

# Family torn by accident copes with disabilities

By ED ROGERS

Coping with the aftermath of a horrendous traffic accident is just half the battle for Jamie Fleet and his family.

Before he lost his sight, sense of smell and hearing in one ear, Jamie, 27, used to help his mother care for Timmy, his multi-handicapped brother who can't be left alone.

Now the time-consuming care of both boys has fallen on the shoulders of mother Janet, a friendly, open woman who has limitless love for the two, but only limited endurance.

"I'm with the boys seven days a week, 24 hours a day. It's getting really rough," she said in a recent interview at her Musselman's Lake home. "(I'm) thinking of moving east (to family in New Brunswick) because I don't have anyone to help. The house is falling apart."

Jamie copes well two years after flying over his motorcycle and landing face-first into the corner of a car trailer. He's an outgoing joker and open about his experiences.

"I won't say (coping is) easy 'cause it's hard. Now I see with my ear and I see with my hands. It takes a lot of getting used to... There are times I still get frustrated," he says.

His newest consolation is Sheba, a two-month-old German Shepherd who will eventually become his guide dog.

She lies silently and patiently at Jamie's feet under the table,

fighting the natural zeal of being a puppy.

A friend of the family, John Campbell, 45, occasionally visits the Fleet family and takes Jamie fishing as a break for him and his mother.

"As far as I'm concerned, he functions like a normal person," says Mr. Campbell, an engineer at Canada Packers and small businessman who rebuilds BMW cars.

"I would say he's probably a better fisherman than I am. He's had a rough time but he's coped extremely well," he added.

Jamie's injuries have solidified his outlook life's preciousness. The injuries have also added a bluntness to his conversation.

"Since his accident he doesn't hold anything back," says his mother. "You never know what he's going to say."

And the bluntness appears at the mention of money — talk on the subject outdistances the supply.

Apart from a spent insurance advance and a pending civil suit, a Canada Pension cheque of \$550 a month is all Jamie receives.

"If you are going to rely on Canada Pension when you retire you're in sad shape. Learn how to eat dog food," he suggests.

In addition to the irrevocable blindness and loss of smell, Jamie must wear a hearing aid in his left ear to pick up sound.

Various other injuries in the accident — broken ribs, jaw, collar bone, spinal discs and a skull

fracture — contributed to his one-month stay in hospital.

Jamie says he doesn't let his disabilities slow him down more than necessary. He still fishes when he has company, maintains his own boat, motor and gear and takes occasional hunting trips.

Suddenly breaking conversation, he laughs. In a field behind him workers round up roaming horses. He says it amuses him when the horses bolt.

But Jamie says the world of darkness can be terrifying — especially when alone.

His hearing aid can't screen sounds and he occasionally hears a jumble of noises and loses direction. Unrestrained dogs can seem like bears.

Since the May 11, 1985 accident, he's taken a several training courses at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB).

Independent Living Care taught him braille, typing, cooking and manoeuvring indoors and a second course gave him mobility training outdoors.

He also bowls in a CNIB league and won the high average trophy this year.

But Jamie is frustrated that the CNIB and other groups don't have more programs to help.

In defense, the social worker says Markham's CNIB district office services York Region and Durham and three service staff deal with 1,000 clients. She adds volunteers are hard to come by.



Jamie Fleet and his family find it hard, but still cope with injuries he received in a tragic 1985 traffic accident. Jamie, 27, lost his sight, sense of smell and hearing in one ear as a result of the crash. He's seen here with his dog Sheba, who will soon become his guide.

— Ed Rogers

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**ADVERTISING CORRECTION**  
EATON'S TIMOTHY DAYS SALE  
INSERT appearing in the Markham Economist and Sun, Wednesday, June 10th, 1987.

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Pge. 24 — Item "M" Vinyl Shower Curtains — Not as illustrated. Should be PANDA BEARS not TEDDY BEARS!

Inadvertently, the error listed above has appeared in our advertising. We sincerely regret any inconvenience or confusion to our customers.

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**ADVERTISING CORRECTION**  
EATON'S TIMOTHY DAYS SALE INSERT  
appearing in the Markham Economist and Sun, Wednesday, June 10th, 1987.

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Pge. 15 — Item "P" — Natural Wood Side Table. NOT AVAILABLE. Due to supplier delivery problems, this item WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE.

Pge. 9 Item "Q" Boys' short sleeved shirt in assorted colours in sizes S, M, & L ONLY. Not available in Extra Large size.

Pge. 16 — Item "H" "Co Pilot" Car Booster Seat — July 15th. Due to supplier delivery problems, the following items WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE:

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