

***KARLO: The Hilzinger Story***

*I swear I will grow stronger  
With each new step I take  
I swear I will be blessed  
With each new beginning, with each new beginning I make...*

H.C. Chadderton: Good going. Terrific. Look, look, alright Chris.

Chris Koch: It's your turn now.

H.C. Chadderton: It's my turn?

Chris Koch: Yeah.

H.C. Chadderton: Alright. You remember the public service announcement you and I did after Karl died?

Chris Koch: Yeah.

H.C. Chadderton: Do you remember what you said in that announcement?

Chris Koch: I said I would like to do things for Karl.

*Public Service Announcement:*

*H.C. Chadderton: I am Cliff Chadderton of The War Amps. Chris Koch is a member of our CHAMP Program born missing his arms and legs. Karl Hilzinger, our Sports Consultant passed away in 1988. Chris asked if he could take over. He told me:*

*Chris Koch: I want to do it for Karl.*

*H.C. Chadderton: The CHAMP Program could have no better representative. Whatever they try here there is only one goal for Champs like Chris. The Winner's Circle.*

H.C. Chadderton: You know Karl was a skier.

Chris Koch: Yeah.

H.C. Chadderton: He was also a great golfer. You knew that?

Chris Koch: Yeah.

H.C. Chadderton: What would you think about the idea of doing a film about Karl's life?

Chris Koch: I think that would be a great idea!

H.C. Chadderton: Great idea?

Chris Koch: Yeah.

H.C. Chadderton: Do you think the public, you know the people who watched our films on television, do you think they would like to know a little more about Karl?

Chris Koch: Yeah.

H.C. Chadderton: Alright. Tell you what we will do today. We'll practice a little golf, we'll use these new arrangements you got, then we'll start on a film about the life of Karl Hilzinger. Okay with you?

Chris Koch: Fine with me.

H.C. Chadderton: Okay buddy. Let's see you sink a couple of more putts.

So before we start in on the story, there is something I learned from Karl that I would like to show you. Remember his golf swing where the shaft of the club used to almost curl around his neck?

Chris Koch: Yeah.

H.C. Chadderton: Well Karl was watching me one day and he said, "You know, you don't have enough leg action to be a good golfer so why don't we go to a whippy shaft", and I found out how Karl had his clubs made and where he had them made and I now use a really whippy shaft and I'd like to show you how it works.

Chris Koch: Okay.

H.C. Chadderton: Well Chris as Karl said, I need a little more whip in my club. Just take a look at this, like a fishing rod. Therefore when I hit the ball I don't need leg action, I just need hand action. Let's see if I can make it work.

If we see that swing in slow motion I think we get a better idea of how the whippy shaft allows the golfer to deliver what is known as club-headed speed.

Canadians will remember Karl Hilzinger for a number of really tremendous accomplishments. So far as football was concerned, he was that rare bird, that home grown product, a Canadian halfback

who could hold his own with the American imports. And he was just in the midst of a good football career when he lost his legs in a tragic car accident.

Before he died, Karl and I talked about doing a film on his life and I remember Karl saying, "Listen buddy, the last thing in the world I want is one of those sappy, sentimental, you know, isn't he wonderful, he made it back into the real world, type of film". Well this is not going to be that kind of production.

Nice shot. Just super, right down the middle. Well keep your eye on this one Chris.

Well if we're going to do a story about Karl Hilzinger's life, like any other story, I guess we better start at the beginning. Wouldn't you say?

Chris Koch: Yeah.

H.C. Chadderton: You know, when he was a youngster, Karl was a star athlete.

Chris Koch: Like Gretzky?

H.C. Chadderton: Like Wayne Gretzky, yeah! That type of thing and he won many, many awards even before he was in high school. I got some old pictures of him, let's have a look at them, okay?

He was here the coach of a junior swimming team and of course a high school football star. One of his lesser known sports was water polo. And here he is receiving the award as the Montreal Athlete

of the Year from the former mayor of Montreal Cammillien Houde.

Well Chris, the footage we have just seen, and the pictures, that was Karl when he was a young high school athlete. What do you think?

Chris Koch: Well, I think he was a terrific kid.

H.C. Chadderton: Yeah he sure was. Okay, I gotta get out and hit this shot. Let's see if I can get close to the pin. A little strong. Okay, we'll get you ready for your shot buddy. You gotta change clubs this time.

Chris Koch: I think a nine iron should be good.

H.C. Chadderton: Nine iron? Yeah that will do it alright.

Chris wanted to do everything that Karl hilzinger did and so it had to be golf and Chris uses his ski legs to stand up and get around to the golf ball and we developed special attachments for him. The one on the left arm which the golf club screws into a hook device for the right arm which would secure the club as he swung it back and forth. And believe it or not, this was the first time that Chris had ever used this equipment. By the end of the filming he was smacking that ball 40 or 50 yards down the fairway.

Chris Koch: Could you adjust this one?

H.C. Chadderton: This has to come out a bit more?

Chris Koch: Yeah.

H.C. Chadderton: Let's put this on first. About right?

Chris Koch: Yeah.

