



NEWS

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Higher Goals

FORMER PROFESSIONAL SOCCER PLAYER FOUGHT BACK FROM AMNESIA, PARALYSIS AND BLINDNESS TO FIND NEW LIFE AT MTA

Memory Lane doesn't go back far for Bradford Balduff, the MTA's 32-year-old assistant webmaster – 10 years to be exact. Before that, everything is a blur.

In late January 1991, a car he was riding in swerved off a freeway in Pasadena and slammed into a wall. The accident left Balduff with total amnesia and paralysis. He was also blind and didn't come out of a coma for two months.

The road to recovery for the former LA Aztecs professional soccer player has been tedious and even unexpected.

His doctors held out very little hope, but thanks to a supportive family – plus lots of praying – the former tax accountant has made it back. The paralysis, for the most part has vanished and, except for some peripheral difficulty, his vision has returned to 20/25.

Besides the purely physical hurdles, the biggest obstacle facing Balduff following the accident was the amnesia that wiped out all recollections of his previous life. These included lots of partying, multiple sports, and participation in his USC fraternity and interest in computers.

In addition, he could not read, write or do arithmetic. He was forced to leave college for three years. He was a blank disk.

MORE...

Page 2 of 3 COMEBACK

"I had to relearn everything, literally, even two plus two. I had to go from being a baby to a senior in college in as short a time as possible," recalls Balduff.

Occasionally, out of nowhere, a fragment of information flashes in his mind. "I remember some things but they're jumbled up for lack of a better word."

If not for the love and support of his parents, Marilyn and Bill, who arranged for a steady flow of tutors, or the crash course computer lessons taught by his sister, Lisa, Balduff probably would not be where he is today.

A recurrent refrain heard during the interview was, "the Lord's help."

"There is no way I could have come through this without some divine intervention," Balduff believes. "I think the credit is properly due Him."

Graduated with two degrees

Eventually, he began rekindling relationships with long-lost friends - "They knew more about my life than I did, which is disenchanting, and they still do." He graduated from USC with Bachelor's and Master's degrees and took up bicycling and jogging.

In 1999, Balduff decided to leave the number-crunching accounting field. He taught himself advanced computer skills, which led to becoming a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer.

A native of Granada Hills who now lives in Glendale, Balduff takes care of his 97-year-old grandmother, Ruby, and looks forward to the future. He doesn't allow a lingering paralysis in one leg or the occasional tremors in his left shoulder get him down.

"I need to go further but I've come a long way," he says, confidently.

MORE...

Page 3 of 3 COMEBACK

Balduff's philosophy of life is a mantra anyone who has come back from the depths of despair can live by.

"My motto is that failure is not an option. It scares me to think of the alternative. I've been trying to live by that motto...and I'm not sure how successful I've been.

"You cannot afford to give up and expect to lead a productive life," he declares. "You have to keep fighting. It's kind of a depressing thought, but that's reality. I guess I've taken the concept of life as a fight to a new dimension."

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MTA-112