



West Hollywood Division Operator Roy Allen: "I can't put into words how happy I am to be back."

Division 7's Roy Allen Makes Inspirational Comeback After Losing Leg

By JENNIFER YEH

(Jan. 23, 2003) When Roy Allen went for a regular doctor's visit two years ago, he had no idea that his life was going to take a critical turn.

A Metro Bus operator at West Hollywood Division 7, Allen, 46, was faced with a life or death decision. Doctors told him he had to have his left leg amputated or he could die from a blood condition.

The complication to Allen's health started when doctors discovered he had a blood clot in his aorta. Some time later, the blood clot broke up into smaller pieces and traveled into the smaller veins of his foot, blocking circulation.

After an unsuccessful surgery in an attempt to save his leg, doctors and Allen agreed on the next available option.

"I was upset when the doctor told me I needed to have my leg removed, but I had no choice but to just deal with it," says Allen. "Either that or not be here today."

Low self-esteem

The result of the surgery left Allen with low self-esteem. And making matters worse, the DMV took away his commercial driver's license.

"They said I no longer met the physical requirements and they didn't even give me a chance to take the driver's test," he says.

"I wanted to get back to work," says Allen. "I really missed being around everyone. I used to see my colleagues on the street driving when I was going to the doctor's office and I would be crushed because I wasn't on the bus driving."

With encouragement from his mother, Allen put all his pain aside and worked hard to get back on his feet. He attended physical therapy twice a week and practiced vigorously on his own.

"At one point I was on crutches and I knew I had to work extra hard if I wanted get back on my feet, so I threw down my crutches and took it from there," he says. "When I fell I picked myself back up and kept on trying."

Allen, who joined MTA in July 1999, admits he has always wanted to drive a bus. "I really love the job so I pushed myself to get back."

Began a comeback

Allen began his comeback in May 2002 by working as a bus operator recruiter in the Special Assistance Program (SAP) program at MTA Headquarters.

"People in the SAP program really helped me a lot," he says. "I was on disability and they got me into the program. They built my self-

esteem back up, convinced me to appeal the DMV decision to get my driver's license back, and pushed me to come back and drive because they saw that's what I really wanted to do."

In December 2002, Allen succeeded in getting his license back and returning to the job he loves. He admits having a prosthetic has slowed him down, but it hasn't stopped him from doing what he enjoys.

"You wouldn't believe how happy I was when they told me I could come back," he says. "It just blew me away. I feel like a new person."

Overcoming a major obstacle hasn't been easy for Allen. He gives a lot of credit to his family and friends who have helped make it possible for him get back on his feet.

"I love everyone at Gateway who has helped me," he says, "and all my friends at Division 7 who have motivated me to come back."

His message to others is: "If you have a goal in life, don't let anybody say you can't do it. You should always do what you enjoy no matter what. Always put your best effort forward. Take it from me, I am happy right now."

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