As a seasoned carpenter, C.I. depended on logic and skill to envision a project and build it to detailed specifications. He worked in a world of designs and tools and depended on his skills to replace a roof or construct a deck.

But that life of plans and projects was upended in 2013 when he fell from a one-story scaffold and landed on concrete. Radiological tests showed he had an epidural hemorrhage, a cerebral contusion, and multiple bone fractures. His cognitive processes were slow and his cranial nerves were grossly intact.

He was admitted into Centre for Neuro Skills (CNS) Bakersfield facility for postacute treatment then transferred to the San Francisco clinic, where his case manager and staff created an aggressive treatment plan addressing memory recall, problem solving, and following a structured daily routine. Although impaired, C.I. never lost sight of rebuilding his career.

His deficits were clear: reading and math skills were at an eighth grade level and his balance and agility were impaired, which prevented him from returning to work. Bilateral gross motor coordination is also crucial in physical work, and C.I.’s scores were too low to handle complex tasks. His bilateral grip strength was weak as well, making it difficult to hold tools.

Rehabilitation seemed daunting but CNS was consistent with expectations and support. Within a month C.I.’s grip strength scored above the norm and his visual processing improved. His Independent Living Scale numbers, which measure Activities of Daily Living, behavior, and initiation, increased to 99.12 points.

This progress led to a major milestone for C.I. His case manager arranged for two days of volunteer work at Habitat for Humanity, where he performed simple carpentry.

“She knew that I wanted to work again and she did whatever it took,” he recalled.

While at CNS he passed the height evaluation, in which patients are assessed on ladders to determine balance, dizziness, and overall safety. Staff encouraged his every step upward as he reached the top rung, stood on the flat roof and smiled triumphantly as a therapist took his photo.

One month after discharge, C.I. was on the job again. He returned to the company he’d worked at for 20 years and “everyone was really happy,” he noted. Today he does not work on roofs or scaffolds but is competent in many construction tasks. Once back at work, he became a foreman and lead carpenter.

“I think about what I’d be doing today if I hadn’t recovered,” he reflected. “I’m very up on CNS. The three months I spent there were well worth it. It’s the place to be.”

Often, C.I. visits staff at the San Francisco clinic to be reminded of his transformation and thank his therapists.

“They’re like family,” he said. “When I was discharged and came home I cried because I missed them so much.”