

## How Brain Injury Impacted My Life

By Mel Rosiechuk

It's been said that brain injury is a thief because it steals freedom from all it touches. Putting the pieces back together and reclaiming lost freedoms requires many things, some of which are hope, belief, commitment, humor, a positive attitude and a support system.

I would like to thank NABIS, for being a part of my support system and for the opportunity to share my story after my life altering brain injury.

My name is Mel Rosiechuk. I'm in my mid 50's (OK, my latter 50's). All my adult life I was an avid outdoorsman (camping, skiing, snowmobiling, parasailing, horseback riding) and active sportsman (hockey, baseball, football, golf) and an entrepreneurial businessman. I lived and enjoyed life to the fullest.

All that changed February 28, 1994 when I was involved in an auto accident in which I sustained back, neck and head injuries. My life since then became a journey of challenges with everyday routines such as paying bills, making bank deposits, managing money, opening and responding to mail, shopping, socializing and even dialing phone numbers, becoming major undertakings. Hour to hour, day-to-day, life was a burden.

In the following weeks, months and years, I had to deal with chronic pain, headaches, vertigo, memory and cognitive difficulties, losing thoughts in mid sentence, absent mindedness, difficulty in concentrating and planning, physical and mental fatigue, lack of initiative, inability to sleep. I became an emotional liability, depressed and irritable. Being self-employed, I experienced a mayor impact with my



Mel at his desk.

earning capabilities.

Medical appointments with various specialists, doctors, physiotherapists, acupuncturists, psychologists, chiropractors and pain clinics became part of my daily routine for the next seven years. Few of them were of any benefit in addressing the issues at hand.

My future was filled with fear and hopelessness. As a last resort my doctor referred me to NABIS. That was when things began to slowly turn around for me.

NABIS helped me put the pieces of my life back together (like a jig saw puzzle). They gave me insight to my issues with information on brain injuries. I was introduced to the grieving process and how I had to work through the denial, anger, bargaining, letting go and finally acceptance of what happened. They taught me new skills that in turn gave me a new attitude and a new understanding of life and myself in general. They gave me confidence when I had doubt and hope when I had none. For that I am grateful.

I still can't run, but I can walk. I still can't comprehend everything I read, but I can see. I still can't tolerate noisy crowds or loud music, but I can hear. I still have a problem with my vocabulary, but I can talk. For this I am grateful.

I now spend one hour every morning on a stretching and exercise program and one hour every evening in aqua therapy. This helps control my pain and balance issues. For this I am grateful.

Last summer I was able to make a weekend horseback trail-riding trip to the mountains for the first time in seven years. I am repeating that experience this summer and extending it to one week. My next goal is to ski this winter. For these little steps I am grateful.

I refuse to let my accident ruin the rest of my life. Yes, I have limitations, however I've learned to live with