

Dean Schaumburg: A Place To Call Home

By Scott Laird

Dean Schaumburg's life changed completely on August 16, 2007. When a tree fell on him while he was working in the woods as a logger, Schaumburg, a long time Vernonia resident in his twenties, was severely injured and his recovery has been long and slow. Five years later his life is beginning to regain some sense of normalcy, considering everything he has been through.

Today Schaumburg is living in his own home, thanks to the help of many community members who pitched in to assist him. He lives on his own and for the most part takes care of himself. He is continuing his rehab work and his health has stabilized. He seems reasonably happy and content and loves his house and the time he spends with his son Sylas.

Schaumburg says he is willing to talk about his accident, his recovery and his life, although there are some particulars, due to legal reasons, that he is unable to discuss. "Questions don't bother me, I'm an open book," he says. "if I can I am more than willing to talk about things."

The Vernonia community was devastated when they learned of Schaumburg's accident and lack of health insurance and quickly pitched in to help raise funds for his health care. While undergoing back and brain surgery as well as surgery to reconstruct his ankle, Schaumburg suffered a stroke which magnified the seriousness of the accident.

Today Schaumburg is considered legally blind as he is only able to see out of the top, left corners of his eyes and he has trouble with bright lights. He has full range of motion with his right arm but has trouble gripping with his right hand. He has limited motion in his

reconstructed ankle and uses a wheelchair to move around. His speech is slow from the brain damage he received, yet he is very sharp in conversation and easy to talk with. He has not lost his sense of humor and has a positive outlook on his life.

In early December of 2007 Schaumburg's wife Kendra and one year old son Sylas were getting ready for Dean to finally come home from an extended hospital stay and continue his rehabilitation in Vernonia. Instead their rented home was flooded on December 3, and the family lost almost everything. In January of 2008, as the entire Vernonia community was trying to recover from the flood, several residents and friends of the Schaumburg family banded together and started a project to build the Schaumburg's a new home. Mike Pihl Logging donated a 5,000 square foot lot in city limits and Casey Mitchell and Dana Hyde organized and gathered donations of funding, materials and labor. In the spring of 2008 the project was started and moved forward on the backs of volunteers.

After several stops and starts the home was completed just over a year ago and today Dean is enjoying the comforts of a fully ADA accessible home built specifically for his needs. All the doorways and hallways are extra wide to accommodate a wheelchair. A roll-in shower with bench, a lower marble counter top for food preparation, a covered back porch and wide concrete walks around the outside of the house allow Schaumburg to live comfortably and take care of himself.

An exercise room is set up with a treadmill, a standing machine and a

sauna. Schaumburg says he tries to walk on the treadmill every day and is up to al-



Dean Schaumburg at home with his son Sylas.

most a third of a mile. "When I'm done I'm sweating like a pig," says Schaumburg. "Before I got hurt I didn't know any other way to work but to sweat. To me, if you're not sweating you are not really working."

The standing machine and a wooden wedge allows Schaumburg to work on the range of motion in his ankles. The sauna is good for the neck, back and muscle pain he still experiences. He says he would like to add a hot tub in the future. He goes weekly for extensive therapy work in Hillsboro.

Dean and Kendra were divorced several years ago. Sylas, who lives in Gaston now, comes and visits every Thursday afternoon and stays with Dean every other weekend and has his own

bedroom and bathroom in the home. "It's hard not to spoil him," says Schaumburg about his time with his son.

Dean received a financial settlement from his accident and was able to use some of the funds to put the finishing touches on his home, which was almost complete. He installed hickory hardwood floors with three different widths of boards which provide an interesting look. "I went with the hickory because of the different tones," says Schaumburg. "I can't really see the dirt! I'm really picky so if I could see something on the floor it would really bug me." High baseboards, wood trim and matching wood furniture throughout the home help complete the package.

Schaumburg's love of the woods is evident throughout the home. He has a beautiful dining room table with benches made from sweet gum wood. A large carved turtle occupies a corner of the dining room. Framed on the wall is a double bladed axe, signed by the entire Vernonia Ax Men crew from the first season of the popular television series, which was filming at the time of Schaumburg's accident. Large wide screen televisions in the living room and in both Dean and Sylas's room make life pretty comfortable.

Schaumburg purchased a 2005 FX4 Ford 150 truck so he can get around when needed. "I bought it so I could go to doctors' appointments or to therapy," he says. "It's a whole lot easier to find somebody with a driver's license than to find somebody with a license and a car. It's way easier to find just a driver. If they have a car usually they are working

continued on page 9

HAPPY TRAILS: A REPORT FROM THE RODEO ROAD

By Mackenzie Carr
Miss Rodeo America 2012

Hello for the last time.

