

Nothing is Impossible - Carol Cooke

Paralympic Cycling Gold Medallist with Multiple Sclerosis MS

For more interviews on living with Multiple Sclerosis MS visit [this link](#)

Multiple Sclerosis MS. In her mid 30's Carol's, Doctor told her to go home and get her affairs in order to quit her job give up playing sports and begin a bunch of medication to manage her diagnosis.

Fortunately, Carol found the determination and spirit to defy what this doctor had told her. Although Carol had to leave full-time employment she found another passion to keep her busy.

Carol started the 24-Hour Mega Swim in 2001 and now fifteen years later has 17 swims running in Victoria, NSW, and the ACT.

The Mega Swim raises money for the Go For Gold Scholarship program run by MS Limited and gives scholarships to people living with MS to follow a dream.

The swims have raised over \$7,000,000.00 which has also allowed MS Australia to initiate a Financial Assistance Scheme project for people with MS.

Carol won silver medals in 2011 at the World Para-Cycling Championships, in 2012 was named to the Australian Team for the London Paralympics and went on to earn a Gold Medal in the mixed T1-T2 road Time Trial, even beating the men.

Since 2012 Carol has become a 5 x World Champion - 2 in the Road Race and 3 in the Time Trial.

Living with Multiple Sclerosis MS

Although living with the never-ending symptoms of this unpredictable disease, Carol has the strength and courage to get up each day with a positive and motivated attitude.

Carol has learned to live for today and not worry about what may or may not happen in the future.

Carol believes that “nothing is impossible if we dare to face our fears and believe in ourselves and believe that the greatest pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do.”

<http://www.carolcooke.com.au>

Transcription:

Intro 0:04

Recovery After Stroke podcast moving you through life's transit lounge and helping you go from where you are to where you'd rather be.

Bill 0:14

This episode of the Recovery After Stroke podcast is brought to you by recoveryafterstroke.com. Are you looking to get your health back on track? Do you struggle with a lack of energy? Are you recovering from a major health scare?

Bill 0:30

You know the improvement in my health came after I hit rock bottom in 2012 when at the age of 37, a blood vessel burst in my brain causing a blood clot the size of a tensing coin, which became the size of a golf ball six weeks later, after a second blade, the result of which caused me to forget my name.

Bill 0:51

Not being able to recognize my wife lose my ability to remember simple things and put me out of work for more than nine months. researching how to recover my health, I discovered that what was causing the symptoms, apart from the blood clot that remained in my head until surgery in 2014 was inflammation in the brain.

Bill 1:15

For more than four years now I've researched the topic of inflammation, and have found that there are many ways to reduce inflammation in the body. With the food we as I started to change my eating habits to reduce the inflammation, I found myself experiencing an unintended consequence that was quite a pleasant surprise.

Bill 1:38

Without exercising, I lost seven kilos in the first two years, and since February 2012, I have lost a total of 15 kilos, just by changing my eating habits. If you would like to learn how to lose weight and gain health, get in touch, go to the contact page of this podcast or go to billgasiamis.com fill out the contact form and I will be in touch. Hello everybody and welcome to another episode of the transit lounge.

Bill 2:10

Today I have got an amazing guest, Carol Cooke who has an order of Australian metal and is a five times Paralympian and she's also a world champion in cycling. Carol was born and bred in Toronto, Canada, where she fulfilled a lifelong dream of following in the footsteps of her family and several members of her family and served as a member of the Toronto Police Force in Canada for 14 years after competing in Hobart, at the Masters swimming nationals in 1998.

Bill 2:49

She awoke one morning with disturbing balance problems and double vision. Another all too common symptom of multiple sclerosis was rearing its ugly head. Having only been married for three years, and no immediate family around her thoughts revolved around how she was going to cope with this unpredictable disease.

Bill 3:12

Although Carol had to leave full-time employment, she found another passion to keep her busy. Carol started the 24-hour mega swim in 2001. And now 15 years later, has 17 swims running in Victoria, New South Wales, and the AC T. Welcome to the program, Carol.

Carol Cooke 3:35

Thanks, Bill. It's good to be here.

Bill 3:37

It is a pretty impressive boy that I've got in front of me and I didn't read more than about a third of it or a quarter of it. Tell me a little bit about yourself and growing up in Canada, which by the way, sounds like an awesome place to grow up.

Carol Cooke 3:54

Yeah, look, it was bloody cold in the winter. I don't miss that. But Life was great. You know, I'm from a family of just two girls and we grew up in suburban Toronto quite far into the East End, it was a brand new area that was being built that my mom and dad bought in.

Carol Cooke 4:14

And, look, it was just it was a normal childhood. You know, we, my parents bought a cottage up in Northern Ontario. So the end of June when school that out we were up in the bush on a lake for two months, barefoot and running around and bathing suits all year, all summer in about four days before school started we'd be back in the city getting ready for school.

Carol Cooke 4:41

So, you know, it was fantastic to have that chance to spend it on a lake. So learn to swim and water ski and, you know, just we just run nuts, you know, because we could, there was nowhere to really get into trouble.

Carol Cooke 5:00

And yeah, I guess, you know, as a little kid, I just grew up doing all the things little kids do and mom had us in, you know, dance lessons and I got right into gymnastics and then thought that at the age of nine, this would be great all my best friend and I we love gymnastics, and we were going to try out for an elite gymnastics club.

Carol Cooke 5:23

So when we did, unfortunately, I didn't make it in. But my girlfriend did. And they weren't very nice. They said, Oh, you're too fat for gymnastics. So I'm lucky. I've got parents that, you know, made me realize that I could question things and they just said, well just try something different.

Carol Cooke 5:42

So I started swimming, and then swimming became my life and my sport. And that was my goal was the 1980 Olympics in Moscow. And unfortunately, Canada boycotted those games along with us and, and most of the Western world other than about I think right now. Britain in Australia, so yeah, so that's when that dream died. And I went and decided to get a real job and join the police force.

Bill 6:09

Fair enough. And what a real job that is.

Carol Cooke 6:12

Yeah, that's for sure.

Bill 6:14

You know, what I'm curious to understand is a little kid wakes up one day and goes to try out for gymnastics, because it'll be fun, gets rejected, for lack of a better word by people who obviously didn't know who they were dealing with. And probably missed out on a world champion, you know, gymnast of some sort.

Carol Cooke 6:34

I'll look like now because looking at my body, I'm definitely not in this build. So you know, they could have probably put it a bit differently. But I definitely was not a gymnast build, you know, and I never would have got to any level there's just no way. But I was built the right build for as a swimmer.

Carol Cooke 6:58

So you know, that's And then we because we had the cottage we grew up around water. And we learned that, you know, Mum and Dad had us in swimming lessons. And I remember Dad throwing me off the end of the dock one day and just saying swim back. So you know you do. Yeah, there's one way to learn how to swim. So yeah, so I have no qualms about them saying that. No, I wouldn't be a gymnast, but it just might have been the way they handled it might have been a bit different.

