

Photo: Jiri Prskavec

Why Adventurers Embrace LVC

Kathleen Taylor in action, at a race last year in Charlotte, NC — one of the most challenging artificial courses in the world.

By JoAnn Chiasson

Think of a moment in time when you felt really alive. If memories like these were logs on a fire, Kathleen Taylor and Stan Christensen have enough to light up an evening sky.

In very different ways, life is an adventure for both. And both have had LVC surgery to ensure the adventures and memories keep coming.

Kathleen Taylor, now a first year Human Kinetics student at the University of Ottawa, started paddling at the age of 11 and began to race seriously a couple of years later. A member of Canada's National Junior Slalom Team for the past two years, Kathleen represented Canada at the 2006 World Championships in Slovenia, and last year at the Pre-World Championships in the Czech Republic where she finished 17th.

We caught up with her via e-mail in Mexico, where she is training. Her enthusiasm for

the impact LVC surgery has had on her life is downright infectious.

Kathleen has been wearing glasses since she was 5 and contacts since she was 11, and says she wanted to get LVC surgery ever since she first heard about it. When her doctor recommended LVC for her when she turned 18, she prepared for the big event by reading up on related procedures and talking with others who had undergone LVC, including many paddlers who had the surgery, and "highly recommended it," she says.

"I had the surgery because I am a whitewater slalom paddler, which means I go down a section of rapids and navigate through 18 to 20 gates on the river set in a challenging sequence. The races are about 100 to 130 seconds, depending on the paddler." In a world where speed really counts, no matter how hard you train often it's good vision that is vital to a winning outcome.

"Other than the normal frustrations," Kathleen says contacts were fine for everyday use but "terrible" for paddling. "I would constantly get water splashed in my face paddling on the bigger whitewater courses, which would knock my contacts around in my eyes." Plus, as her vision was "so bad there was no way I could function without

contacts in"; this would leave her close to blind going down a roaring section of rapids.

"Not a good situation to be in!" she insists.

Another reason Kathleen opted for LVC: "Contacts were a pain. I hated having to put them in early in the morning, to go to training for 7 a.m. Also, late at night, keeping them in was difficult, if I was up late or out with friends," she adds.

"Here in Mexico, it's wonderful to be able to get up in the morning and train without forcing contacts into sleepy eyes."

The results of her LVC surgery? "Fantastic," says Kathleen. "It's completely changed my everyday life," she explains, adding that it's allowing her to "fully enjoy" her active lifestyle. "Right now I am in Tlapocoyan, Mexico on a two week training camp. And having LVC has made this trip a breeze," she says via e-mail.

"Before LVC, plane trips would be a pain: I would have to put in and take out my contacts to rest my eyes for sleeping. This plane trip I was able to watch a movie, sleep, and be up and about — all without sore eyes or

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without having to remove and put contacts back in. Here in Mexico, it's wonderful to be able to get up in the morning and head to breakfast and training without trying to force in contacts into sleepy eyes."

"LVC has dramatically changed my life!"

Closer to home, Stan Christensen lives what sounds like a picture-postcard life in Canada's heartland: a farmer by profession, he lives in a farmhouse where he and wife Cheryl raised their sons Eric and Ian, perched at the edge of Lac Ste-Marie, with the Mont Ste-Marie ski hill in the background.

Stan's up at dawn with farm chores. But he's almost as frequently found heading down the local mountainside on a mountain bike... or hiking through the woods on a trek... or zipping along the rivers in a canoe or kayak.

Stan lives the kind of adventurous, beauty-filled life that only Mother Nature, and close family, can provide. And, thanks to LVC, life just keeps getting richer.

"I've been a Level 4 ski instructor for a long time and both my sons [Ian and Eric] are ski instructors as well." Father and sons are close. They're also keen competitors: regular participants in 'adventure races' that involve performing a combination of road-race activities in the outdoors, with water, woods and mountainside competition.

"The races are usually 4- to 12-hour events, so they require pretty good vision," explains Stan.

He recalls one race, a few years back: he was racing through the woods on a mountain bike, was hit by a branch, and lost one of his contact lenses. "Suddenly, I was trying to adapt to the depth perception and [navigate] the next little section through the bush." No such luck. "I took a couple flips [and] then went right over the handle-bars."

