

## A Word From LARS...



Well, it has been a little more than one year now. My wheelchair and I celebrated our first anniversary on July 13th. It turned out to be somewhat less of an event than I had anticipated. I may have even let the date go by unnoticed had my mother failed to remind me of the significance of the day. I thought I would never be able to forget the day I had the use of my legs taken from me. I guess after the past year, a mere calendar date is rather insufficient to grab my attention. If someone had told me a year ago of the condition I would be in today, and what I would have to go through to get this way, I probably would have laughed in their face. Somehow, life never seems to go quite the way one had expected it to. So where does Lars stand now?

### *The Body*

The paralysis is permanent. I will not walk again. People tell me I should never lose hope. This is fine. I don't think anyone who sits in a wheelchair ever completely resigns himself to his fate. I must, however, also learn to live with certain facts. The damage to my spinal cord was severe. A year has passed with absolutely no sign of recovery.

Miracles do happen. But not very often. I should just feel lucky to be alive. The parts of my body not affected by the paraplegia have shown tremendous progress. Broken ribs have healed. Lungs, though they may never be what they once were, have mended. With the arrival of a new racing chair, strength is returning to an upper body which completely wasted away during a four month hospital stay. I have lost most of the vision in my left eye, though in the grand scheme of things, this seems a mere detail only noticed through the gigantic left side blind spot of which I must be constantly aware of during lane change maneuvers in the car. The slight loss of hearing in my left ear is hardly noticeable. Anyone having any doubts as to the completeness of my recovery has only to witness my extraordinary ability to fall backwards down a full flight of stairs, completely unscathed, to have those doubts completely and inexorably removed from their minds.

### *The Mind*

I have said many times that the "not walking" part is the easy part. The biggest struggle I have faced has been that of accepting a completely new position in life. New attitudes which people have developed toward me. New attitudes which I have developed toward myself. How am I supposed to know what I can and cannot do on my own? How do I let people know, gently, that I do not need, nor want, their help? How do I go about accepting help when I do need it? Some days things go quite well. I can accept my present position in life, work within my new limitations, and possibly even feel happy in doing so. On other days things do not go so smoothly. Fight it to the bitter end. Invariably losing at the bitter end. The only thing one can do

is pick oneself up, dust off, and figure out what, if anything, was learned to be applied next time. The one thing I can be sure of is that I do have plenty of time to make all the mistakes I want.

### *The Bank*

One thing I most certainly cannot complain about is a lack of support from the provincial and national ski communities. The Lars Taylor Disabled Skier Trust Fund which was set up through Cross Country BC and the BC Paraplegic Association, with the invaluable support of Per Gaarder has been a great success. The donations to this fund have settled down now after reaching a total of nearly forty thousand dollars. The other capital fund, arranged by the staff at the Vernon branch of the Royal Bank has received donations totalling more than fifty thousand dollars. Although this money has not yet been touched. I can assure everyone who donated that it will be put only to the best use. Probably the most crucial part of my rehabilitation has yet to come. I will enter college or university to acquire the knowledge which is required to allow me to get a good career going. I must be able to survive on my own. I would like to make certain I have some direction in mind, school wise, before I start spending money out of the trusts. Also very important to me is the fact that the Disabled Skier Trust Fund will remain in place long after I am gone. We have already had several serious accidents involving our young athletes in this province. As much as I hate to say it, in a group as active as ours, mine will very likely not be the last such incident. It is of some comfort to know that the Trust will be there to help any skier unfortunate enough to need it.

*Thank you for this gift.*