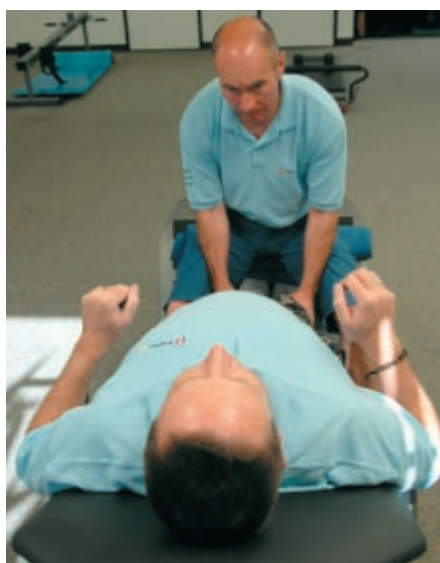


Standing Start

by Peter Carr



The lure of a possible improvement in my condition (or was it the California sunshine) led my wife and I to trek some 5,500 miles to San Diego in October 2006. We went with hope and trepidation, and to be honest a certain amount of English cynicism, regarding the possibility of 'recovery'. There was no medical intervention, no needles, no operations, just damn hard work to be done in the gym!



I left some two weeks later, inspired both mentally and physically and with the additional goal of bringing the concept of Project Walk to the UK.

On my return from San Diego I continued my exercise plan at

Following a chance comment by a friend of a friend, I'd like to say I stumbled over Project Walk, but I can't say that because I can't walk! Exactly a year before, I had been rendered a T6 complete paraplegic by an inconsiderate motorist who knocked me off my motorbike!

home. Repetitive exercise, thousands and thousands of times, some with a trainer, some done alone. My body had known how to walk for forty years, I wasn't going to let it forget. I had to re-educate my nervous system, form new pathways to reroute signals, bypassing the damaged areas. With regular follow-ups by video link and email from Project Walk, the slight changes made to my routine on an ongoing basis keep my body awake and alert. My physical and mental gains have been enormous. I have hope. It is a managed and limited hope, but is hope and a goal just the same. I am currently working at Phase I and II of the programme and this has allowed me to remain free of medication for spasms, with increased muscle tone and bulk. I have none of the side effects of anti-spasmodic medications, nor have I had to endure further invasive procedures to control these. My core stability has

improved both my posture and strength. With the increased muscle tone my skin has remained healthy and I have not experienced any of the skin issues so many SCI people are prone to. I'm not sitting on my bones quite so much! My cardiovascular fitness has improved and I am able to pick things up from the floor and sit up again without holding on to outside structures, I can balance unaided on any surface, my transfers have improved and in an emergency, I could just about crawl. To the able-bodied a fairly simple movement, but in the event of a fire, something that could save my life!

NASA and the Russian space programmes have both spent millions of dollars researching how the body reacts to reduced gravity, noting the loss of bone density and muscle mass and the deterioration in the nervous system without stimulation. They could have saved their



money; all they needed to do was take a look at the environment of an SCI individual. The 'hands off' approach, pumped full of drugs to prevent spasms and given no hope of improvement in a power chair... action and reaction... you put nothing in, you get nothing out!

Irrelevant of our age, financial status, fitness, spinal cord injured or not, we all set ourselves goals, some attainable, some beyond the realms of possibility. I was never going to be content to literally just sit out my time in this world. I nearly lost my life and I was damn sure I was going to make the best of what I had left! I accept I will never run round the garden or play football again, but my goal is to stand unaided for transferring in and out of the car, or dressing... only a paralysed individual would know what a difference that would make to life! Project Walk and now Standing Start is all about what you can do, not what you can't. There is no negativity. My goals and standards of accomplishment are mine and mine alone; I have been witness to much, much greater achievements. The testimonials on the website are real people, ordinary individuals who have had an SCI thrust upon them as they have been carrying out their



normal day. Over the course of my visits I have met many of them and have shared their amazing stories.

I was brave enough (with the help of my wife!) and financially able to travel to the other side of the USA, many others do not have that good fortune. So, following three further visits, the latest in October 2008, Standing Start will open its first facility in the UK on 1 December 2008. Staffed by qualified physiotherapists trained in the Project Walk methods, our centre is located in Cambridge, 50 miles from London and served



by all the major routes, North to South, East to West and also Stansted Airport. Central to the UK, I hope our facility will be accessible to all.

This is just *my* story, and the difference Project Walk has made to *my* life, let it make a difference to yours! Please look at our website www.standingstart.org and see the testimonials of all those who have benefited from the programme.

MONTAÑA SOL, S.L., **TORREMOLINOS, SPAIN**

Full board accommodation in luxury villa complex. Specifically adapted for wheelchair users and disabled people. Ground floor en suite bedrooms, wheel-in showers, shower chairs/commodos provided. Height adjustable beds with head and foot risers and swinging monkey poles to fit right or left. Level grounds, pool with hoist, conservatory, bar and satellite TV. Adapted courtesy buses provide airport transfers and all local transport f.o.c. Live entertainment. Mobile hoists and other aids available f.o.c. Electric chairs, ripple mattresses for hire. Highly recommended in various publications. Open from March until end of October.

SELF-CATERING available from November to March – see website for further details. We would be classed as category 2 of the British Tourist Boards National Accessible Scheme.

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