H.C. Chadderton: Nice shot. Suppose now on film I show you some of the other things that Karl did in his life.

Chris Koch: Like what?

H.C. Chadderton: Well what we call his Acapulco period when he was down in Mexico. I got some great film footage of that.

Here we see Karl water skiing. He often told me it was one of his favourite sports and of course he was very good at it. He was also a scuba instructor. In fact, he ran a scuba diving school in Mexico. You know what Karl is doing here? He is practising on land his diving skills. These are the famous cliffs at Acapulco. He was an expert skier before he lost his legs?

Chris Koch: No wonder why he could ski so well afterwards.

H.C. Chadderton: I have some priceless film footage of Karl skiing at Mont Tremblant.

Chris Koch: Okay then, let's go.

H.C. Chadderton: These pictures really speak for themselves. Karl was a top instructor at Mont Tremblant for quite a few years. He didn't like to ski competitively particularly. He got more enjoyment out of instructing and teaching other people. And you know sometimes

people don't like to take advice but Karl had that way of just skiing up to somebody and saying, "By the way buddy, don't you think you would get a little further if you learned to carve an arc with your right foot?", something like that and people would say "Who was that fellow! What a great guy!" And they were right. This was really a technique that Karl developed all by himself, just keeping the legs right together. Marvellous to watch it.

Alright let's get it on there. Close to the pin. It's a pretty nice looking shot! Ah your putting, you should be able to make that one.

You know with that terrible physique, it wouldn't surprise you if I told you that Karl used to get a lot of requests to do male modelling like swim suits and things like that.

Chris Koch: He had the build for it.

H.C. Chadderton: Yeah and I guess he sold a lot of swim wear.

What can one add to those pictures? Male Modeller of the Year. But like everything else he did you know, it never went to his head. I mean, so what, he took it in stride. He told me one time "Some people approached me with a camera and said we would like to use you as a model." Karl said "Why not?" And the white cadillac was part of his trademark and, as his friends said, it went right along with that engaging, tremendous personality that was Karl Hilzinger.

Karl Hilzinger: When we were driving home one night, this chap had this car and

he got caught in the soft shoulder, hit a hydro pole and it just happened that the hydro pole had four transformers on it. Being that much weight, the whole thing fell down on the road. Now, while I was in the car, I was in the convertible and my whole body launched forward and I had a concussion on the frame of the car so I was then coherent to everybody else but not to myself and what I did is that I had three across me. One across my chest, one across my arm and my middle waist and one across my legs. Because my legs were grounded, the electricity went through my legs and it just shorted out the whole area.

As soon as they pulled me in the door they said this man is dead. D.O.A. Dead on arrival. When you have any kind of amputation, they usually put a hood over you so you don't get to see it kind of thing and when I woke up I looked at all these things and I said what the heck is going on. And then it dawned on me that I was in the hospital and I saw this hood. I looked at the hood and said what is that? They said, "Hey, we have to leave that on." I said, "Take it away." And then I could move my stumps. I could feel that, you know. And I said, "Are they both gone?" And then I said, "I just want to see them." They pulled it away and then my first comment was, "Why didn't they get all of me?"

And then I spent a year in the hospital. One entire year. It took me about ten months to come back to any kind of reality because I felt that "Okay, why me?" Why should they take a human being, who has, let's say, a phenomenal career, the body is in excellent shape and my legs were everything I had, you know, because I was a professional athlete.

H.C. Chadderton: You know a great big lump comes to my throat when I remember a chat I had with Chris after Karl died. Chris said, "How are we ever gonna get along without him?" I said, "Well Chris you're never gonna replace Karl but what about you Chris? Do you think that you could do some of the things that Karl was doing?" And Chris said, "Yes." And he said very positively, "I want to do it for Karl."

Ans so the little guy really did take over. He chose his own title, it's CHAMP Ambassador-at-Large. He has his own calling card and without interfering with his school work of course, he speaks to assemblies at schools, he's been interviewed on radio and television and in the print media and I would have to say that, in his own way, Chris Kock has in fact done what he wanted to do. He has in a sense taken over where Karl left off.

But Chris would be the first one to admit that he still has a long way to go but I'll tell you, Chris Koch has the heart and the courage and the drive; he is fast becoming the best known quadruple amputee in the whole wide world. And I think that statement is true.

You know, Karl's determination was never more in evidence then when he took up skiing after he had his accident.

Karl Hilzinger: One of the reasons I actually skied was because I got fed up staying at the bottom watching everyone having a good time on the mountain. So I went to a fibre glass company in Granby and I showed him this form that a doctor made - you know they make forms for people sometimes, where I made a plastic form of my

stumps and I told them I would like to have a fibreglass forms made of that. And make a small little pedestal on the bottom. And then on the bottom of that I would like to have a little walking piece, a little rubber, so that when you don't have the skis on you can walk and not break the fibre glass you see. So this really worked out well.

*There is a time we must come to grips  
With fortune playing chance with the lives that we live  
And after that day, we'll never be the same  
Everything that ever was will have changed*

*You'll feel defeated and lost*