Bill 7:27

Yeah, fair enough. So what happened? Did you take on swimming and then straightaway as a young kid decide you were going to try out for the Olympics? How did you get to, you know, going and having some fun swimming, and then deciding I'm gonna try it for the Olympics?

Carol Cooke 7:42

Well, I guess it was probably in 1976. When the Olympics were in Canada, they were the 819 76 Montreal Olympics. And I was swimming at just a junior national level at that point and everything It was all about swimming during the Olympics. I think I cut.

Carol Cooke 8:03

As a matter of fact, the other day, we decided to do a big clean out of our house and I opened up a trunk that I had sent here from Canada when I moved here 22

years ago. And I found in this trunk god, I'm a packrat. I found a folder, and it had all the articles that I had cut out of the paper from the 1976 Olympics, about the swimming that I had posted on. I taped it on the wall of my bedroom.

Carol Cooke 8:33

And I still had them Oh my God, I couldn't believe it. So I sat here I'm supposed to be pulling crap out and throwing it away and, and I sat there for an hour just going through all this stuff. Everything was yellowed, and, you know, the type wasn't holding anymore in this book. And so I just went through everything and went, yep, do these. I really wasn't. And it was from there that I just went Yeah, I'm gonna do this.

Bill 9:00

Right. Okay, so you tried out for the Olympics, and then Canada boycotted. And then what happened to the dream of swimming in the Olympics?

Carol Cooke 9:09

Well see back then I was about 18 at the time, and in swimming back back, we're talking, you know, 1979 1980. If you hadn't made it as a swimmer, by the age of 15 16, you were pretty much washed up. I mean, thoughts have changed now around women in sports.

Carol Cooke 9:30

And now we've, realized that women don't hit their peak hit their peak strength until they're into their late 20s, even early 30s. And in fact, in 2008, in Beijing, they had a woman, Dara Torres from the US who was 42 years old, and swam at the Olympic Games in the sprint events, and I think she went home with three silver medals.

Carol Cooke 9:52

So we've now learned that you know, yeah, you're certainly not as a woman at your peak at the age of 18. Back then that wasn't it. Most of the world record holders were in their teens mid to just 18 type thing.

Bill 10:08

Yeah. And you're certainly not washed up by 19. Right.

Carol Cooke 10:11

Oh, god, I'm 54 now and I'm still not washed up. I'm proving them all wrong.

Bill 10:18

That's awesome. So you decided to become a police officer? Well, you're one of those really cool Mountie Karna police officers with the red outfit and all that because when I think of Canadian police, that's all I think of.

Carol Cooke 10:32

Yeah, well, let me tell you the Mounties are like the Federal Police here in Australia. So most of the red tunics that they wear. Their red Serge is a dress uniform. So most of the time, they're just in a normal blue uniform.

Carol Cooke 10:50

They patrol the airports and they do a lot of the small towns throughout Canada. And obviously a lot of the Federal stuff. So no, I was with the City force, the Toronto Police Force, which is now probably well, it is the biggest force see force in the country.

Carol Cooke 11:08

And I think at the time when I was on the job, there were probably about 5500 officers just for the City of Toronto. And yeah, my mom and dad had both been members. That's how they actually met. And my dad's father had been a police officer and he joined before World War Two, he was a police officer and he trained all the police horses because he was he had racehorses himself.

Carol Cooke 11:37

And when he went to war, he lost his leg, my grandfather, but they still took them back on the police force when he came, came back because of losing his leg. And so you know, he was working in the telecommunication area and yeah, so my dad joined, and my grandfather's brother was on and I had two cousins on Then mum was the 14th woman ever hired on the Toronto Police Force.

Multiple Sclerosis MS

Carol Cooke 12:04

But mind you back in the late 50s, I think was around 5657 that Mum joined the police force. And they didn't do a lot of policing per se. They worked with young, young people as they were known back then the youth, the use of the day, don't think the use of the day today is like the youth of the day back then.

Carol Cooke 12:30

And they did a lot of directing traffic. So you know, there wasn't that. Yeah, nitty-gritty type of policing for women back then. But in saying that when they got married, you couldn't the police force wouldn't let you have men and wives on the force, because they were worried that the woman might just get too upset if something had happened to her man.

Carol Cooke 12:53

So one of them had to leave and so mom had been a teacher previously, so she left So yeah, I think because, between all of us, we had about 85 years of the Toronto Police Force total. So yeah,

Bill 13:07

Those pesky women not being able to swim past 19 and deal with them may,

Carol Cooke 13:12

Oh, seriously I know thank God moved on from there.

Bill 13:18

That's hilarious and sad at the same time but we can look back and have a bit of a laugh and say it was really a family affair this whole police force thing.

Carol Cooke 13:29

yeah most of the family my sister Well, she was the rebel she became a journalist. And Sunday dinners were interesting when I'd come home for dinner and you know, Dad and I would not say a word about work, because Cindy was always looking for a good story. That's talk about work at the table. Was it done surreptitiously?

Bill 13:54

That's hilarious. Now I'm thinking though my heart's going out to Your amazing Ozzie husband, how in the hell did he break into a family full of cops and it was able to convince them that he was the man for you?

Carol Cooke 14:13

Well, that's interesting. I ended up in Australia because of the world police and Fire Games, the very first games which were in California in 1985. And I was the only swimmer in the Toronto Police Force. And there was one swimmer from the Melbourne fire brigade and the rest of the forces had multiples they had teams so this guy, Gramps, Bobby, and I, we kind of met up on the pool deck and went,

yeah, let's fit together.

Carol Cooke 14:43

And he invited me back to what was the barbecue. They were staying at the university and it was in San Jose and California. And I said, Okay, I'll come back and meet you know, firefighters and Their wives from Melbourne. And there was one couple they're almost the same age as my mom and dad and they had a business card and they said, Oh if you ever want to come to Australia, you know, give us a call. I think they said that to about 3000 other people, but don't invite me anywhere because I always show up.

Carol Cooke 15:17

So, I got home and thought, Wow, I've always wanted to go to Australia. Maybe I'll do that. And I. So about six months later, I rang them. I had booked a flight already I rang them and I said, Hi. I don't know if you remember me, but you met me at the games and you said I could come visit. So I've booked the flight. I hope that's okay.

Carol Cooke 15:40

And they're like, Oh, sure. I think I was the only one that took them up on their offer. Well, they became like second parents to me, and I'm still in touch with them to this day, even though they've split up. You know, Marla's my Ozzie mom, and I'm still in touch with John and so between 86 and 92 I actually flew down to Australia nine times.

Carol Cooke 16:05

And it was because I learned I fell in love with the country. So I wanted to didn't I, to be honest, I'm going to pretend that I'm a really dumb blonde and say, I thought Australia was this little tiny island in the South Pacific. And when I was first coming down for my three weeks, I was going to see it all. And when I got here and realized how big it was, every year I came down to see a bit more.

Carol Cooke 16:29

And it wasn't until 9293 no hang on 92 November 92. I took a year's leave of absence from the police force and I actually came down here to travel around for a year because, at that point, I wasn't really sure I wanted to stay a police officer I had become a bit jaded by it all and just about had enough.

