

SPOTLIGHT

Scott Fedor '98

“I WANTED TO LIVE”

Scott Fedor '98 had dived into Michigan's Coldwater Lake many times. But when he dove in during a visit to his in-laws' cottage on the Fourth of July weekend in 2009, he didn't know that a spell of dry weather had dropped the lake's water level to just 33 inches.

“As I hit the bottom, it almost felt like an electric shock and warm sensation real quick, and then nothing—no pain, nothing, just the water on my face, and I knew right away that I broke my neck,” Fedor said.

He was facedown in the water, and as time ticked by, he felt his heart beat faster and faster until he thought it was going to explode from the fear and adrenaline. Realizing this was the end, Fedor said a prayer for his family and started swallowing water in an attempt to end things quickly.

However, his wife at the time—alerted by the barking of a family dog—dragged him out of the water, and her sister and some others who were nearby performed CPR on Fedor for 45 minutes until an ambulance arrived.

Fedor was diagnosed with a complete spinal injury—he had broken his C1 through C6 vertebrae, and severed his spinal cord at the C3 level. His lungs were full of liquid, he couldn't breathe on his own, and his body couldn't regulate or process any of the normal defense mechanisms that it would as far as trying to heal itself.

“The doctor came in and gave me the worst news. He said, ‘You're never going to walk again, move again, breathe on your own, or eat on your own. You'll need people to take care of you 24/7, and it's just going to be a different life for you, and that's the best prognosis I can give you.’ And he let all of that set in and then gave me the choice whether I wanted to live or die. Without hesitation, I said I wanted to live.”

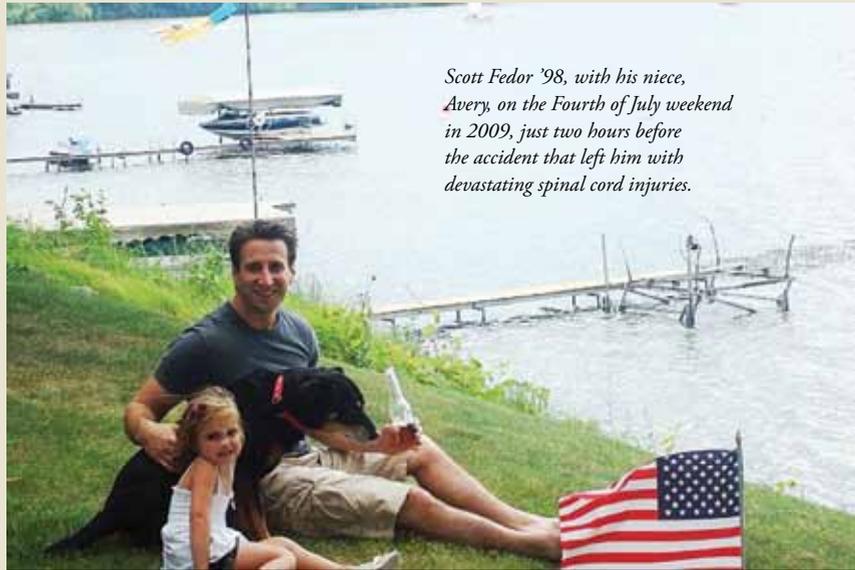
The months that followed were touch and go. He survived depression, anger, coding five times, and four bouts of pneumonia—one of the greatest risks to quadriplegics because they are incapable of yielding a

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productive cough to clear their lungs. Fedor then spent more than a year in a skilled nursing facility.

He has improved through determination, faith in God, and advances in medical technology. He now breathes completely on his own, no longer dependent on a ventilator, and is able to cough and clear his lungs. He works out several hours a week at an exercise facility that caters to



Scott Fedor '98, with his niece, Avery, on the Fourth of July weekend in 2009, just two hours before the accident that left him with devastating spinal cord injuries.

individuals with spinal cord injuries. Once told by doctors he would never move or feel anything below his neck, Fedor can now feel through to the middle of his biceps, rotate and shrug his shoulders, and activate his quadriceps and hip flexors muscles.

He believes he will one day move his upper body again, allowing him to hug people.

Fedor has made it his charge to bring more awareness to the devastating effects of spinal cord injuries and serve as a resource to those confronting such an injury. He founded a nonprofit organization, Getting Back Up, whose purpose is to raise

awareness, support, and education for

people with spinal cord injuries, and invest in research initiatives that work toward advancing a cure for paralysis.

A former vice president for a Berkshire Hathaway subsidiary, Fedor has embraced a new career as a motivational speaker. He routinely speaks at businesses, schools, and other venues about the power of a positive attitude, faith, and persevering through difficult times.

And Fedor continuously finds the positive in his circumstances.

“I've learned about the power of now, to live in the now. And in a way that's a gift, and it has helped me to be able to better appreciate things and talk to other people and really listen in a way that, well, you can't achieve when you're always trying to move forward, move on to what's next.”

For more information, please visit www.scottwefedor.com.

—Maxine Mendelovici



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SCOTT FEDOR '98

Fedor has embraced a new career as a motivational speaker and has devoted himself to raising awareness about spinal cord injuries.