



We give the *Mountain* pulpit to:

Lee Cohen | *Mountain* magazine Senior Contributing Photographer

I first met Brian McKenna up at Alta. Like many of us here, he was an enthusiastic skier who'd moved to Utah for the snow. A couple of years later I got an email from his friend Dr. Carolyn Campbell, explaining that Brian had been paralyzed from the neck down in a mountain biking accident at Deer Valley. They had been schoolmates at Tulane and were still close friends. When Brian crashed, Carolyn was in her residency at University of Utah Hospital. She soon moved over to the spinal rehabilitation unit.

As soon as Brian was able to breathe on his own again, the talk turned to skiing. But although there was equipment that enabled paraplegics to ski, nothing yet existed to get individuals with tetraplegia (the modern and correct term for quadriplegia) back on the hill.

Enter Dr. Jeff Rosenbluth, the Medical Director of the Spinal Cord Injury Acute Rehabilitation program at the University of Utah Health Sciences Center. Beginning with a frame called the Kartski, from Tessier, a French adaptive sports equipment company, Dr. Rosenbluth built a custom device he dubbed the Tetra Ski. To operate it, two skis are controlled by small heavy duty actuators used in research submarines. The actuators, in turn, are controlled by the operator sipping and puffing into a tube, which moves the skis from a wedge to parallel and then puts them up on edge.

I've been a ski and outdoor photographer most of my adult life, but seeing Brian out on the hill with the Tetra Ski was truly an amazing experience.

Currently, the Tetra Ski team is working with the University of Utah to establish a nonprofit to distribute Tetra Skis to adaptive ski programs. The nonprofit will also provide the education and support needed for a safe rollout. "Our adaptive sports initiative has a goal to 'control everything with anything,'" says Dr. Rosenbluth. "We'd like to take any remaining muscle activity that an individual still has after a significant injury and translate that into meaningful activity." ■

Learn more at: tvc.utah.edu/ or healthcare.utah.edu/rehab/support-services/trails.php.