Carol Cooke 16:51

And yeah, I drove 34 and a half thousand kilometers around the country and I came back to Melbourne and I went to North Q football club and I met my husband. But by the time November rolled around again, that was August of 93.

Carol Cooke 17:10

By the time November rolled around, I had to go home because I had no money left and go back to work. And yeah, I think the first time that Ross came to Canada was a couple of months after I had left, and I think he was bitter and a bit overwhelmed by Dad questioning him about people.

Carol Cooke 17:32

But when we got married, I must say because our certain wrestler's surname was cool. And mine was banks. My maiden name was Banks. And my uncle was the emcee at our wedding. And he came up with a great story because, you know, James Cook, who, you know, landed in Australia, his chief botanist on the boat was on the ship was Sir Joseph Banks.

Carol Cooke 17:56

And because Australia was looked at as a penal colony, my uncle put all those three things together and said, Well, thanks and cook, you know, definitely had to get together. And because Russ was in Australia, he obviously was descended from convicts, and our family was all cops. So it was a marriage made in heaven.

Carol Cooke 18:19

But it's taken them. Ross knows a few of my idiosyncrasies because of the police force, and every time I'd go into a restaurant, I had to sit with my back to the wall. So I had a big view of everything in front of me. So he's kind of got me out of that a little bit by jumping into the seat. He knows that I want to taper so yeah, so he's been good. There's been a bit of training in getting out of that cop mode in the last four years.

Bill 18:45

Wow. That's amazing. It really is interesting to hear how two cultures come together, especially, you know, from two different parts of the planet.

Carol Cooke 18:53

Oh, yeah. Especially being that far apart.

Bill 18:56

Yeah. Yeah. That's amazing. Good to hear that it all worked out. Well. And you got stuck into the sports when you go to Australia, right? You competed in. What was that again?

Carol Cooke 19:11

Yeah, I was still swimming. I was still competing as a master swimmer. So yeah, we were down in it was in in 1998. And we were down in Hobart. They had the Masters National Swimming Championships there.

Carol Cooke 19:26

And actually, Russ had come to watch for the first time. So yeah, so that's, that's where we were competing. We used to compete all over the place, but yeah, 98 they were in Hobart. And then, it was really hot, which was surprising. They were having a heatwave, and it was like 40 degrees in Hobart and the pool had absolutely no air conditioning.

Carol Cooke 19:49

And even though I was really fit, I swam like a rock, like I just swim very, very badly and I couldn't figure out what was going on. And I was getting really lethargic and very tired and, and fatigued. And when we got home I said to her, so I feel like I've got the flu coming on. And I spent a couple of days in bed. And then my balance started going in and banging against walls and yeah, but the sport I mean, coming to Australia sport was coming to Melbourne like, as a sports fanatic.

Carol Cooke 20:25

It was like, Whoa, and because I'm at rest at a local AFL club. I realized when I moved here that if I wanted to see him between February and October, I actually had to get involved with football. He was the team manager for the North Q football club. So you know, Tuesday nights, Thursday nights all day Saturday, man he was gone.

Carol Cooke 20:47

So I thought what can I do at the club and I started there. In the canteen, which was not a good idea. I'm not really good with chips and hotdogs and I eventually became the head sports trainer took the sports trainers course and ran around the field with the guys every Tuesday night, Thursday night, and all day Saturday.

Carol Cooke 21:08

So I like to tell people it's a great job for a woman because it's the only place that my husband would let me be with 40 naked men in a room and he didn't care.

Bill 21:17

Wow.

Carol Cooke 21:19

It was interesting.

Bill 21:22

Yeah, well, you know, you're doing the right thing for the team. Right.

Carol Cooke 21:25

Exactly. And, I mean, it was quite funny because, you know, I'd spent 14 years on the police force, and nothing fazed me. You know, I spent four years working undercover on the job and, so nothing at all would faze me and the guys would try it on. Some of the jokes, you know, oh, Carol, I pulled a groin muscle. Could you rub it for me and I just pull out the dinkum ram and go Yeah, jump up. Oh, no, it's feeling much better now.

Multiple Sclerosis MS

Bill 21:53

Brilliant. Brilliant. Come back there.

Carol Cooke 21:55

Yeah. So it was fun.

Bill 21:58

So you woke up that morning. Not feeling the best you swam like a rock?

Carol Cooke 22:04

Yep. Yeah. Um, yeah, I thought I had the flu. I thought I had the flu and, and it was, you know, over the couple weeks, I'd been to the doctor and my balance was off, I literally would fall down, I'm walking the dog and I'd fall down and the doctor thought I had an inner ear infection which made sense, you know because I was a swimmer.

Carol Cooke 22:26

And because of the balance, we tried everything stems at all, and then he had a

CAT scan done and nothing showed up. And, you know, we were kind of Wow, and then my eyesight started to go and I went to just a local optometrist in the city and mountains and walked in there and she did you know, I told her, my doctor, things happened in your ear infection, but you know, I'm seeing double my eyes feel like they're shaking.

Carol Cooke 22:56

And so I thought I'd better come have an eye test and so she did a field vision. Test and I failed it dramatically. I had no peripheral vision whatsoever. So anything, the only thing I was seeing was dead center. And she had just graduated from university. And it was interesting to suggest a young girl and she'd only been working for I think, a couple of months.

Carol Cooke 23:19

And she said to me when I finished this test, she says, look, that wasn't very good. You haven't done very well at all. But you said you had an inner ear infection. I said, Well, that's what the doctor thinks. And she said, Well, maybe the infection spread to the optic nerve. Do you mind if I get your doctor's name and phone number and I'll give them a call?

Carol Cooke 23:37

And I said, Yeah, that's fine. And, and, and she said, and then go make an appointment, go back and see him. And so I left, you know, and I went back to see the doctor and she actually called him and said, She's got optic neuritis, and that's a precursor for Ms. So have her tested for Ms.

Carol Cooke 23:57

And he just went Whoa, I didn't even think that you know, so because she had just graduated that was just really in in in front of her you know and as my doctor said to me said look you know we learned 20 minutes on every disease as a GP and that's about it he said so she obviously remembered what optic neuritis you know what some of the things that could cause optic neuritis were and that's it so and yeah

Carol Cooke 24:28

So we found the first neurologist which was another mistake that that I could get in and he was probably Oh 70 something and should have been retired. But um, you know, I went to see him and he took all the details of me and in order you

know, ordered an MRI and so I had my MRI and I was going back to see him and it's you know, weeks have gone by now and I'm finally my symptoms are gone and I'm thinking oh this is a waste of time because It must have been that ear infection.

Carol Cooke 25:02

And I get there and he's in a hurry. And he Asher's mean to his office and I'm thinking yeah, I'm wasting his time. My husband Ross, went to work I said, Don't bother coming because it's gone, you know, and there's nothing wrong and as he makes me sit down really in a hurry, he says, Look, he says, You pulled out the film and he held it to the ceiling light and he says, Yeah, there's too many lesions on your brain for someone your age.

