

Peel Bio. Bk. Aug 8-90 M.N Lovell

Lovell vows to walk again

By STEPHANIE INNES
Staff Reporter

Saturday August 4 marked an anniversary Jocelyn Lovell would rather forget.

It was a muggy summer afternoon — August 4, 1983 — when Lovell, then 33, took a plum out of his fridge and hopped on his bicycle for a daily training run. One short moment, in a collision with a dump truck on Britannia Rd. just west of Trafalgar Rd. in Milton, left Canada's leading amateur cyclist barely alive.

Lovell's injuries were severe — a broken neck, fractured pelvis, and deep cuts to his head and arms. Now, seven years later, Lovell lives with chronic reminders of the accident. Paralyzed from the armpits downwards, and classified as a C5/C6 quadraplegic, Lovell, 40, can move just his shoulders, biceps and diaphragm.

If the accident hadn't happened, Lovell says he would still be racing his bicycle. Instead, he has chosen to devote his time to an organization called the Spinal Cord Society of Canada (SCSC), a society that according to Lovell has, "built a fire under the comfortable paralyzed community."

The society's logo shows the international symbol for wheelchair crossed out. The motto under the logo says "cure, not care."

"It is a startling symbol when you first see it," says Jo Ann Kornack, president of the SCSC chapter for Peel Region. "It's not that we are against wheelchairs, but our goal is cure."

The SCSC brochure says that improving care is the logical goal of cure. One hundred per cent of money raised from the society's chapters goes directly to spinal cord research.

"I don't think I'll go into the year 2000 in a wheelchair," says Lovell, who lives in a two-bedroom Port Credit home with his three-year-old border collie.

"For me it's easy to see. People thought it was impossible to walk on the moon, or to walk



Staff photo by Fred Loek

Jocelyn Lovell, seen here with his three-year-old dog, Sunny, is counting on researchers to help him walk again. Canada's former cycling champion was paralyzed in an accident that happened August 4, 1983.

around with a plastic heart. What is impossible is only in your mind. Things will change. The power that I got through cycling drives me now."

Between the years of 1966 and 1982, Lovell won 40 Canadian national championships, won two Pan American gold medals, participated in three Olympics, placed second in the 1978 world championships, and in 1975 was the Canadian athlete-of-the-year.

"When I was an athlete I did things that no one thought I could do," says Lovell. "It's all a matter of directing and focussing yourself, and that is what I am doing about my situation now."

Lovell says his portrayal by the media has been that of a bitter individual, largely due to the fact that his causes have been misunderstood.

"People just think we should accept our injury as incurable," says Lovell. "We should be happy as we are, and make the most of it. But I think it is wrong to pour all our money into games for the handicapped, and not put one cent into research. No one can say they like being in a wheelchair. Why is the number one cause of death for paraplegics and quadraplegics suicide?"

The Spinal Cord Society is a 12-year-old organization, and has been in Canada for the past six years.