

COMSTOCK

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Comstock was trapped for ten hours beneath the fallen logs. Logs lay across his legs, his right bicep and over his face. The only internal damage he experienced was a split liver from the fall, his right wrist and left hand were crushed. His right leg was twisted up at an angle near his head.

On hands and knees near a disarrayed pile of logs, emergency crews could see Comstock with a flashlight. "I was in a gutter," he said. When he was finally pulled from the stack and rushed to College Station Medical Center, Comstock could sense enough emergency room staff hovering around him to know his condition was serious.

"They told me, 'We're going to shoot you up,' and I said 'OK, if I don't make it, my family I love them,'" he said. "A whole month and a half turned into a second. I woke up before New Year's."

Comstock vaguely recalls people who visited him in the medical center in the days before he fully regained consciousness. But for most of the month-and-a-half he was in a coma, he recalls nothing but a "crazy morphine dream."

Surgeons amputated Comstock's left leg above the knee and removed dying tissue from his legs and buttocks. He underwent more surgeries than can be counted, he said, telling of a surgery that lasted days, with a break overnight when staff wrapped him in plastic while the surgeon slept.

The log that had been weighing on Comstock's pelvis caused nerve damage that left him with no feeling below his waist. The nerves slowly began to regrow and he can now feel everything above his ankle, he said.

After regaining consciousness, Comstock remained in the intensive care unit at the medical center for 40 days before being transferred to

Zale Lipshy University Hospital in Dallas, near his hometown of Richardson.

Therapists at Zale devoted Comstock to rehabilitation.

He was finally released in April 2000, but Comstock's time at home was yet another ground for recovery. He continued outpatient therapy five days a week, learning how to maneuver in a wheelchair and how to pull together the strength to walk, a few steps at a time, with the assistance of a walker and prosthetic leg. His therapy dropped to

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— Dixie Comstock
John's mother

three times a week, then two, before being bumped back up to three. Once right-handed, he had to learn to write with his left hand, the hand that was free during the seven hours he was under the fallen stack.

His hopes of coming back to A&M in Spring 2001 were delayed when therapists decided he needed more time at the advanced Dallas facility. Instead, Comstock attended Richland Community College near home and gathered 24 credit hours toward his degree at A&M.

Comstock's mother, Dixie, said her son never gave up.

"He wears out, but he's not down," she said. "A lot of people would have been very bitter, but his attitude throughout all this is that he's got to do what he's got to do."

Comstock simply says it is a waste of energy for him to be angered by what has happened.

"I have to spend my energy

towards rehabilitation and getting back to where I was, not in being upset about an accident," he said. "Besides, I'm going to light [Bonfire] 2002. It won't be the same, but it'll be something ... one of those things to help people get over the collapse."

Coming back to school for the fall and "getting away from me again," his mother said laughing, is the greatest step Comstock has taken in his recovery. Her son is learning how to walk again, how to write again and how to drive again, and he is "absolutely elated," she said.

"I know he loves it down there," she said, explaining that her biggest worries for him were when he got back behind the wheel this year. "I know he has a million numbers he can call, and a million people who would come whenever he needs them."

Today, Comstock attends physical therapy three times a week at A.P. Beutel Health Center and can only walk in short bursts of energy. He tires easily. But his sense of humor shines when he talks about being back on campus, especially in a wheelchair.

"The hardest thing is getting around in this chair," he said. "You have to take these flight patterns to get to class. It can be bad, especially to get there and realize that now I have to go all the way around again to get in."

"But I just want to get better, finish my education," he added, "and get out into the world."

Now a junior, Comstock bears the scars of something the Aggie family always will mourn. But like the energetic freshman he once was, Comstock has something emblazoned on him to show his pride in his school and everything he's gone through.

A few days before he moved back to College Station, Comstock got a tattoo: over his shoulder blade, if he will show you, is a 4-inch tall, 3-inch wide Bonfire, with the words "The 13th Man" written underneath.

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- 1) Why do you want to work at *The Battalion*, and what do you hope to accomplish?
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- 3) What changes do you feel would improve the quality of *The Battalion*? (Give special attention to the section for which you're applying.)
- 4) What is your definition of dedication, and how would you apply that to a position at *The Battalion*?

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