Carol Cooke 25:31

So basically your life is you know, it's over. You've got MS and I suggest you go home and put your affairs in order before you become incapacitated. And I was just sitting there and I swear my chin hit the floor. It was like being hit by a Mack truck. And I just looked at him and I went, What? And he said you hurt me.

Carol Cooke 25:51

You've got Ms. And what was the only word that I said the whole appointment and he said, so on. This silly sports stuff you do, you're going to have to quit that you're gonna have to quit work gonna have to go on a whole bunch of drugs. But look, I don't have time for you as a patient. I got enough people with MS already. So go back to your own GP. And with that, he stood out to me put the film back in the envelope and he walked through the door and I'm still sitting in the chair kind of going. What?

Carol Cooke 26:21

And all I could think of was my life was over as I knew it, I'm going to be incapacitated. That's the only thing that kept running through my head. And he opened the door and he said, hurry up. I've got people waiting.

Bill 26:32

Oh, my Lord.

Carol Cooke 26:34

Yeah. As I walked to him, he slammed his envelope into my chest. I can tell you what I wanted to do with the envelope at that time and then had the audacity to

say see my secretary on the way out. Now, it was probably less than a minute that I was in his office for less than two minutes, but it was no more than two minutes.

Carol Cooke 26:55

And I remember walking down the hall of this house. It was an old house and cute. was converted into, you know, medical records. Yeah. And I walk past the secretary's office, and I'll walk out the front door. And all I remember is when I got to the door, this Secretary yelling Mrs. Cook, Mrs. Cook, and I just walked out. That's the last I still have to this day, it's almost 18 years, April 23.

Carol Cooke 27:20

It'll be 18 years and I still to this day, don't remember driving home. I know I must have driven because the car was at home when you know, I got home. Yeah. And next thing I remember is sitting on the couch and crying and I snapped out of it because our Puppy was six months old, and she put her head in her in my lap and started to whimper because I was so upset, and I just snapped out of it.

Carol Cooke 27:46

And I said to her, all right, it's all right, you know, so not knowing anything about Ms. Other than the readathon because funny enough readathons started in Canada and it was the library and I have When I was in year seven, who started it? Right? So we were the first to ever do the MS. readathon. But I didn't know what Ms was.

Carol Cooke 28:09

And so I had my whole life sorted out when my husband came home. And I told him that I was going to give him a divorce, and he could have the house we just bought. And I was going to go home to Canada to let my parents look after me because I was going to be incapacitated. And to me, that meant the worst thing possible, you know, unable to function at all on my own. He that's what incapacitated meant. And my husband, God bless his soul.

Carol Cooke 28:43

He is a real bush boy and he just looked at me and called me a fucking idiot. And I said, Have you not heard what I've said? And he goes, Yeah, I will say, Hey, you know, like, we don't know anything about this. So let's not jump the gun in here. Let's Let's see. Go and find out let's find out what we're dealing with.

Carol Cooke 29:02

And then he said probably the most loving thing that he's ever said, even aside from our wedding, and he said, Look, you don't have it, we have it and we'll deal with whatever happens. Very cool. You know, so yeah, I'm we're actually this month married 21 years. So we've had some big ups and downs with my health. But yeah, he stuck it out.

Bill 29:26

Isn't that interesting, you know, amazing partners? I've been married 20 years, in January this year. And we hadn't been through anything rough like that early on. But, you know, the blessing of being married to an amazing person who just decides no matter what, that they're going to sort everything out, you know, they step up, they make you feel supported, they make you feel loved, they make you feel like no matter what happens, everything is going to be okay.

Bill 29:53

And they go from being a normal person to, you know, superhuman almost overnight, just to look After you and care for you, and I, you know, I reflect on that part of my challenges with my brain and wow, you know, it's just, it's just amazing it's so great to know that there are people like that will, you know, be straight upfront and tell you in no uncertain terms what you are and to,

Carol Cooke 30:19

Yeah, exactly. And but the interesting thing is, I mean that wasn't even the word that was just the start I mean it got much worse around 2003 and I had to have some pretty major surgery, and unfortunately with Ms.

Carol Cooke 30:33

You don't you're not immune from anything else and I had an ovarian cancer scare as well. And in 2003 You know, my Ms. kicked in was I ended up having my whole large bowel having to be removed, and then six months later I had a full hysterectomy because of the possibility of ovarian cancer and after both surgeries, I had multi-resistant staph so is extremely sick.

Multiple Sclerosis MS

Carol Cooke 31:00

And to see a man who would turn green walking into a hospital sit there and hold my pupil. And, you know, wipe my face with a cold cloth as I just have my gods, you know, to think that he was actually able to do that is just incredible, you

know? And yeah, and then we come out the other side.

Carol Cooke 31:25

So, yeah, it's, I'm, well you and I are obviously two of the lucky ones because they're I know so many people who are living with Ms who have lost partners because they just couldn't deal with it. And, you know, and the people that person with MS is fine. Yes. Are they sure they've got symptoms, but they're fine? They're still living, breathing walking around, but the person just couldn't handle it.

Bill 31:51

Yeah. I know the same, the same scenario. In the stroke community. There's plenty of that going on and it's a bit sad, but sometimes what happens is, I think, even though it's dramatic, and a lot of the people that are going through a neurological challenge, suffer by going through it, and then you know, in the attempt for recovery or getting their life back in some way, shape or form, the people that I've come across at least have been able to,

Bill 32:23

I know somehow even turn a bad relationship that went bad, even turn that into a positive, you know, understanding that, you know what, that's okay, you know, I can move on and I can find a way to overcome that.

Bill 32:36

That being said, I wouldn't wish it on anybody and I would rather everybody go through, you know, our challenges the way that we were supported and, and loved and cared for, you know, yeah, definitely. My wife also had the pleasure of holding a puke bag while I puke. Hospital and, and the same day, I didn't know who she actually was I just had this strange lady under my bed.

Carol Cooke 33:04

At least I knew who she was.

Bill 33:07

And she was holding the puke bag. Well, I picked up, and yeah. And she's never let me forget it. So I'm really curious because I wake up in the morning and on a Sunday is my day where I decided that I'm going to ride from Preston where I live, which is 12 kilometers away from the CBD of Melbourne.

Bill 33:32

I'm going to ride my bike there, you know, have a coffee, you know, do a bit of a walk around, and then ride back. And in total, depending on the route that I take, it can be from 24 to 26 kilometers, and by the end of it, I can't feel my leg anymore.

Bill 33:46

And I have to really be careful when I get off the bike. And you've had so many things that most people would use as an excuse not to ever get up and do anything. What do you think? feel when you do the exercise that you do, because we'll talk a little bit about your cycling, but, you know, how does your body feel? What's the new normal for you?

Carol Cooke 34:11

Oh, quick, cuz it's a mess. It varies from day to day. Yeah, I have some symptoms that stay with me all the time. I've got neural pain in my feet. So it's like, it's like walking on hot coals all the time. And the more fatigued I get, the worse it gets, or the hotter my core body temperature gets, then that neuro pain gets worse.