Contacts, for Stan, weren't just an unreliable nuisance, they were uncomfortable.

"No glasses, no contacts — no nothing. LVC works really well for me."

"That was one of the reasons I opted for [LVC]," he says. Now, I just get up in the morning, go and check the cows, check the World Cup race results on the computer, get dressed and go to the ski hill. It's a real joy to do it with no glasses, no contacts — no nothing. LVC works really well for me."

Stan has a twin brother who is in the military and leads his own kind of adventurous life.

"We're both into a lot of sports, and do a lot of things together. He had surgery done first. Then his wife had it done, and one of my sisters had it done, too," says Stan. "I had

the best eyesight of the bunch, so I'm last to get it done," he adds with a laugh.

Stan, 56, had a Monovision procedure last November, and says that "adjusting to the reading takes the longest. The best part is that recently, at my three-month checkup, the end result was excellent."

"The other day I was looking out on the lake, watching the deer walking around, and realized, 'I can see!'. When I was wearing glasses, I'd be getting in and out of the truck, they'd be fogging up... [Now] I don't have to deal with any of that."

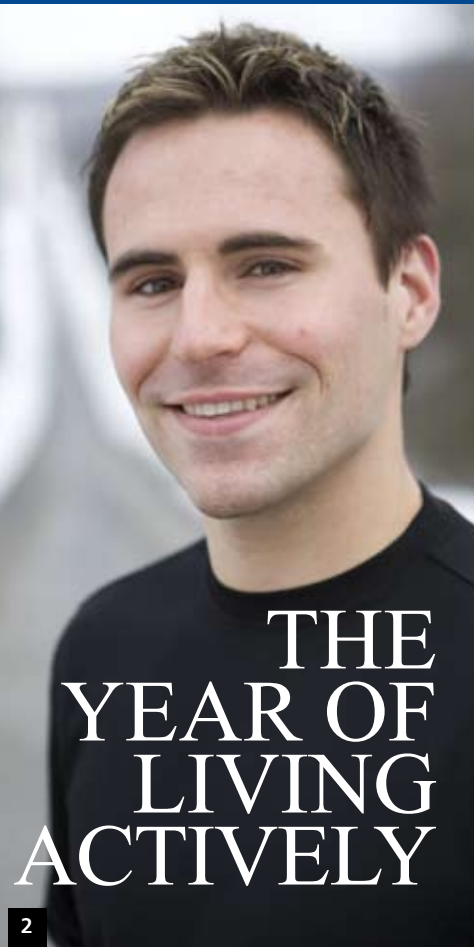
The kicker came when Stan and his twin brother beat Stan's two 20-something sons in an adventure race. "My sons are pretty good at the adventure racing. We were behind them, on the canoe section of the race but we were pushing hard on the bikes. It was very muddy and the boys took a wrong turn. So, they ended up behind us."

What does Stan think led to the boys' downfall?

He's not sure, but he does note, with a wry laugh, that his sons "still wear glasses."

It's likely that Ian and Eric are watching their father more closely than ever, wondering if LVC will be part of their prescription for family adventures, and their own future victories. ■

KINGSTON UPDATE



In today's society, we have constant reminders to live healthy and more active lifestyles. People are engaging in more physical activities, eating better and getting more involved in day-to-day activities. This in turn keeps everyone busier than ever before: walking and running, training at a gym, even volunteering.

No doubt this allows less time for getting ready — and even fewer minutes for worrying about glasses and contact lenses. Perhaps not surprisingly, having laser vision correction has become more and more popular as our lives get busier and more active. Being active myself, and having my procedure four years ago, I know how laser vision correction (LVC) has simplified the sports I play and made being constantly on the go and little easier to handle.

I hear everyday why people want to undergo LVC. And now, with the precision of Wavefront PRK, patients can return to their sporting activities within a week of their surgery. For those anxious to return to their active lifestyles, this is an attractive feature of LVC.

Brian Carty (pictured left), a Personal Trainer here in Kingston knows the feeling. Brian had surgery in February 2007 and was just hitting his one year post-op date when I dropped him an e-mail and asked how life has changed since having the procedure. Here is what he said:

I'm a personal trainer at the YMCA and I own my own personal training company, Fianna Fitness (www.fiannafitness.com). I had a Wavefront PRK procedure in January, 2007. There were many reasons why I decided to have the surgery. Most of all, I couldn't stand using contacts: they made my eyes feel dried out, and with my active lifestyle, glasses got in the way. On top of that, glasses and contacts are expensive so I realized that in the long run it was cheaper to have the surgery.

