

Adaptability: Student emerges from accident with new attitude

■ Continued from Page 1

Friends pass and shout greetings over their backs. Krostag smiles and acknowledges them and continues on his way. A rushed woman glances down at him, then quickly shifts her gaze. Krostag doesn't seem to notice.

"It's more difficult to get close to people," he says. "In reality, I don't know that many people."

The early morning crush of students has filled East 13th Street. Students and professors hurry to class, hardly paying attention to Krostag. He passes quietly through their midst. At one point, a large group of people standing on the road cause Krostag to veer his wheelchair into the grass. He smiles and continues on his way.

"I'm more of a person who would get out of the road," he explains. "Everybody has problems with people blocking sidewalks."

But in a wheelchair problems are compounded. Especially during the winter, Krostag runs a continual risk of getting stuck in mud and slush.

"People are nice," he says. "Once, some-

one stopped their car and got out to give me a push."

His first class this morning is Japanese, in Villard. He has already mapped out a path to Villard, free of obstacles and curbs.

He arrives, not at the inviting front door of Villard, but at a smaller side door partially concealed by construction scaffolding. The blue sign on the door carries the universal symbol for "wheelchair accessible."

But this is not an electronic door. "Wheelchair accessible" merely means that the door is wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair. On this day, someone holds the door for Krostag. Other days he is not so lucky and must carefully guide his wheelchair up to the door, open it, and get in by himself.

To the left is the elevator, Krostag's only possible way to his class. The door slides open, and he carefully backs himself in. The door closes, and the hardest part of the morning commute to class has come to an end.

Krostag said the University is fairly wheelchair friendly. Only Friendly is not.

The Japanese class he is now taking had to be moved from the second floor of Friendly to Villard, a more accessible hall.

"We have well over 50 students with some kind of mobility limitation," said Hillary Gerdes, the University counselor for differently abled students. "Not all of those people would be wheelchair users."

After the accident, Krostag spent much of his time thinking about his position and complaining. He took as many prescription drugs as possible to keep himself out of reality.

And, he talked to God.

"I did a lot of soul searching, talking to God," he said. "I was asking questions, complaining."

The accident changed Krostag's life in more ways than limiting movement. He emerged from it with a unique perspective on the world.

"You are what you make out of it," he said. "You get out what you put into it."

It's noon. The day has warmed a little, and the early morning chill has thawed to brighter sun. The first class is over for Krostag. It's time for lunch.

In Carson cafeteria, he waits patiently for an employee to come help him get his food. When the helper arrives, Krostag follows him through the line, telling him what foods he would like to eat.

"I think what I miss the most, in very vague terms, is the independence," he says.

Because he cannot use his fingers, Krostag needs a special harness on his hand to hold the spoon. "I'm always dropping things," he admits.

Later that evening he sits in his dorm room talking about life. His room looks like any other - slightly disorganized, personal, vibrant. But look closer, and there are differences. The phone has a special handle so he can answer it. The door has a bar, not a handle, to easily push open. Everything is organized for someone in a wheelchair.

"I miss playing basketball," he says in his quiet voice.

He thinks a moment, then sits back in his chair. "I miss just being able to go somewhere and be totally alone," he says.

"Like going on a walk."

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Notre Dame fan sues over misspelled slogan in his tattoo

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — Dan O'Connor is fighting mad. Not "fighting," "fighting."

The Notre Dame fan went to a tattoo parlor in August for a permanent symbol of his allegiance to the school's Fighting Irish — a drawing of the university's leprechaun mascot that cost him \$125.

But when O'Connor took the bandages off his upper arm, his girlfriend began laughing. The inscription read: "Fighting Irish."

"I was irate, and for a minute or two after I cooled down I kind of giggled," he said.

On Monday, the 22-year-old from Lodi sued the Tattoo Shoppe in Carlstadt seeking unspecified damages.

Airline passenger accused of defecating on food-service cart

NEW YORK (AP) — An investment banker is accused of

Stranger Than Fiction

assaulting a flight attendant and defecating on a food-service cart during a drunken rampage on a United Airlines flight.

Gerard B. Finneran, 58, managing director of the Trust Company of the West, pleaded innocent Monday to federal charges of assaulting and intimidating an attendant and interfering with a flight crew. He was freed on \$100,000 bail.

Federal authorities said the Greenwich, Conn., executive started pouring drinks on himself during a Buenos Aires-to-New York that began Friday.

When flight attendants tried to cut him off, he told one attendant he would "bust (his) ass," according to court papers. He allegedly shoved an attendant into a seat.

Later, Finneran was spotted with his pants down, defecating on the food cart, authorities said. He used linen napkins as toilet paper.

Teacher who operated on live cat sentenced to work at shelter

MUSKOGEE, Okla. (AP) — A high school science teacher whose classroom operation on a live cat was halted by its loud cries has been ordered to spend 100 hours helping out at an animal shelter.

Mickey Duncan pleaded no contest Tuesday to a misdemeanor animal cruelty charge and was given a deferred sentence and community service. The charge carried a maximum sentence of a year in jail or a \$500 fine.

Duncan, helped by at least one student, shaved the cat, attempted to knock it out with chloroform and used a sterile blade to make a 3-inch incision down its left rear flank, prosecutor John David Luton said.

Midway through the Oct. 3 demonstration, the cat awoke and began crying loud enough for students in other classrooms to hear. The animal was later treated by a veterinarian and adopted by a student.

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