

STAND & DELIVER

With a new CD and a new radio show, Jim Byrnes is finding lots to enjoy in a life that's seen more than its share of challenges

BY CHARLES CAMPBELL

*I*n the Social Services Seminar Room at the G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre on Laurel Street, there are motorcyclists and cancer survivors, and a hale fellow with a white beard whose story this week is that he was gored in Pamplona at the running of the bulls, after he stopped to tie his shoelace. It's an amputee support group, and they're talking about their shared hatred of lingering snow and phantom pain. Do those who decide to amputate have less pain than those who lose their legs unexpectedly?

Jim Byrnes, the guest of the group, tells them that his "foot" sometimes feels like it's been set on fire and someone's come with a broken bottle to put it out. One woman says she hadn't realized Byrnes had lost his legs. "I suppose it's because, 37 years on, I'm still in denial," he says. "I'm still the same self-centred, venal sonofabitch I've always been. That can serve you well when you're an amputee."

He wasn't always so philosophical. On a February night in 1972, Byrnes and two friends were on a closing-time run to get more beer for their farmhouse party. Sheets of rain were

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