

PERSONAL STORY – WALLACE L. JOHNSTON



In 1996, I suffered a herniated L5 Disk with associated extreme sciatic pain. Through therapy, medication and the passage of time, I avoided surgery and regained almost full mobility and was able to continue working. I could walk without the use of a cane and any arthritis related discomfort was controlled with Tylenol.

In 1999, I was diagnosed with spinal stenosis and sought to relieve any accompanying pain with epidural injections and physical therapy. Unfortunately, this route did not work, *this time*. Further neurological testing, MRI's and consultation with a neurosurgeon and my chiropractor confirmed that, although I was able to manage the pain with Tylenol (down from hydrocodone and oxycontin upon which I refuse to become dependant) my continuing peripheral neuropathy and loss of reflex and nerve sensation in my feet and lower extremities would likely lead to confinement in a wheelchair.

Surgery in the form of a lumbar laminectomy – L2,3,4,5- was performed in 2002 and the pressure on my spinal cord was relieved. More Physical Therapy and a gradual return of feeling in my legs and feet although there were balance problems. For those of you familiar with balance testing My BERG score was 22/56 after the surgery. I am now up to 36/56 with an attainable goal of 46-48 in sight

Apparently, my nerve impulses do not connect to the muscles in my feet and ankles. I cannot raise my weight on my toes – the muscles are there, just not receiving the nerve signals.

I am able to work full time and use a cane most of the time. As long as I can be on the move, I can walk and stand for brief periods of time. It is the "standing in place with balance control" that gives me problems. I am now in Physical Therapy at the Balance Center in my community.

Enter the SEGWAY HT. In August of 2003 I was fortunate to be able to travel to Dallas, TX and receive an introductory demo ride on an E-Series conducted by Neil Costa of Segway LLC. Mr. Costa was introducing the SEGWAY HT products to a Dallas area distributor.

I was quite surprised and very pleased to find that the SEGWAY could and did meet my expectations for mobility enhancement. My need to stand and touch something to obtain a reference point for stabilization was fully met by the SEGWAY. I had "Electric Feet!"

My employer, Texas Tech University in Amarillo – Graduate Engineering Studies Center – was recently approved as a Segway Friendly Campus and we have had the use of a Loaned I-Series for demonstration in our classes, community presentations at local high schools and community colleges as part of Engineering Week activities.

I now have over 30 hours of personal riding time and have graduated to the Red Key for outside glides. I hope to have completed more hours by the time we have to return the SEGWAY HT EPAMD to New Hampshire.

In order to transport the SEGWAY in my car, I designed and built a pair of folding ramps so I can use the power assist to get the SEG in the trunk of my Volvo.

I have a medical prescription for a BLUE MIRROR HANDICAPPED PARKING TAG. I move it from car to car and to the SEGWAY when I enter a new establishment.

I recently toured the Make a Wish Car Show in our 500,000 sq ft Civic and Convention Center. I was met with smiles and questions – no adverse comments or reactions.



I plan to attend a City Commission meeting and introduce the SEGWAY to the mayor and elected officials. I have already called to explain my reason for wanting to be placed on the agenda so there will be no surprises. Yes, I will wear my BLUE TAG to the meeting.

Wallace Johnston