

# Two Ways of Responding

Adversity of one kind or another comes the way of all of us. The measure of our character is how we deal with it.

Recently, I read the stories of two paraplegics, totally unrelated to one another

One was Kenneth Wright, a high-school football star and, later, an avid wrestler, boxer, hunter and skin diver. A broken neck sustained in a wrestling match in 1979 left him paralyzed from the chest down.

Wright underwent therapy, and his doctors were hopeful that one day he would be able to walk with the help of braces and crutches. Apparently, however, the former athlete could not reconcile himself to his physical disability.

He prevailed upon two of his best friends to take him in his wheelchair to a wooded area, where they left him alone with a 12-gauge shotgun. After they left, he held the shotgun to his abdomen and pulled the trigger. At the age of 24, Wright had committed suicide.

The second paraplegic is Jim McGowan. A semi-professional baseball player, at the age of 19 he was attacked by a gang in Brooklyn, stabbed and left paralyzed from the middle of his chest down. The injury confined him to a wheelchair. But he was featured in the news when he made a successful parachute jump, landing on his target in the middle of Lake Wallenpaupack in the Poconos.

Reporters covering the feat learned a number of things about McGowan. He lives alone, cooks his meals, washes his clothes, and cleans his house.

He drives himself in his specially equipped automobile. He has written three books, and he did the photography for this country's first book on the history of wheelchair sports.



Two men with handicaps: One chose life and the other didn't. One decided to make the most of his disability. The other couldn't deal with his.

Robert Frost wrote it: *I shall be telling this with a sigh ... Somewhere ages and ages hence ... Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – ... I took the one less traveled by ... And that has made all the difference.*

– Beecher Hunter