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The Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC) is a non-profit, charitable, private organization that is recognized by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). CPC is comprised of 40 leading national and provincial sport organizations. CPC delivers programs that strengthen the Paralympic movement in Canada, including sending Canadian teams to the Paralympic Games. The CPC empowers persons with physical disabilities, through sport, at all levels.

Joanne Kelly

Wheelchair Basketball

A native of Calgary, AB, Jo has never considered herself to be a natural athlete and has had to work very hard to make herself capable of playing at the international level. She treasures the 7 years she spent with the Canadian National Team and considers the travel and friendships to be the most beneficial aspects.

In 1964, the Beatles stormed America and in that same year on a stormy night in Canada, I made my arrival into this world. I was the last of a family of six – five girls and one boy. My family had immigrated from New York about a year prior to my birth. I have always been proud of the fact that I was the only “born Canadian” in the family. I truly love being Canadian and as a person who grew up with a disability, I’m thankful to have been born in a country that encouraged my independence.

I was born with Spina Bifida. As a child, I was exposed to many different sporting opportunities and nobody ever questioned my participation. Sports never really got its hooks into me until I was a mature 27 year old mother of a 4 year old boy. I was feeling rather frumpy and out of shape, never having really lost the “baby weight”. I was searching for an activity to get myself back into shape when I met a woman who introduced me to wheelchair basketball. Wheelchair Basketball changed my life.

After my first year of playing wheelchair basketball I was invited to go to the women’s national team training camp. The women were preparing for the 1992 Barcelona Paralympic Games. I left that camp 2 days early, over-

whelmed with the feeling that I did not belong there, but knowing that it was exactly where I wanted to belong. It took a few years of hard work, commitment and training but I finally made the national team in 1997. In 2000, I was part of the team that brought home its third straight gold medal from the Paralympic Games in Sydney, Australia.



My favourite memory of being at the 2000 Paralympic Games, was getting up each day and walking down to the corner to see the Paralympic torch burning brightly in the sky.

There is immense symbolism in such a simple, beautiful thing. Every morning and every night I would sit and meditate while pondering that flame. I was so happy to have been able to focus my life around one goal, especially after having come back from an existence, which was less than gratifying. I was humbled to have such an experience and felt elated to be bringing that experience home to share with all my friends, family and supporters. I felt truly blessed in my mind, my body and most especially, in my soul.