

# Battling back — Rob Wall was told he would never walk again

By Norberta M. Kosin  
Mountain Peaks Photojournalist

Life can change in an instant, Rob Wall knows that all too well. Rob is the grandson, by marriage, of Mountain Top native and community organizer Nick Hollock. Nick is a founding member of the Mountain Top Ambulance Association and past president and current secretary. Over the last 55 years, Nick has responded to over 3300 ambulance calls. He was also president of the Mountain Top Hose Company for 22 years. Rob is married to Nick's granddaughter Mandy, the daughter of Nick's daughter Eileen.

It was a hot muggy evening in August 2005. Rob Wall was on a pontoon boat in Rehoboth Bay, DE. He decided to go for a swim and dove into the water. His head hit the sand and

something snapped. He lay face down in the water — he did not know that the water was only 18 inches deep in that area. His brother-in-law Braden reacted quickly and turned him over in the water so he could breathe. He was drifting in and out of consciousness as family members stabilized him, kept him awake while they waited for emergency services personnel to arrive.

Rob was life-flighted to Christiana Care Hospital in Newark, DE, a Level-1 Trauma Center that handles the extreme medical emergencies on the East Coast between Philadelphia and Baltimore. Rob could not move. Doctors discovered that while his spinal cord was not severed, the C4, 5, 6 vertebrae in his neck were severely compressed and bruised. Spinal fusion surgery was performed the next day to



**Nick helps Rob with his physical therapy during a recent visit to Project Walk in Carlsbad, CA.**

repair the crushed vertebrae. Rob remained paralyzed from the neck down. Five days later, he was moved to the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation.

The team at Kessler concluded that Rob would never walk again. At best, he might regain limited use of his upper body. After five months of inpa-

tient rehabilitation at Kessler, Rob had only regained some control of his upper body. He could not sit or roll over and was completely dependent on his wife for personal care and movement.

In January 2006, Rob was sent home from Kessler, but continued outpatient reha-

bilitation three days a week. By May, he had made little progress and started augmenting his workouts with a physical therapist trained by Project Walk.

Project Walk is a spinal cord injury recovery program located in Carlsbad, CA. It was founded in 1999 and uses customized exercise programs for paraplegics and quadriplegics. Their ultimate goal for their clients is to learn to walk unassisted.

Rob saw immediate improvement in his strength and motor skills after he started working with the Project Walk trained physical therapist. In July 2006, he visited the Carlsbad facility for a two-week trial program. By the end of the two weeks, Rob was able to stand.

In September 2006, Rob and Mandy decided to move to California so that Rob could participate in Project Walk full time. Since then, with intense one-on-one rehabilitation five days a week, Rob has learned to walk short distances with the help of a walker. He is presently training for Project Walk's 2007 Steps to Recovery half mile walk in October.

In talking with Nick, you can tell that he is proud of the courage and determination of both Mandy and Rob and the sacrifices they have made. Rob has come a long way in the last two years, but he still has a long way to go.

Because medical insurance does not cover Rob's physical therapy at Project Walk, a charitable campaign has been established in Rob's honor to help with the \$4200 monthly treatment cost. All donations and fund raising proceeds are being used to finance Rob's treatments at Project Walk. Checks can be made payable to: The Robert Wall Benefit Fund and sent to P.O. Box 130595, Carlsbad, CA 92013. Contributions can also be made through the web site: [www.supportthewall.net](http://www.supportthewall.net). There are also updates about Rob's progress and a message board on the web site. You can contact Nick Hollock on 570-474-6529 for more information.



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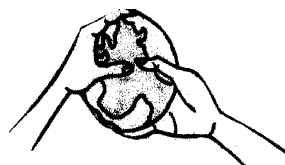
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