



## Advanced Foot & Ankle Surgeons

Mark Solomon, DPM

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### FORECAST 2005

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# Local surgeon recognized for successful limb salvage

**T**housands with diabetes face the possibility of losing a limb to the disease.

Mark E. Solomon, a local medical/surgical podiatrist with Advanced Foot & Ankle Surgeons who specializes in a cutting-edge procedure to restore sensation to those suffering from neuropathy, is also earning the respect and gratitude of his patients by offering successful alternatives to amputation.

Retired Army Lt. Col. Gene Romanick, a patient of Dr. Solomon's, has asked to share, in his own words, his very personal story. By doing so, he hopes to reach fellow diabetics who believe that amputation is the only remaining option. He feels it's imperative that they, along with their family and friends, are made aware that now there are successful alternatives.

"In December of 2003, I developed a sore on the heel of my right foot as a result of activity in physical therapy for a heart attack suffered in June 2003. As a diabetic (even with the blood sugar under control) this sore got progressively worse and finally resulted in gangrene. This is a condition that all diabetics face. My general practitioner sent me

to the hospital as soon as she saw the wound. As the wound got worse, my blood sugar became unmanageable as a result of the body trying to fight the infection, and the wound became worse as a result of the elevated blood sugar.

"This development was both frightening and dangerous to my overall health. As such, I was hospitalized and put on the normal course of antibiotics, and then the wound was debrided to remove the affected tissue. The follow-up treatment consisted of more debriding of the wound on almost a bi-weekly basis and a very limited course of antibiotic. The wound became deeper and as a result the infection reached the heel bone. My wife dressed this wound twice daily (for six months) and as a teacher was not trained to look into a wound that was basically the size of a small plum and had the bone exposed.

"I then went to the wound care center when my infectious disease doctor realized that this wound needed very specialized care. On my way to my third wound care visit, my heel bone shattered as a result of the infection. I was hospitalized locally for the third time and this time, the

doctors were considering amputation of my right leg below the knee as the option.

"I was discharged from the hospital with the shattered heel on intravenous antibiotic and a six-week wait to see if the heel bone would knit. If it didn't, amputation was the only option.

"I was sitting at the kitchen table the morning after I was released from the hospital and Dr. Mark Solomon called me. Dr. Solomon had heard of my case from the wound care center and told me, 'I think I can save your leg.' Of course, this information gave me a great deal of hope.

"This occurred on the Thursday prior to Labor Day weekend. Dr. Solomon gave me his cell phone number and told me to call him anytime that weekend to set up a meeting at Morristown Hospital. I met Dr. Solomon on Sunday of Labor Day weekend and he admitted me. He told me that he would operate and that he was sure he could save my leg. He advised me that I would probably need an external fixator on my leg and that the process would probably last for six months.

"Dr. Solomon operated on my foot on the following Wednesday and determined that the fixator wasn't necessary and that a

stainless steel screw would suffice. He operated through the existing hole. I was placed on a wound vacuum and then sent to a sub-acute care facility to recuperate. I went to the hyperbaric chamber at Morristown Hospital for 40, 2.5-hour sessions and continued on IV antibiotics. The combination worked wonders! Within a month, there was noticeable healing and with it a great deal of positive feeling. I wasn't going to be an amputee, it seemed. I took extensive physical therapy in the sub-acute facility to help me cope in my return home.

"By early November the wound had closed and the bone was showing absolute signs of healing. I was finally allowed to return home.

"I can't thank Dr. Mark Solomon enough, he and his team of residents and interns visited me every day of the week while I was in the hospital and sub-acute, they dressed the wound and took personal charge of my recovery. When my morale flagged in the sub-acute, they were there to give encouragement and to lend a hand whatever the problem. Dr. Solomon was available at all times to answer my questions or those of my wife and to provide reassurance when our spirits flagged.

"I am following up with Dr. Solomon and he continues to be a consummate professional, caring and a truly good soul. Dr. Solomon is a blessing to me."

— Retired Army Lt. Col.  
Gene Romanick, Newton

For more information on limb salvage, neuropathy or other foot and ankle conditions, please call Dr. Mark Solomon at Advanced Foot & Ankle Surgeons, 218 Ridgedale Ave., Cedar Knolls. Call (973) 285-1700.