This is the final article I will be writing, sharing my stories from the rodeo road. My last two weeks as Miss Rodeo America were spent in Sin City for the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo, the 2013 Miss Rodeo America Pageant, and the PRCA Convention. These two weeks were jam packed full of many adventures and fun times, too many to share in this piece. I've captured the highlights and I hope that you enjoy.

I kick started the trip with my first events relating to the PRCA Convention. I had the honor of giving the invocation at the Gala and presenting the awards at the Awards Banquet. The most hilarious and definitely memorable event took place while I was up on stage presenting the Donita Barns Lifetime Achievement Award. A man named Art and his wife won the award for their outstanding volunteerism. His



Mackenzie in her "Elvis dress" at the MRA fashion show.

wife came on stage, shook my hand, and graciously accepted the award. Art had other things in mind. I thought he was coming in for a hug, he thought he was going to get a little bit more. Needless to say, an old man reeking of cheap alcohol and missing one of his front teeth coming at me mouth gaping, hoping for a kiss, was TERRIFYING! There were so many people on stage that I couldn't get out of the way fast enough. Before I knew it I had screamed, "NOOOOOOOOO!"



Thank you to Judy Wright for doing my makeup at the fashion show and coronation.

Thankfully he just barely missed.

A good portion of my week was spent at the Miss Rodeo America Pageant. Here, 31 different state queens were competing for the title of 2013 MRA. I played hostess at many of the pageant events; telling stories from my year in between speeches, interviewing the contestants to make them feel at ease, and singing "Me and Bobby McGee" accompanied by John Wayne Schultz on the guitar. One of the most memorable pageant events would have to be the fashion show. The contestants and I modeled new fashions from Wrangler, Justin Boots, and other designers. At the end of the show, each state queen modeled an elegant western dress. Like the girls, I got to design my dress. I wanted to do something special, something that was only me.

For those of you who have known me for a very long time, you might recall that I am a huge Elvis Presley fan. What could be more fitting that a dress that looks like one of Elvis' suits? The dress was a gigantic hit! I cannot thank Donna Riva of Western Reflections enough for taking the time to bring my creation to life.

I spent half of my time at the Pageant and the other half at the Thomas and Mack riding in the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo. I would do my queen's run each night during grand entry, but I'd also go change and carry the Wrangler flag during the Sponsor Flag Lineup. Riding at the NFR was beyond a rush. You don't realize how small that arena is until you're in it. Running in

at full speed, crowd roaring, and surrounded by the cowboys and cowgirls I have represented all year was indescribable. It was definitely one of the best memories from my year.

I owe a HUGE thank you to the town of Vernonia. I would not be the person I am today without all of your help, kindness, and support. I remember when I won my first rodeo queen pageant in 2007 and



Mackenzie's last queen's run as Miss Rodeo America at the National Finals Rodeo.

you all stepped up to the plate with open arms, willing to help in any way possible. Not once has your support dwindled over the past 5 years. I am beyond grateful for all that you have done.

Thank you Scott Laird for allowing me to share my travels each month in your newspaper. I have enjoyed writing them and I know that many others have enjoyed reading them. Your newspaper is so different from many others, in that it focuses on our great little community. It's bright, it's fun, and it shares a positive message. Thank you for all of your hard work.

Lastly, thank you to my family. I cannot tell you enough how much your support means to me. You guys really are the best thing in my life. From the bottom of my heart, thank you and I love you.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Dean Schaumburg: A Place To Call Home *continued from front page*

to pay for it!" he says with a laugh.

Schaumburg says he cooks, cleans, does his own laundry and takes care of both he and Syllas. "I try to be as independent as possible," he says. He has someone come in every other week to deep clean and do the things he can't reach himself, but other than that he is pretty self-sufficient. He has a regular wheelchair for moving around the inside of the house and a motorized wheelchair for getting around town; he can often be seen out doing errands, eating at Mariolino's with Syllas or out getting some fresh air.

Schaumburg says he stays pretty active with his therapy and taking care of his house and Syllas. "Keeping house and being a dad keeps me pretty busy," he says. "Honestly, being a dad,

besides being fun, it is actually quite a bit of work for me. Getting back and forth and still trying to be an involved Dad takes time."

Schaumburg says he gets a lot of help from his family, including his mother, his younger brother, older sister and his father and several aunts and uncles and cousins. He also says that he really appreciates everything the community has done to help him. "I can't name the specific names because I'll forget somebody," says Schaumburg, "but I really want to thank everybody and I really appreciate all their help. I'm not just saying that to say it—I really do appreciate it. For me there is not another community in the world that would do what this one has done for me."

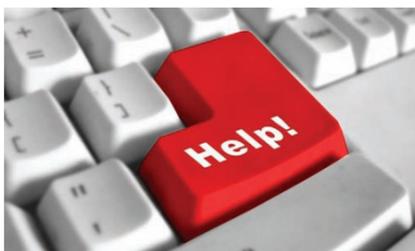


Dean Schaumburg's house in Vernonia.

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