

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF GORDON SCOTT

When Gordon Scott (MBA 2008) “walks” graduation on his own two wheels this spring, it will be with the backing of an uncommonly supportive network of family, friends, Foster School alumni and classmates from the Evening MBA Program. And against several sets of odds.

Scott has been functionally quadriplegic since a catastrophic skiing accident four years ago in Colorado. The crash occurred just as he, his wife and young daughter were beginning several months of travel from Seattle through Europe en route to his native Scotland, where he was to attend the MBA program at the University of Edinburgh.

Life changed in an instant. But Scott never gave up or gave in. “I got quite a lot of the bad news up front,” he recalls, “and I think my motivation mostly was that I’m married and have a daughter, and you can’t just quit. I also felt, although it was an accident, some of the responsibility sadly lies with me. So it would have been an inappropriate response to just not deal.”

Instead, he got on with a revised plan to earn his MBA. The family returned to Seattle, where Scott had written software for InfoAccess and Expedia. And he enrolled in the Foster School’s Evening MBA Program.

Scott’s student experience has been unlike most. He has learned to adapt and heighten mental abilities to compensate for physical disabilities. “As time went on,” he says, “I attended class and listened and used text books and did assignments and it just worked. While others were scribbling notes or tapping away at their laptops, I just took it all in.”

But the achievement was not earned without help. Scott credits his remarkable wife, family and friends, and amazing new technologies like speech recognition software. “There



are a lot of tools today that allow me to do things that would otherwise be impossible,” he says.

Now he has one more. A year ago Stuart Jamieson (MBA 2004), an old friend from InfoAccess days, saw a demonstration of the iBot Mobility System, a next-generation wheelchair invented by the creator of the self-balancing Segway scooter. The iBot climbs and descends stairways, rides over curb and off road, and operates on two wheels to lift its passenger to nearly his full standing height.

Being an entrepreneur, Jamieson immediately began plotting a way to

get one for his friend. He organized a golf tournament as fundraiser. It turned out to be a pretty easy sell. “The thing that impresses me to no end is that there was no looking back, no what-ifs, no life-is-crap stuff,” he says. “Gordon just said, ‘Okay, what am I going to do now?’ He’s just an impressive, strong character who is hard not to like and root for.”

That sentiment was echoed by 100 family, friends and colleagues who raised nearly \$30,000 to purchase the iBot and a necessary retrofit of the van Scott drives.

“It was amazing. Humbling, actually. Quite overwhelming at times,” Scott says.

Now equipped with a Foster MBA, confidence and a cool new ride, Scott is considering positions in program and product management at Microsoft, Expedia and Accenture.

“The attitude you have to take is to make the best of what you have. I’ve been pleasantly surprised by some things I can do now that I thought I’d never be able to do again. I’m graduating. I’m starting a new career. The iBot is opening some new avenues for me. I’m very fortunate, really, in a number of ways.”