Since my surgery, life has become a lot freer. It's great not to worry about bringing my contacts and glasses with me everywhere I go. And I can see what is around me when I am wakeboarding and playing squash. Plus, I don't have to worry about dry, itchy eyes throwing off my game. And as far as personal training goes, because my eyesight became better than 20/20 [after surgery] I can see the second hand on clocks from across the gym, which helps when timing my clients.

Finally, the people at Focus are very friendly and welcoming; I highly recommend them and Wavefront PRK. You don't know how much [LVC] can change your life until you do it.

by Michelle Owen, Manager,
Focus Eye Centre, Kingston



Mission Possible

InFocus asked Everest SurgiCentre's Clinical Manager Francine DesRosiers, RN, to tell us about her numerous experiences working with ORBIS International and its DC-10 'flying eye hospital' that brings the gift of sight to residents of some of the most remote parts of the planet. We also asked her to explain the deep and personal satisfaction she has had from volunteering on ORBIS missions to Wuhan, China, and Dar Es-Sallaam, Tanzania.

To understand why Francine takes off with ORBIS one must first appreciate what the organization is and how ORBIS initially took flight.

In 1973, Dr. David Paton, head of the Ophthalmology Department at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, and Betsy Tripe DeVecchi, daughter of Juan Trippe, the founder of Pan Am, dreamt of a unique way to use aviation to help those suffering from curable blindness in the developing world. With the assistance of A.L. Ueltschi, chairman and founder of Flight Safety International, their idea of a mobile eye hospital became a reality. United Airlines donated a McDonnell Douglas DC-8 jet, and even helped to convert it into a fully-equipped state-of-the-art teaching hospital. In 1982, the ORBIS Flying Eye Hospital was ready to embark on its first mission.

Today, ORBIS is a leader in the field of blindness prevention. The Flying Eye Hospital, now upgraded to a DC-10, continues to circle the globe, delivering medical education to developing nations, where 90% of the world's blind live. The aircraft serves as an ambassador of goodwill, crossing physical borders and transcending cultural and political differences by bringing people together to work toward the shared goal of saving sight. In addition, ORBIS carries out many further sight-saving projects each year without the aircraft, all designed to provide trainees, staff and sustainable eye care services to serve local needs.

"Blindness knows no boundaries," says Oliver Foot, former President and Executive Director of ORBIS. "ORBIS is a neutral organization, not aligned with any one government or country. This independence allows us to work together with all people, regardless of their political or cultural backgrounds."

Francine DesRosiers joined ORBIS in 2001 and worked for the organization for a year and a half. She says her role as both a head nurse and staff nurse was to coordinate everyday nursing activities for 30 weeks per year, while also working in foreign countries. "I had to plan sufficient surgical supplies for the next program (i.e., three



Photos: ORBIS



Francine DesRosiers (top, and bottom right) prepares a patient for surgery aboard the ORBIS 'flying eye hospital'. ORBIS is a founding partner, along with the World Health Organization, in *Vision 2020: The Right to Sight*, "a worldwide concerted effort designed to eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020."

to four missions) which would last between three and four months," explains Francine. "Meeting that goal was quite a challenge! Especially when a rush delivery of supplies by 9 a.m. was not an option."

Only after everything has been planned well in advance, will the ORBIS jet take flight, eventually touching down in a place such as Africa or China. A regular ORBIS day in the field starts at 6:30 a.m. with breakfast followed by a bus ride of an hour or so to the airport where the ORBIS plane is parked for the duration of its stay in a host country. "The day lasts between 10 and 12 hours," says Francine, "And the work day is over when the work is done; it is that simple. Nobody is watching the clock," she adds referring to dedicated colleagues from places as far flung as the Philippines, the UK, Belgium, Iraq, China, Ireland, India, Italy, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Africa, South America and across North America.

As the lead nurse, Francine's role is not teaching as much as "sharing my skills with my nursing colleagues in every country where I have had the privilege of representing ORBIS," she explains.

