." I give a little credit to myself too, just for being too stubborn to let go too soon.

Anyway, it isn't very easy being a quadriplegic, but it's better than not being anything at all. I have made a lot of people laugh more than once, and I will have a lot more laughs to go.

Being in the hospital was a nine-month vacation in a place that you would rather not be. But sometimes in life you just don't get to choose, and you have no say. So like they say, if life gives you lemons, make lemonade. I had long nights in the hospital lots of times, especially on the weekends. It would get so dreadfully quiet that you wouldn't realize you were ten feet away from several people. Those

Duane Mulvaney

long nights had lousy TV. I think I watched every rerun of M*A*S*H and Happy Days that had ever been made. Daytime was especially terrible for TV, especially if you didn't like soap operas. So it was a time to make myself busy, sometimes at the nurses' expense, but it was all in good fun.

I had this machine to the left of my bed, and it was full of ice. There was a tube going from the machine down my nose and into my stomach to feed me a liquid called Ensure, and it was so cold that I felt like I was having a permanent brain freeze. One day I came up with a brilliant idea of how I could get that out of my nose. I got hold of the tubing with my mouth, gripped it with my teeth, crimped it, and waited to see what would happen. I thought that if something happened to the tubing, they would have to take it out. So I waited and waited until I noticed, out of the corner of my eye, that a huge bubble of chocolate Ensure was forming in the tubing. I suddenly realized that I had better let that tubing open up, but too late. It busted, and it went all over me, all over the ceiling, all over the curtains, and all over the walls. Not to mention all over my hair and everywhere else you could imagine. That was another backfire on me, but maybe I would be successful the next time! That evening the nurses told my parents what I had done, and my father thought it was rather cool. So did my mother, but she wouldn't let it show, at least until all of the nurses were gone from the room. That was just one of the pastimes I came up with during my nine-month visit.

The nurses were very cool about everything. They were waiting until the pipe could be removed from my throat so they could hear what my voice sounded like. I guess that's as good a thing to think about as anything while you're in the hospital. I had a trick in mind for when that time came around, but that was going to be a ways down the road. For now, it was lip reading all the way. I thought I would try sign language, but I forgot that you had to have your arms and hands for that. Silly me!

From Legs to Wheels

I continued to make the most of being in the hospital by having a little fun along the way. The nurses all loved me, and I felt the same way about them. I did make them all sick when I would eat some of the stuff my mother would bring for me for dinner. I ate things like ox tail soup, sauerkraut, pigs' ears, beef tongue, Limburger cheese on rye bread with a slice of onion, and homemade headcheese. Of course, that is just a sampling of the things my parents would bring me to eat. Some of the nurses would ask what I was having for dinner so they could figure out whether or not they wanted to come into my room during dinnertime. One redheaded nurse used to really get sick, I mean actually sick, by just smelling some of my favorites. Sardines and mustard sauce was one of those. They are delicious on a regular old cracker. I did have some fun, but those poor nurses. Sometimes I actually felt sorry for them, having to put up with the likes of me.

Although I was in the hospital, flat on my back, it really wasn't anything like I thought it would be. I had thought it would be a very terrible experience. I had made it where once in awhile I could have a good laugh, even though it hurt when I laughed. The way I looked at it, at least I was laughing instead of crying. I became so close to all of the nurses that I actually knew their families and all of their names. I knew when someone was getting married, and just about everything else that was happening. They would come in during the night, sit down, and tell me about their troubles as well their happy things. I was a good listener, I guess because I couldn't talk myself. So why not listen to everyone else? They had very interesting lives, and I felt like I was a part of them.

There was an orderly that came in on the night shift, and he would bring a six-pack of Budweiser. We would drink three each, and then he would usually take a nap! But that didn't happen until I got my pipe taken out of my throat so that I could swallow. Sometimes they had to plug up the hole in my neck so the beer didn't foam through the hole. I know that sounds ridiculous, but a cold beer really tastes good when you are in a place where it isn't readily available. I had my connections. Sometimes I felt like I was going to the prison guy that

could get you anything you needed. My dad would also bring me a couple of beers to drink with dinner. Most of the nurses would just tell the doctors I wasn't in there, and they'd know nothing. There were only a couple of them that I didn't trust fully, but they came around after awhile.

Eight months in the same place was really a long time, but I made the best of it for everyone's sake. The nurses never did understand how I could have a sense of humor while I was in the hospital. I just told them, "Would you rather I cry?" They said, "Of course not, we like you much better the way you are, but we bet you were a real wild man before coming in here." My father told them, "Watch out, don't let him fool you, and don't let down your guard when you are around this character. He will strike like a snake if you don't watch him."

My parents were in my room one night when one of the nurses came in and said, "Duane, I am getting off early tonight." She kissed me goodbye and said, "I will see you tomorrow." My dad said, "Well, she must have let her guard down somewhere along the line." My mother said, "Do all of the nurses kiss you goodbye when they are leaving?" I said, "No, only when they leave early." Mom said, "You are the only guy I ever saw who could charm a lady while lying in a hospital bed." My father said, "Like father, like son." My mother said, "Yes, right, Casanova." We were one big happy family. I had my bad days, but I had my good days as well, and so did everyone else working in the hospital.

Hospital employees would come in and ask my opinion on certain things, and I would do the same with them, so like I said, one big happy family. During some of those terrible days during the blizzard of 1977, my parents would come to visit even when some of the nurses couldn't make it in because of the road conditions. Sometimes my parents would pick them up and bring them to work. Now that is something that doesn't happen every day, right?

From Legs to Wheels

It was going to be a long, hard fight back, but I was determined enough to say that I would walk again, no matter what they said or did. That's the way I felt. I was going to work as hard and as long as possible to make that dream come true. For some reason, the nights that I lay in bed thinking about my condition made me more determined than ever not to feel sorry for myself. I wanted to show everyone that it could be done. I have heard of people having a serious injuries and paralysis being told that they would never walk again, and proving that to be wrong. That's just exactly what I planned to do. Then again, I knew that if there were a reason for me to stay in this condition, I guessed I would have to live with that.

Duane Mulvaney survived a 1977 automobile accident that rendered him a quadriplegic. This book chronicles Duane's life experiences from his pre-accident young adulthood up to 2007. Duane has related these colorful accounts in a straightforward, humorous, and philosophical manner.

From Legs to Wheels: The Memoirs of Duane Mulvaney

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/3231.html?s=pdf>