

## True grit

Shauna Petrie thought she'd never again feel as free as she did that sunny afternoon before parachuting from a plane into a world of darkness.

Both her chutes failed to open properly, and she plunged 850 metres onto a grassy Winchester airfield, near Ottawa.

Amazingly, the 16-year-old survived. But the June 1981 accident left her a paraplegic for life, and as she lay in her hospital bed recovering, Shauna worried about losing her independence.

Nearly two years later, she's once again free in a world of sunshine.

Shauna has discovered the limits of her disability, learning to make use of the upper body strength she's developed since being confined to a wheelchair.

She was awarded five gold ribbons last month at the Eastern Ontario Games for the Physically Disabled.

"My whole life has turned around since the accident," she said. "But at least it didn't turn around for the worst."

During rehabilitation, her new friends told her about the games for the disabled. Within half a year, Shauna entered the regional competition without any training — and set a record in her first toss of the shot-put at the 1982 Ontario Games.

"That sort of turned me on to getting more involved in this," she said.

She's trained three days a week since January and hopes to qualify for the



John Major, The Citizen

*Shauna Petrie puts the shot.*

Ontario and National Games this summer.

"I can't believe I'd never heard about these competitions before, because they're all I think about now."

Next year, she'll study business administration at York University in Toronto, where she plans to continue her training at Variety Village, an indoor sports complex for the disabled.

"I know what I'm missing because of the accident; now I'm involved in a lot of things I wouldn't have been able to do."

Shauna is typical of the 120 athletes

who competed — all of them determined to turn their disability in their favour.

It may have taken minutes for some cerebral palsy victims to inch their wheelchairs down a 100 metre track, but their intensity was no less than that of a non-disabled international athlete.

Half of the Games competitors were stricken with cerebral palsy, while others competed in events for the blind, amputees, and those confined to wheelchairs.

Most were in their early twenties, although the list of athletes included a nine-year-old and 63-year-old. Some were born with their handicap; others have learned to adapt.

Ottawa's Gordon Hope, 28, lost his sight to cancer when he was an infant. He's been competing in the disabled games since 1976, and set a provincial triple jump record last year.

"I come from a family of five boys," he said. "The reason I compete is no different than the reason my brothers compete."

His disability hasn't held him back academically — he's defending his masters thesis in psychology, entitled *Learned Helplessness and Depression*. Next year, he'll enter the doctorate program at Carleton University in Ottawa.

Blind competitor John Baxter, 37, lost his sight in a mining injury nine years ago. The premature explosion also blew away two fingers but, before long, he was training for the Games.

## Keeping cool earns honour

Two air traffic controllers who guided a small aircraft that had lost its instruments through a blinding rain storm to a safe landing at Ottawa International Airport were honoured recently.

The Canadian Air Traffic Control Association presented awards of honour to Bob Scott, a civilian controller, and Al Collins, a military controller, for their tension-filled hour of work July 21, 1981.

With a pilot and one passenger aboard, the airplane, a Piper Cherokee, ran into stormy weather after leaving Mont-Laurier airport, about 180 kilometres northwest of Montreal.

The storm conditions limited visibility to about a kilometre and created a dangerously low cloud ceiling at Ottawa airport.

Then the pilot, who had only 15 hours instruction in flying by instruments rather than visual rules, discovered his

only piece of equipment, the altimeter that measures his height above the ground, had failed.

Lost in the clouds, he radioed an emergency call to the Ottawa airport tower.

"He had no way of getting down," Scott said.

The Ottawa airport has a special piece of equipment, not found at all airports, called a precision approach radar unit.

Using that equipment and consulting charts and reference material, the two controllers first established the altitude of the plane, then got it turned around and onto the right flight path for a safe landing.

Scott said that a major factor in averting an accident was the fact "the pilot was very, very calm through the whole incident". Collins commented: "You do everything naturally in a situation like that. You think about the consequences after it has happened."

## Sleeping sickness study

Scientists in two laboratories continents apart are using the latest biochemical techniques in an effort to develop a simple field test for the early diagnosis of sleeping sickness.

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa is funding a joint research project involving the University of Victoria in British Columbia and the Kenyan (Africa) Trypanosomiasis Research Institute.

In May, IDRC awarded a three-year grant of \$115 520 to a six-member team of University of Victoria scientists headed by Dr. Terry Pearson of the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology.

The university team will collaborate with the institute in Kenya, headed by Dr. Adriel Njogu.

Trypanosomiasis or African sleeping sickness is a debilitating parasitic disease introduced by the bite of the tsetse fly.