As for the patients, their stories are what keep Francine and her colleagues coming back. For instance, When ORBIS doctors first met Juma Twaha, a 25-year-old shoemaker in the rural Tanzanian town of Temeke, he was nearly blind in both eyes and was finding it difficult to earn

a living and avoid the torment of local bullies. All that changed when Juma was selected as a teaching case during an ORBIS Flying Eye Hospital program in Dar Es-Salaam.

The opaque cataracts covering Juma's eyes were successfully removed through small incision cataract surgery, a new technique employed by ophthalmologists at Muhimbili Hospital. According to ORBIS, two weeks after the surgery, during a follow-up visit, Juma expressed to the doctors and nurses his joyful optimism for the sight-filled years ahead.

"As a nurse," says Francine, "what I like the most about working and traveling with ORBIS is that I have a direct impact in terms of helping people get excellent medical care that [in turn] makes the world a better place." She also cites the opportunity to be a role model for women in the countries she visits. "And," she adds, "you learn about their culture."

"It has been a very unique and rewarding experience to work with passionate co-workers as we aim toward a shared goal: saving sight."

Editor's Note: The core of ORBIS's success is the medical and aviation professionals who donate their skills. Francine is still a volunteer nurse for ORBIS, and worked in two different two-week long missions, most recently in 2007. She thanks *InFocus*, which has greatly supported her work.

Clear Lens Exchange (CLE)

Everest SurgiCentre treating 'impressive range' of patients; superior results start at pre-operative assessment stage

Everest SurgiCentre was established in 2006 in order to cater to that subset of Focus Eye Centre patients who, largely due to higher refractive errors, fall outside the parameters for typical laser vision correction and will benefit from Clear Lens Exchange. Since then, CLE has proven an excellent fit for many patients who cannot immediately benefit from Laser Vision Correction and for whom cataract formation is not an issue.

"We are treating an impressive range of patients," says Dr. John Cheung, the ophthalmic surgeon who performs the majority of CLE procedures at Everest SurgiCentre in Ottawa. "We have seen and treated extreme farsightedness (hyperopia) of +16.25 diopters to myopia of -24.0 diopters, with superior results," adds Dr. Cheung, who serves as the Medical Director of Focus Eye Centre in Kingston and Assistant Professor at Queen's University.

Determining who will benefit from CLE is largely a matter of careful pre-operative assessment; a case-by-case process that begins with a comprehensive examination and an evaluation that includes an assessment of the patient's expectations. This pre-operative work-up is where the expertise of Dr. David Edmison comes in.

"Patients need to be aware of their options and cognizant of the limitations," explains Dr. Edmison, Medical Director and founder

of Focus. "Successful surgery is always about blending reasonable patient care with superior medical treatments and the latest techniques and technology," adds the surgeon who used the facilities at the Riverside Hospital to perform CLE for Focus patients prior to founding Everest to meet growing demand.

While complications are always a concern when performing an intraocular procedure, these are mitigated during the pre-op assessment. The result: many patients who thought good vision was a thing of the past — even an unrecoverable dream — attain a level of visual acuity that greatly enhances their quality of life.

"The experience of seeing colours and the world around me again was... mind-altering,"

Take the case of Dr. Ron Rushforth, a Family Physician for more than four decades, including the past 27 years in Ottawa. "We left for a 40th wedding anniversary trip to France one week following my second CLE procedure at Everest," says Dr. Rushforth, who remembers the procedure as "quite painless and easy."

"The experience of seeing colours and the world around me again was so mind-altering," adds Dr. Rushforth, "that upon my return from France, I found I could no longer sit in my office yearning for life outside. I decided to retire."

THANK YOU FOCUS



Photo: Photocmc.com

This is long overdue, but I wanted to thank all the staff who took care of me there; Howard and the girls at the front, all the doctors, every person who took the time to help. I really appreciate it. My husband had his eyes done there, and a few years later just before our wedding, I finally took the plunge and came in for my eyes, one of the best decisions we've ever made.

You guys and gals are simply fantastic. Thanks for everything.

*Cheers,
Denise Picanco & James Jones,
photographers (www.picano.org)
and happy clients!*

When accurate vision is critical, bring your world into

focus

At **Focus Eye Centre** our surgeons use the most **advanced treatments and technology** in laser vision correction — including **Wavefront** — to deliver **outstanding results**.

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