

St. Pete Times, by Susan Clary
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He is one of those extra special people. There is one in every crowd. They see life differently than many of us.

The glass is always half full.

People want to be near him to capture a ray of his sunshine.

Yet Scott Burrows has every reason to hate life.

When he was 18, he was in a car accident that left him paralyzed. He almost died three times of complications. He lived, through hours of surgery, months of rehabilitation and years of coping.

Yet Burrows never gave up on life. Today, he is 28. He is a successful insurance salesman with an elegant town house in Hyde Park, a beautiful BMW, a Waverunner and more friends than a swarm of bees. Not to mention his good looks.

Watching Burrows work a bar scene on Saturday night, people come out of the woodwork to greet him. You would never know someone pulled the rug out from under him 10 years ago.

He was a sophomore at Florida State University. He was a walk on receiver for the Seminoles and a kickboxing champion. He had a girlfriend back in Stuart. He joined a Fraternity. He was looking forward to the future.

One day that fall, it happened. On St. George's Island for a fraternity party, he left with a friend who had too much too much to drink. The car went off the road, then back on, then off again.

The car hit a sand dune, rolled several times and landed right side up.

As Scott tells it: "he was fine. I broke my neck."

With no hospital and no telephone, friends dragged him from the wreckage and drove to the house to call for help.

"I was sitting in the car, and I came out of it," Burrows remember. "I whipped my body to the right and to the left, and I remember yelling. "Oh my god! I'm paralyzed." And then I blacked out.

He went to a nearby hospital and later was taken by ambulance several hours away to a hospital in Panama City. When he awoke, doctors and nurses hovered over him, cut away his clothes and shaved his head.

"I didn't know what was going on. I couldn't move anything", Burrows said. "They screwed two metal bolts in my head when I was awake, and then I blacked out again and woke up a day and a half later."

What followed were months of therapy and treatment. He endured collapsed lungs, bedsores, pneumonia, blood clots, weight loss and stomach ulcers.

"At that time, I was hurt badly," Burrows said. "I remember after surgery talking to my dad and realizing that something bad has happened and it was going to cost a lot of money and then I broke down and cried." For more than a year after the accident, Burrows lived outside reality. He believed that he would play football again, enjoy kickboxing fame and shoot basketball.

My mind set was, "I'm paralyzed, there's no way. I've been hurt badly. I'll recover. I'm fine." Burrows said. "I put the blinders on, and I didn't care. I don't think reality set in, for a long period of time."

He was told he most likely would be a quadriplegic and might never walk again. Slowly, Burrows regained some of his feeling. He talks about the day he woke up, used all of his energy to move his big toe and went back to sleep for six hours.

Remembering his friends and their plans to go to Fort Lauderdale for spring break, Burrows pushed himself hard and walked out of therapy, with the help of a cane, that spring.

He has not looked back, Burrows enrolled in his hometown junior college in the fall of 1985 and forced himself to become independent and accept his new life. Paralyzed from the chest down, he has enough movement in one leg to walk with a cane. Nevertheless, knowing no one in Tampa, he transferred to the University of South Florida and graduated with a business degree.

Acting on a friend's advice, he took a job with Northwestern Mutual Life, where he writes disability insurance.

"One person told me, "You should take your disadvantage and turn it into an advantage," Burrows said. "I just kind of share a little of my experience."

He makes up for the things he cannot do by finding things he can do. Burrows snow skis every year and rides his Waverunner when he can. He said he doesn't know where he would be if there hadn't been an accident, and frankly he doesn't care.

"I look at life differently," he said. "I want to experience and do a lot of things. I want to have fun and enjoy it while it's here, because it could be gone tomorrow. I think there are a lot of people out there who don't do that."

Book Scott for your Next Event!