



# For the Love of Skiing

By: Craig Kennedy, Access Anything

When people ask me why I moved to Steamboat, Colorado, I always say: "I moved here to ski. I broke my back skiing, and that's why I still live here!"

I grew up a product of my surroundings in upstate New York in the Adirondack Mountains. I probably spent more time outdoors than I did indoors, doing everything from fishing to rock climbing. But the one sport that I truly loved was alpine skiing.

So I packed up my gear after college and moved to Steamboat Springs to be a better skier and take advantage of the incredible and vast terrain that Colorado is famous for. I never would have imagined that twelve years later I would have spent more than 600 days in a monoski and only 100 days skiing upright.

I will never forget my first day back on the mountain. My parents and friends could not believe that less than a year after a three-month hospital stay recovering from eight broken vertebrae, I was attempting to learn to ski again.

I borrowed a monoski from a friend and, with the help of a couple of able-bodied friends, got back on the lift. I can still feel that wide smile spread across my face as the lift swept me upwards. A warm feeling spread through my body, the same feeling I still get every time I get into my monoski.

I am not sure that I would have, or

could have, stayed in Steamboat after my accident if it wasn't for skiing. I know it sounds crazy, but the sport that put me in a wheelchair is still the sport I love the most. My love and passion for skiing have only grown stronger.

I remember the struggle to stay upright and the agony of trying to pick myself up after falling, again and again. I remember a fellow monoskier saying to me that skiing was the hardest to learn (he wanted to quit after his first 5 days), yet the most rewarding and enjoyable sport that I'd ever try. It was that comment that fueled my refusal to quit.

Now I have eight seasons and 600+ days under my belt, and I still enjoy skiing more than any other sport that I've tried. Now it's all about the deep powder and finding my favorite stashes every day; the stashes that make me never want to ski anywhere else for worry of missing the best powder day of the season. It's about challenging myself every day to ski harder runs and steeper trails and, someday, reach my ultimate goal of skiing for a Warren Miller film!

Skiing is one of only a few wheelchair sports that you participate in without the use of your chair. For me, monoskiing is all about freedom... freedom of getting out of my wheelchair and going places where nobody expects I can go. It's liberating.

Other than the love of my family and

friends, there's nothing in this world that makes me feel the way I do when I am skiing. The feel of the snow, the fresh air, the floating sensation of powder skiing, and the hooting and hollering of friends as I ski the lift line are all reasons I love skiing as much as I do. Not only has skiing been a huge part of my "life after injury," it has taught me how to overcome obstacles and adapt to a never-quit attitude. By conquering the sport that almost conquered me, I have learned that I can do whatever I set my mind to. In the immortal words of Winston Churchill: "Never, never, never give up!"



Craig and Andrea Kennedy started Access Anything in 2003 after a trip to Alaska left them wondering how anyone with a disability found traveling easy. In 2005 they released the first adventure guidebook in a new series for this niche of traveler, Access Anything: Colorado, Adventuring with Disabilities. For more information, visit [www.accessanything.net](http://www.accessanything.net).