



CASS'S CORNER

The Adjustment

Marjorie was an accomplished swimmer, specialising in the backstroke, for the Canadian national team.

Kitts, too, was a gifted athlete, whose prowess on the field was always admired, respected and, if on the other side of the ball, surely feared.

'C' swam competitively, himself, from age 7 through high school, as well. He was always in premier physical condition, and had a regular swimmer's well-toned and muscular body.

Lisa was a gorgeous frequenter of the beach and actually owned a bar in Daytona Beach, Florida, drawing envy from all the gals around her, as well as admiration and certain 'oogie eyes' from the male contingency fortunate enough to see her.

Each of the above-named individuals led lives and enjoyed a lifestyle to be envied, certainly, without doubt. Then, with the swerve of a car into the lane they were driving in, all of that was taken away.

Sadly, this happens to far more individuals in society than anyone is ready or often willing to acknowledge. Closed-head injury or, more broadly, 'brain injury,' is what, so often, deprives people of their former athletic abilities.



"What exactly is a severe brain injury," one may be wont to inquire.

In answer, a severe brain injury occurs when the brain makes impact with the interior of the skull. As a result, there may be bleeding in the brain, bruising, damage to tissue or more precise neurochemical changes within the brain.

A closed head injury occurs when the brain tissue impacts the inside of the skull.

A brain injury causes physiologic, cognitive, behavioural and psychological changes. Each person may be injured in a separate part of the brain, and this is largely the determining factor for long-term effects.

Physical functions as seemingly simple and natural as standing, walking and hand-eye co-ordination can be severely altered and compromised.

I was incredulous when speaking directly with Marjorie. It was 2007, she told me; Marj had started training for a triathlon. She was tired 'of looking like a mum' and wanted competition back in her life.

In January 2009, Marj had her accident. "All training ceased."

Following the accident, the life-long athlete faced a reality she never before would have expected or foreseen.

"I was mad at the water for the first time in my life. Swimming hurts. All of my therapists said water will help. But how can it help when it makes me dizzy? In 2012 I started trying to walk again."

Kitts had a similar, but different story. All his life, Kitts had participated in and succeeded at achieving high levels of accomplishment in any sport he chose. I like to think of him as the King Midas of sports: each sport he participated in or touched 'earned him gold.'

Then he was in an automobile accident, flying through the windshield and dying three times in hospital, following his tragedy.

Welcome to Cass's Corner the place where you will hear about news, research, articles and much more that pertains to brain injury.

Lisa was a regular bathing beauty, owning a bar in Daytona Beach, Florida. Women, as I have suggested, gazed at her in envy and men wanted to be with her.

Her good fortune, too, disappeared in an instant, following her destructive trauma.

She now has trouble even speaking, and her mobility has been severely diminished.

For all of 'C's life, he, too, had the sports bug. Be it the competitive swimming he took part in for upwards of twenty years, the championship racquetball he played, or the time he spent skiing, he 'was always at it.'

Now, yes, his mobility has been fully regained, but he no longer takes part in his former efforts at physical fitness.

Each of the individuals I have spoken of had something in common. More than one thing, actually: They had all been well-accomplished and respected athletes, and each underwent severe head trauma.

Tim is another man I spoke with. Yes, he operated in an office, with the regular dexterity necessary for such an endeavour. He was also athletic, participating in rather advanced levels of baseball, all in all, being thought of, too, as an exceptional athlete.

Following his accident, his mobility, too, has been diminished. No, one would never guess it to come across Tim on the streets; he speaks eloquently and is easily understood. Sadly, however, his enjoyment of baseball, for instance, would have to be on the television screen, should he choose to watch a game. Tim, you see, is no longer able to jump. He cannot run.

Fortunately, he is content in that he enjoys his children and grandkids and very much enjoys activities that he is able to do, with them. These include gardening, at which he is gifted and he is an avid and quite successful fisherman, too.

Lisa may no longer be able to talk; her compensation, however, comes in the joy and spark she brings to each of our group meetings. With mother by her side, helping to offer a recount of the preceding week, Lisa adds a lovely bit to each of our gatherings. We are eager to see her, each week.

Kitts may not be partaking in his sport of choice, any longer. His 'compensation' comes in his own contributions to group. He has offered to lead certain dance lessons to our HBIA members and, for that, he is absolutely appreciated and enjoyed.

The story here is not about what each of us 'used to be' able to do. Sure, we all have our past glories. Whether we excelled in baseball or swimming, at racquetball or in managing an office, we each had our 'niche.' Our respectful accidents did what they could to deprive us each of our glories. We are luckier than that, however.

We have all learned to compensate. If we are unable to participate in swim meets regularly, we still do a fair share of writing, or of contributing to and helping to guide one another in group.



Some may see us and feel a certain sympathy for us or our respectful plight. They may not see the joy and satisfaction we receive, instead, from the gratitude of others, when we pull a fish out of the lake, master a dance we have just learned to do, or finished reading an article that has been submitted to the most recent newsletter.

We. . . we are not only achieving, but we are succeeding!