

24 March 2009

To whom this may concern:

I am writing to provide the highest possible recommendation for Rob Buren as a public speaker on the experience of having a life-altering accident which ended him up having to live in a wheelchair.

I have known Rob since he was my student in Sociology at King's University College in the early 1990's. He took all of my courses, served as my teaching assistant, and earned the highly coveted Board of Governors' Gold Medal, as the student with the highest grade point average in the graduating class of 1995. Rob went on to distinguish himself by earning a Master of Arts in Sociology from The University of Victoria, and to have a successful career with Microsoft. I am blessed to have maintained contact with him over the years, and I consider him a dear friend.

I became aware of Rob's tragic accident this past October and have faithfully followed his blog, [www.getwellrob.com](http://www.getwellrob.com), ever since. When I needed a speaker in my Sociology of Deviance class to discuss the "moral career" of becoming "disabled", I thought of Rob. While his accident was relatively recent, he accepted my invitation to speak before two sections of the course, this past Friday, March 20, 2009. This entailed an arduous day, driving from Oakville to London, giving two one-hour lectures, and driving home afterwards.

Preparing for this event demanded considerable reflection on his part, which he embraced. He also prepared a beautiful powerpoint presentation with pictures of his life before and after the accident. I feel privileged to have experienced his very first public account of what has transpired over the past five months. Before a hundred and thirty students altogether, in addition to some other professors from King's, he spoke of his life in quiet, gentle, reflective, and sometimes humorous terms. He managed to capture the emotions of my students, a rare gift in a speaker. He shared his personal journey in frank terms, inspiring my students to look at life as a gift. By calling himself "lucky", he led them to understand that life is what you make of it, and that love, hope, and determination are key factors in this ongoing challenge.

I know that Rob could reach many, many people in so many ways, with his considerable talent and courage in sharing. I hope that he will be given more opportunities to share his story, providing inspiration to all.

If I may be of any further assistance in recommending Rob Buren for possible speaking engagements, please do not hesitate to contact me at (519) 433-3491 x 4351, or via email at [harman@uwo.ca](mailto:harman@uwo.ca).

Most sincerely,



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