Carol Cooke 34:33

And, you know, I'm a member training in Spain One day and I thought, Oh, yeah, nobody else was. Everybody else had to do much longer. So you know, I'm on three wheels they're on to so off.

Carol Cooke 34:45

I go out of the city of Segovia, and like I'm going to going and I think, oh geez, I better turn around, and as I turn around, and I'm getting hotter and hotter because it's Spain, and it's hot and I get to a point where my feet hurts so badly that every pedal stroke was like stepping on a burning fire knives going through my feet.

Carol Cooke 35:12

And I thought I'm not going to make it back to the hotel. So what do you do find the nearest coffee shop with air conditioning, get off and get in there and have something you know, and sit for half an hour before I go again. So, look, that doesn't happen all the time. It doesn't get that bad all the time. But it depends on the diet depends what I've been doing in the lead-up to that day.

Carol Cooke 35:41

And I think it's really, you know, it's not something that I've just jumped on a bike overnight, and then go out and ride a bouquet. It's not it's been baby steps 2001 hours in a wheelchair full time. So I wasn't walking, I think could stand up but I wasn't walking. And I had a really good rehab doctor that decided to try Botox, which he was using for cerebral palsy.

Carol Cooke 36:10

And so I had Botox injected into my leg and then six months of really intensive physio, and then more Botox again. But what I did do is start exercising again and I got back in the water because in the water you can do things that you can't do online, and started back swimming and started to build my strength and go to the gym again.

Carol Cooke 36:34

And it was baby steps. It was very, very slow. It wasn't until I guess about 2005 that I got invited to a Paralympic Talent Search day. So I went to that and they said they wanted me to take up the sport of rowing.

Carol Cooke 36:52

So I thought okay, and then rowing built into that as well so you know the constant drive with your legs. and whatnot and it made me stronger, made me stronger and then switched to cycling in 2011. And I honestly believe that and I tell you when I started cycling in 2011 24 k would have been huge for me, you know, like it was, it was a building process.

Carol Cooke 37:21

And exercise is keeping me walking. So you ask, how can you get up every morning? Because if I don't, I'll be back in that wheelchair. I honestly believe that. So, I will get up and I will do something and you know, somebody, I was talking about a school not long ago, and one of the kids was up country Victoria one of the kids stuck his hand up near and he goes, when are you gonna retire?

Carol Cooke 37:50

Now here's eight years, this eight-year-old kid looking at me going, oh god, you're old. Like when are you going to retire? And I said, Well, why should if i I like what I'm doing? And I am and I'm good at what I'm doing and I enjoy it, then I'm going to keep doing it. You know, so, you know, the day that I don't like cycling anymore is the day I'll try something else.

Bill 38:13

Tell me Yeah, when you first got on the bike, was it a two-wheeler or a Three Wheeler?

Carol Cooke 38:17

Oh, well, I grew up, you know, with a two-wheeler and I used to do triathlons and stuff. But I lost because of my Ms. I lost my balance, right? And I couldn't ride two wheels anymore. And I remember I had to coach down at rowing one day, so I grabbed the bike, just out of the sheds.

Carol Cooke 38:36

And I was like Fred Flintstone, you know, are this feed feeder on the ground, that's what propels the car. And I just could not balance on the two wheels. So I had to lower the seat so I could run my feet on the bike path as I was going up and down the arrow river trying to talk in a megaphone and coach.

Carol Cooke 38:56

So I thought, Hmm, maybe I should invest in something that's got three wheels instead of two, and yeah, I found a builder here in Melbourne who built me my first trike a 22 kilos steel frame trike. Wow. And I just would ride back and forth to rowing training and yeah, so that's that that was my introduction into cycling. I knew nothing about the trike category at the Paralympics. It was strictly to get me from home to the Yarra River and back home.

Bill 39:32

Yeah, I remember the first time I got back on the bike after surgery and after rehab and the numbness in the leg. The bike that I got back on was just the old regular bike that I used to ride on. And I went to pedal around you know, as you do, and the left foot slips off the pedal and ends up sort of almost scraping the ground.

Bill 39:55

And you know when the pedal comes back up and scrapes half of your skin off of your shin bone Yeah, I did that about three or four times just to get back home because I couldn't feel my leg. And I was just destroying my shin bone the whole time.

Bill 40:07

And I thought, you know what I've got to do, I've got to get a stirrup. I'll get a

syrup on my left foot, and I'll put that one on, and then I'll be fine. So I went to the local bike shop, and you wouldn't believe it. The guy there goes, ah, this guy just dropped off some old stirrups and I don't want them Do you want to buy them for 10 bucks, and just use one I said, Yeah, awesome. Perfect.

Bill 40:27

So put the steps on and then I went for a ride. And then when I stopped at the light, I need to put my foot down. But I forgot my foot was in the stirrup.

Carol Cooke 40:35

So you fell over, but then only fall over once I fell over about three or four times a little bit well enough of that. I'll keep the syrup on but now I'll take the strap off. So after three attempts at riding the bike, I'm finally at that point where my leg, my left leg doesn't fall off. And it's a little bit less dangerous for me to go on. I'm not going to destroy my car, my shades.

Carol Cooke 41:03

You're not a real cyclist if you don't fall because you forgot to take your foot off because when you start with cleats as well when you clip your foot in, you know, I don't care who you are, you will always fall sideways. At least one Yeah, okay. Don't have to have a problem with your body. And it happens to every person who starts off you know, who finally decides, okay, I'm going to get clipping shoes. Yeah, that's just got to a light and they forget.

Bill 41:35

Awesome. I'm so glad that it's just not me. I feel a lot better now.

Carol Cooke 41:39

Oh, no, it's just not you. Don't worry about it. Hey, Carol.

Bill 41:42

Were you one of those people that was just that somebody like me hated because you're good at all sports and I really had to struggle to be good at any sport? Because it sounds like you're just

Carol Cooke 41:54

Not okay if you can be any kind of ball sport. Yeah. basketball, volleyball, and baseball. I am shocked, okay. And I think the worst summer of my life was one-year Mom and Dad decided they were going to rent the cottage for a couple of

weeks, you know. So what did they do?

Multiple Sclerosis MS

Carol Cooke 42:15

They rolled us in softball. And even though you know, we were on teams, I was always stuck out as far out in the field as possible because then I didn't have to catch anything. Until one day, somebody hit this fly up in the air and I'm standing there with my glove going, it's coming to me. I'm going I've got it. I've got it. I've got it.

Carol Cooke 42:40

And it landed right in front of me. I didn't have it. And yeah, so that was the most horrible time of my life spending claims off Paul. My sister, on the other hand, was a great basketball and volleyball player. So she got the ball skills and I didn't.

Bill 42:58

Well, you've done all right. By the way. looks at things since 2006. There's probably, I don't know, there's probably about 15 or 16 different titles. And there is definitely a gold medal at the London Paralympics.

Carol Cooke 43:13

Yeah.

Bill 43:14

Tell me, what is it like to win a gold medal in the

Carol Cooke 43:18

Well, you know, the funny thing is, I hold that gold medal up when I'm talking to people, whether it be adults or kids, and I asked them how many they think that that's a success, and invariably, every hand goes up.

Carol Cooke 43:31

But for me, the success I mean, I go back to you know, as that nine-year-old who wanted to go to the Olympics as a gymnast, and then that 15-year-old who decided that Moscow, I was going to be there to swim. You know, I can go 41 years back, it was a dream to represent my country at the pinnacle.

Carol Cooke 43:51

And it took 41 years, two countries, and three sports. I actually got there. And to

me, that was the signal Because the Australian pair cycling team is probably the toughest team to make, you only get so many spots at a Paralympic Games. So in London, we had six female spots, and we had six male spots out of 13 different categories.

Carol Cooke 44:17

So, you know, you either have to be a world champion or have definite mental potential to actually make the team. So to make the team I was just like, wow, that blew my mind. And, you know, the day of the time trial, I actually had to race them in London, because they didn't think that there would be enough females to hold our own race. So they combined us and it was factored. But, you know, the men are so strong.

Carol Cooke 44:49

And so I thought, Oh, well, I'm just gonna go out there and just give it you know, 120% as much as I can do, and I did I just put my head down. I went and was only eight kilometers, but it was like, you know, go as hard and as fast as you can. At this point, I didn't have my 22 kilos steel frame trike, I must say. I graduated to a carbon frame, 14-kilo trike,

Bill 45:14

Thank God.

Carol Cooke 45:15

Yeah, thank God. And I went about because the time trial you go a minute off a minute apart. So I was there were 18 of us. So I think I went about 13th 12th or 13th. So there were about six people behind me. And they weren't reading out when I well when I finished. I'd given it so much that I couldn't even pedal and thank God I was on a trike because trikes don't fall over.

Carol Cooke 45:44

And so I just sat on it and our physio actually wheeled me into our Bay where the team was and they had to lift me off the trike and they were still people out on the course. And I got onto a bike. A wind trainer to try and cool down and get the lactic acid out of my legs. And I had no idea where I'd come from because they weren't reading out the factor times they were just reading out the raw times.

Carol Cooke 46:12

And so I had no idea what my factor time would be and what price it would be and

the men's world men's men's and what I thought the Women's World Champion was still out on the course. It turned out that the female World Champion didn't actually rise because she had had a crash.

Carol Cooke 46:30

This was September she had had a crash in July and had a head injury so they wouldn't let her race I didn't know that at the time. I didn't know till afterward. But Hans Peter Duris, who is from Germany, was the men's World Champion, and he was still out racing.

Carol Cooke 46:46

And I was just like, oblivious, oblivious to it, and our media person from the Australian Paralympic Committee, Jenny Shear, just kept saying, she's holding her phone because obviously they were showing she wasn't telling me But they were showing the factor times online.

Carol Cooke 47:03

And she's looking at it going, I think you've got this. And as I'm on my wind trainer clothes, cooling down, I might put my hand up to her going, Don't jinx it. Just don't say I don't want to know, I don't want them to say it'll loudspeaker. And every time she said something,

Carol Cooke 47:19

I'd hold my hand up to her going, shut up, don't say anything. And it wasn't until this man walked into our Bay, and he comes up to me and he sticks his hand out. And it's the head coach of the Great Britain team. And I took his hand he goes, congratulations.

Carol Cooke 47:36

I said, For what? And he goes, you want and I turned, I almost got whiplash, turning to look at Jenny and she goes, Oh, for crying out loud. I've been trying to tell you for 10 minutes or one to blame, but you wouldn't let me say anything.

Carol Cooke 47:48

And I burst into tears. And I'm sure if thank God, Monty Python wasn't around because if somebody's been filming it, our head coach came up to me He's this huge man like he's just lovely and from Queensland and Peter's got his arms wrapped around me. I've got my head and his shoulder on sobbing so I'm like, Oh, you know, and my but my legs were still going around on the wind trainer. I was

still pedaling, as he was hugging me, and I'm sobbing.

Carol Cooke 48:17

And if you take every feeling possible, you know, fear, excitement, joy, sadness, like everything wrapped into one. That's what I was feeling. You can't even describe it because there's just so much that goes through you. And I think the best thing was that my mom and my aunt and my sister were watching they were there in London from Canada.

Carol Cooke 48:46

And you know, I think of all I guess the first thing that went through my head was that all those mornings that my mom would get up at 5 am when I was a kid and drive me to the pool would drive me This one meets on weekends act as a chaperone and come away with the club. You know, it paid off and it was just as much her metal as it was mine like that.

Carol Cooke 49:13

That's how I looked at it. And yeah, it was just when I got down to the metal presentation area. I was a bit concerned actually about how the guys were going to feel being beaten by a woman. And hence Peter Durst. He had come second to me. And then David David Stone from Great Britain was third. And I certainly didn't have to worry because as soon as they saw me, Hans Peter just grabbed me in this big bear hug, and almost picked me off my feet going in a big thick German accent. You don't good.

Carol Cooke 49:49

And then you know, and David Stone was like hugging me going, Oh, congratulations. That's fantastic. And the one thing that the media David Stone was of course, he's British, and we're in London and the British press grabbed him and said, so how does it feel to be beaten by a woman? You know, that was the first question.

Carol Cooke 50:12

And, you know, I'd give him so much credit because he just turned to them and said, Why do I worry whether it's a male or a female, she had an awesome race, she deserved to win. So that made me feel really good. You know, it was fabulous.

Carol Cooke 50:30

But to stand there and, and have them put that around your neck. It was just like,

Whoa, this is incredible. You know, so, yeah, and it was something on you know, and never ever thought would happen, because all those years before, you know, and I did have a chance of going to Beijing in 2008 with rowing but we're trying to qualify and we missed by point eight of a second, you know,

Carol Cooke 50:56

Quicker than the snap of your fingers and we were devastated so of course in 2008 here I thought wow oh my dreams are coming true I'm going to get to go to not the Olympics but the Paralympics. Not for Canada, but for Australia, not in swimming, but rowing.

Carol Cooke 51:12

Who the hell cares? Go, and then in 8.8 of a second that's ripped away from you. And I just thought, that's it, I can't do this, you know, and, and here, it was four years later, standing there with a gold medal around my neck. So it just kind of seemed surreal.

Carol Cooke 51:33

And you know, to think that this is Paralympic year again. And you know, I think we've got something like, I don't know 185 days left till the Paralympics start. And, yeah, hopefully, be there again, you know, and not have to race the men this time. Yes. And maybe win two gold medals. So that's really exciting to think that this could happen. For a second time,

Multiple Sclerosis MS

Bill 52:01

I'm so amazed. hear your story. Obviously, I'm so thankful that you're making the time to be part of this interview. It's just brilliant to hear what it is that you've done, where you've come from all the stuff that you've had to go through.

Bill 52:17

I know you do a lot of amazing work for some of the local charities and I also want to talk about the swim event that you've organized. And tell me a little bit about what the swim is about and how it was it came to be.

Carol Cooke 52:31

Well, I'm back in Oh around 1999, a lady at the MS Society of Victoria as it was known then started a scholarship program called the Gulf gold scholarships and

she had funding. She raised money in the first year \$10,000 and then in the second year she had funding given to her of \$10,000 so she gave out five \$2,000 scholarships for people living with Ms just to follow a dream and in the third year She had no funding.

Carol Cooke 53:01

So I was pretty good friends with her. And she said, Oh, we got to figure out how to raise this money. And we approached some corporates and got turned down and, and I said, Well, you know what I can raise, I could probably raise \$2,000 for the sports scholarship by doing a swim. So I talked to my club, my Swim Club at the time.

Carol Cooke 53:19

And the President said, Well, why don't we just invite other people to put teams in and let's see if, you know, we can do this. And so I contacted the city of the era because we swam at the Fitzroy pool, and asked them if they would donate a few lines for 24 hours and stuff it and you know, do it for free?

Carol Cooke 53:42

And they said, Yes. You know, they said, Yeah, sure. And so we had, I think we had 10 teams that first year just by word of mouth, and just by, you know, talking to people, and God, we raised \$22,000. Wow. And so I thought great. She Got her, you know, my one-off swim is done its job.

Carol Cooke 54:04

She's now got two years' worth plus a bit of advertising money perfect until I was handing out the awards at the end of that very first swim, and somebody from the back of the room meal. When is it next year? And I just went What? Joelle Hart hard this was to organize because the president of the club at the time had said, Oh, yeah, I'll help you.

Carol Cooke 54:25

I'll help you when we were talking about it. And then she promptly quit the club. So I roped in some amazing girlfriends who to this day are still doing it with me. And yeah, here we are 1616 swims lighter. We just had the 16th one at the Fitzroy pool, on March 4. And the money just kept building and building and now with the help of VMAs we've expanded to New South Wales and the AC T and we raise in excess over a million dollars a year.

Carol Cooke 54:59

Now. Just Through the swims, and the Fitzroy pool itself, just after this 16th swim, that pool alone has raised over two and a half million over the 16 swims. And so we're just over 7,000,007 point 3 million or something. Now, needless to say, we don't hand out \$2,000 scholarships anymore.

Carol Cooke 55:25

We actually hand out \$3,000 scholarships and we have in the past, handed out, five 5000 to you know, people that we thought were just amazing, passionate dreams that they had. And one year we actually gave \$10,000 to a woman living with Ms. And when I say dreams, you know, people think of these wild fancy dreams but the woman who got the 10,000 she was, it was a number of years ago and she was 54 living in a nursing home with nine-year-olds.

Carol Cooke 56:00

Basically a quadriplegic, so couldn't even sit up. So she had to be in bed all the time. And her only daughter, 54. I'm 54 now, so I just kind of shudder at the thought, of that being me. And her only daughter lived in South Australia and was getting married, but there was no way to get her there. Because she couldn't sit in the car because she couldn't sit up.

Carol Cooke 56:23

She couldn't sit on a plane. An air ambulance was just like, ridiculous. You couldn't do that. So the only way we could get her there was by road ambulance was \$7,000 to go from country Victoria to South Australia, and back 7000 just for the ambulance, then she would need, you know, a nurse to go with her. So she'd have to be paid.

Carol Cooke 56:47

They needed to hire like a day bed so she could actually be at the wedding. And so we just went, let's just give her 10 and she actually went to her daughter's wedding. That's how it was her dream forever. For everybody else, that's just a given, you know, you're just going to go to your daughter's wedding, you know.

Carol Cooke 57:06

And so, you know, when when I got a picture back from her daughter of, you know, this woman in her bed dressed to the nines, they bought her new dress and her daughter and new son-in-law on either side of her, and the smile on her face,

just set it all, you know, so that was just amazing. So those are the kinds of dreams that that we make come true.

Carol Cooke 57:27

I mean, they can be anything. So, you know, even going back to school to be retrained because you can't do your job because of your MS anymore. So yeah, so it's just incredible. But, you know, I think we've now over over the 15 years handed out close to 1000 scholarships now.

Carol Cooke 57:47

But we also help finance the Financial Assistance Program, which is means tested so people that need somebody to come and put ramps into the house or do some modifications on a bathroom More put air conditioning in because they hate intolerance so the financial assistance program through Ms. They, they actually make sure that they really do need the assistance.

Bill 58:13

That sounds fantastic. Unbelievable that you guys are raised in excess of \$7.3 million. So I want to, I want to keep talking really, but we're going to have to eventually count it to the end of the episode, which is difficult for me to do because it's been so amazing, but what I want to ask you is your 54 you're going to Rio, hopefully, very soon your second Olympics.

Bill 58:43

You've had a couple of other challenges. What do you tell somebody who is coming home from a doctor today and has just happened to you know, fall across this particular interview and they've been diagnosed with Some kind of a neurological disorder, if it's not a mess, and the doctor, hopefully, has been a little bit nicer than your neurologist and given them some news that, you know, they probably could do without, what do you tell somebody like that?

Carol Cooke 59:16

Look, I think, you know, I think back to when I was diagnosed and, and allow yourself to go through a grieving period, you know, Funny enough, I look at it now. And I think about what that doctor said that my life as I knew it was over. And he was right. He was right.

Carol Cooke 59:35

He was thinking in a negative way. And I like to think in a positive way because I

honestly would not go back and change the fact that I've been diagnosed with MS. Because it's actually made me who I am today. And not that I was a bad person before but I actually like the person I've become more than the person before.

Carol Cooke 59:56

And like I said, Not that I was a bad person, but I think I'm more Pathetic. I've stopped worrying about climbing that corporate ladder and making that money has become philanthropic. You know, it's given me opportunities to do things that I never ever thought I would do. Like last year I wrote a book, I never would have written a book.

Carol Cooke 1:00:17

I wouldn't have gone to London, I wouldn't have represented Australia in two sports, and I wouldn't have started the mega swim to help all these people. So there are a lot of most of the friends I have now I would never have met. And having the diagnosis is really, really scary.

Carol Cooke 1:00:33

And I don't care what it is, you know, it can be minor compared to anything, you know, like a cancer diagnosis or whatever. But it's still that person's problem. No, it's still huge in their life. They could have a hangnail and that could be the biggest problem that they've had, but it's still a problem in their life. And I say to people, especially if they've been diagnosed with a neurologic allow yourself the time to grieve. But don't let that grief take over for too long.

Carol Cooke 1:01:04

You know, if you need to talk to somebody, go and talk to somebody, but keep positive people around you keep, you know, we are who we hang out with. And if you are been diagnosed with something and it's devastating and you're hanging out with negative people, then you're gonna stay devastated. You need to get around positive people.

Carol Cooke 1:01:25

You need to get out of that hole and find a way to live with the diagnosis. Don't let it define who you are. I think that's the big thing that I decided that I wasn't Ms. Ms didn't define the person I was. I was a person living within us. And I and it's so funny because interviews I've done people say, oh, now we're going to talk to

suffer of Ms. Carol cook.

Carol Cooke 1:01:51

And I always stopped them and I say, I'm sorry, but I'm not a sufferer. I'm a person who lives with Ms. My family suffers When I have a relapse, my family, because can't do anything. So my family and my friends are the ones who suffer when I'm not well, but I get through it. And I'm the one living with it, not suffering from it.

Carol Cooke 1:02:16

So, you know, that's my main thing is especially, especially with Ms. Keep exercising, it's just so important, you know, make sure you're eating right, not I mean, I still drink red wine and I still have my chocolate, you know, all in moderation.

Carol Cooke 1:02:33

But look after your health because the healthier and fitter you can be, the better you're going to deal with things. You know, I just look at my neurological condition as something that is not going to kill me. You know, my lifespan is the same as anybody else.

Carol Cooke 1:02:49

And so I'm lucky in that I'm lucky I have relapsing-remitting Ms. And I don't have progressive Ms. You know, so I'm very lucky and I know thank God that That's what I was diagnosed and not something else. You know, so I just think I'm very lucky in the fact that I can keep going.

Carol Cooke 1:03:10

And I think, you know, we really have to think that and I had a friend who died a week ago, you know, 33 years old, Sarah, he wants to go out she won a silver medal in London and rowing at the Olympics. And she just passed away from cervical cancer, you know, after a three-year fight.

Carol Cooke 1:03:29

So, I've got nothing to complain about, you know, and it's but it's got it's getting your head around that diagnosis. And it's, and it's realizing that hey, I'm still here. And while I'm still here, and I'm still breathing, I've still got a life. Yeah. And, that disease is not going to define me.

Bill 1:03:47

Yeah, beautiful. I, I get in the stroke community that when they talk about stroke survivors, and I'm, I feel funny about hearing that as well. I'd rather be somebody who's experienced three strokes. Yeah, and now I have a story to tell. And the other thing about it is, not everyone has my version of the story to tell. So, I know it's a lot harder for a lot of people. And I consider myself one of the lucky ones as well.

Carol Cooke 1:04:15

Yeah, exactly. I mean, there's a lot of people doing it really tough. with Ms. And I, like I said, I'm really lucky. But I still you know, even even if you're struggling with with symptoms of Ms. Just don't let it define who you are. Yeah, no, it was interesting, because we just did this on the bike with Ms. And Shane Kelly, an Olympic cyclist, who wrote it in the MS. Melbourne cycle.

Carol Cooke 1:04:40

And what we did is we built this bike that has MS symptoms, and he said, you know, that was that he said to me when he finished, he says I actually stopped and didn't finish. He said because it was just all too hard. And I said well, well lucky you could get off the bike. I can't get off my Ms. And he says you know what he said and he said something so perfect.

Carol Cooke 1:05:00

Found, and it's exactly what I just said about not letting a mess define who you are and getting on with life. He said, when I stopped thinking about the problems with the bike, I was actually able to ride it a bit better. And I thought, wow, that's exactly what I tell people about not letting ms to find who you are just get on with living. You know, it was just really weird when he said that so, you know, that was a great way to end the bike ride that day.

Bill 1:05:31

Yeah, that's profound. Carol, tell me where can people go to find out more about you? Are there some URLs that they could look at?

Carol Cooke 1:05:40

Yeah, look, I have my own website, and it's just carolcook.com.au I sell my book from there as well. I'm self-published. So what's the book called? called cycle of life? Actually? Yeah, the cycle of Life gold medal Paralympian secrets to success.

Bill 1:05:59

Yeah, well done. Congratulations

Carol Cooke 1:06:00

Not an autobiography. It's just about overcoming challenges and change and jumping hurdles and creating a winning mindset. And I just use stories from my life to talk about how I did it.

Bill 1:06:12

Yeah, fantastic. Look, thank you so much for spending some time with me on the podcast. I really do appreciate it.

Carol Cooke 1:06:19

No worries, Bill. It's been great chatting,

Bill 1:06:21

Yeah. All the best for Rio. This year, I really look forward to hearing about your progress and how you go qualifying and then competing.

Carol Cooke 1:06:34

Well CHANNEL SEVEN this year is going to be broadcasting 14 hours a day of Paralympic events, for the first time ever on a mainstream channel and that's across. I mean, obviously, they'll have different hours across all their channels. So that'll be fabulous. People at home will be able to watch for change.

Bill 1:06:52

Yeah, that is excellent. That is great to hear. And can you just tell us before we actually sign off para Olympics are we what actually? Is it because I think people have a different idea of what the Paralympics actually are?

Carol Cooke 1:07:06

Well, Paralympics came from being parallel to the Olympics. Okay. So it's people with almost any type of disability.

Carol Cooke 1:07:17

Other than they used to have intellectual disabilities that were incorporated. They had a bit of cheating that happened during basketball. So there are only certain sports now that have intellectual disability included. I think swimming is one of the only ones but yeah, so it's people with disabilities competing in the same

sports that the Olympics have. They're just parallel to the Olympics. That's how Paralympics came up came to the fore a couple of weeks after the Olympics. so

Bill 1:07:47

Fantastic. Thanks for clearing that up all the best. Once again, I really thank you for being part of the program all the best and we'll talk to you hopefully on the other side of the 2016 Olympic games with, you know, a couple of gold medals strapped to you.

Carol Cooke 1:08:06

We'll Let's help so, Thanks, Bill.

Bill 1:08:09

You're welcome all the best. Okay. Bye.

Bill 1:08:13

According to Dr. David Perlmutter, vitamin D is the vitamin that may save your brain. While it's lumpy and recognizes that vitamin D is important for strong and healthy bones, its role in health and longevity is now recognized as casting a very wide net.

Bill 1:08:32

Over the past several years, vitamin D deficiency has been associated with increased risk for such brain-related disorders as Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, autism, and even dementia. with reference to the letter, a new study published in the Journal of Neurology correlated low levels of vitamin D to an increased risk of developing dementia to a far greater degree than anyone had predicted.

Bill 1:08:59

Do you have low vitamin D levels, a simple blood test can help you find out? If you liked this episode of the transit lounge podcast, go across to iTunes and leave us a five-star review. This will help others discover the show and could help make a positive change in their life.

Bill 1:09:17

Also, if you found this interview helpful, and you know someone that needs to hear this, please share it with them by posting it on Facebook, Twitter, or other social media sites that you frequent. It will help me reach people that are in need

and could make all the difference in someone's life that may be doing a tough at the moment. Thanks for listening to this episode of the transit lounge podcast.

Intro 1:09:40

The presenters and special guests of this podcast intend to provide accurate and helpful information to their listeners. These podcasts can not take into consideration individual circumstances and are not intended to be a substitute for independent medical advice from a qualified health professional.

Intro 1:09:59

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