Back To The Woods: A New Way To Hunt With A Spinal Cord Injury

For Kevin Kimrey, learning to deer hunt as a boy meant being out in the woods, tuning in to the sounds of nature, and spending time with his dad. “The whole experience was something to look forward to, whether you saw a deer or not. If you killed one, that was a bonus,” he said.

All that came to a halt when Kevin had a spinal cord injury as a teenager.

The day before his 17th birthday, a simple game of tag football at a church picnic turned his life upside down. One minute the Irmo native was guarding a player, and the next he fell and tumbled over his neck, sustaining a C4/C5 injury.

After the accident, he and his father stayed out of the woods. “I didn’t want to go without Kevin and I wasn’t going to say, ‘You want to come watch me hunt?’” said Kevin’s father Bill. “I put the clothes and the guns way back in the closet.” And they stayed there for almost ten years - until the Kimreys encountered Rafe Ellisor.

Chairman of the South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Association, Rafe, recently started a non-profit organization called Fun4All. Co-founded by Michelle Rogers, an occupational therapist at HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital, the focus of Fun4All is to open up recreational opportunities to people with any type of disability. Rafe began calling the Kimreys and telling them how it would be possible for Kevin, as a quadriplegic, to go hunting again.

“Before now I was dealing with other things in life and didn’t believe I could hunt anymore, so I had let that go,” Kevin said. With some nudging on the part of Rafe and his firm but friendly refusal to take no for an answer, father and son decided to give it a try. “I finally realized that I had to be open-minded and try some things again,” Kevin said.

“I was a little hesitant at first,” Kevin admits when a group of ten individuals with disabilities, accompanied by seven volunteers, headed into the woods last December. A flatbed truck brought the hunters to the site so that navigating fallen limbs, brush, and tree roots wouldn’t be an issue.

Kevin’s gun was secured on a homemade mount and a stand fashioned from PVC pipe. A special adaptive device was hooked up to the gun and powered by plugging it into a car battery, which sat on the ground by his wheelchair. The sip-and-puff device allowed Kevin, with his limited hand function, to pull the trigger. “I hadn’t known anything like that existed.

“After the accident, he and his father stayed out of the woods.”

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Kevin just has to look through the scope, puff on the straw, and the gun fires,” his Dad said.

Though Kevin didn’t shoot anything that day, he wasn’t disappointed in the least. What the outing brought was new insight to the 26-year-old. “For that time in the woods you don’t feel handicapped. It really gives you a sense of being like everyone else,” Kevin said.

His dad agreed wholeheartedly. “It was good for Kevin to see how many other people are out there in wheelchairs hunting and that it was a very normal thing for them to do.” He added, “What touched me that day was that it was just a group of men doing what men do and having fun doing it. That was special.”

The deer hunt was one of three sponsored by Fun4All in its first year. Four turkey hunts and a bowling outing were also offered to individuals with disabilities. Rafe notes, “After someone acquires a disability such as a spinal cord injury it makes all the sense in the world to question if you are ever going to be able to do what you enjoy again. What’s great is that the answer is yes.” He recognizes that there are a limited number of organized recreational activities in South Carolina for people with disabilities, and hopes that Fun4All will have a significant impact. The organization looks to expand into water sports and fishing this summer.

The Kimreys appreciate what Fun4All has done for them. “People like Rafe set an example for Kevin and others that there are ways to open the doors for adventure and fun,” Bill said. For Kevin the experience was one of pure joy. “What stood out was doing something again with my dad that we had always enjoyed together. It really brought back memories of old hunts.”

The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation conducted a poll through their website last year to find out what really irritates people who use wheelchairs. Their results, listed from the tenth highest to the most popular response, are listed below:

10. Speaking slowly to me because I’m in a wheelchair.
9. Holding on to the back of my chair so I can’t move.
8. Patting me on my head. Don’t.
7. Not inviting me to an event because you are protecting me from some frustration (let me figure it out).
6. Strangers asking what happened to me.
5. Congratulating me for things like going to the grocery store like it’s worthy of an Olympic medal.
4. Continuing to insist on helping me after I’ve said no thanks.
3. Talking over my head as if I’m not there.
2. Accessible bathroom stalls being used by an able-bodied person.
1. Able-bodied people parking in accessible parking places.

Top Ten List reprinted with permission from The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation.

The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation provides a wealth of information for individuals with spinal cord injury, paralysis, or other mobility impairments. Check out their Paralysis Resource Center at www.paralysis.org or by calling toll-free at 1-800-225-0292.
Sixty Years Post-Injury, Spartanburg Resident Still Staying Active

When a little girl asked Ray Brown why he was in a wheelchair, the Spartanburg resident explained that he was hurt in a car accident a long time ago. With the wisdom of a five-year-old, she chided him, “You weren’t wearing your seat belt, huh?”

In fact, life was quite different for a 15-year-old with a T9/10 spinal cord injury 60 years ago.

Cars didn’t have seatbelts back when Ray was thrown from the passenger seat of a 1949 Studebaker. In fact, life was quite different for a 15-year-old with a T9/10 spinal cord injury 60 years ago. Like the 22 months the teenager spent in Spartanburg General Hospital. “Mostly they had me there because they didn’t know what to do with a spinal cord injury back then,” Ray recalled. Equally surprising is the fact that he never went to a rehabilitation facility. “People can’t believe when I tell them I got OJT – on the job training in a wheelchair.”

Ray held the distinction of his initial wheelchair being the very first foldable one in use at Spartanburg General. “Up to that point they had the old wooden back chairs,” he said. “I had to keep my eye on my chair because when I was in bed the nurses would borrow it to transport other patients.”

During his lengthy hospitalization, Ray was told that he could only expect to live another five to seven years. He was also told that despite completing his high school studies with a tutor, he wouldn’t be granted a diploma. Yet with the encouragement of his parents, Ray stubbornly refused to let obstacles stand in his way. Six months after he returned home, he was behind the wheel of a car. “I was going to buy some hand controls, but a friend who was a mechanic said he could make me a set,” Ray recalled. Ray was soon cruising around Spartanburg. “Driving was another sign of independence that I was going to do this,” he said of adapting to life with his injury. And he did, spending the next six decades defying his initial prognosis. And while some of his doctors over the years have understood spinal cord injury better than others, he “played it by ear” when it came to dealing with pressure sores, urinary tract infections and the like.

Ray went on to complete a television repair training program with Vocational Rehabilitation and spent 20 years repairing TVs. His varied work history also includes preparing taxes at H & R Block and keeping the office running as a church secretary. When he finally retired at the age of 61, it followed “18 years, nine months, and five days” with Spartanburg City/County Communications. Starting out as a 911 emergency dispatcher and moving up into supervision, Ray experienced people’s crises on a daily basis. “Sometimes, with the same calls about domestic problems and alcoholics again and again, I’d ask myself what I was doing there. Then you get one call in which you make a difference,” he said.

Outside of work Ray got involved with the Spartanburg Mayor’s Committee for People with Disabilities, and served four terms as state president of the S.C. Physically Handicapped Society. Almost ten years ago he began volunteering with Protection

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It’s not unusual to find Ray Brown headed into one of his favorite restaurants around Spartanburg to enjoy a meal.
and Advocacy for People with Disabilities, conducting inspections of community residential care facilities where people with disabilities reside. Even a heart attack in 2004 and shoulder surgery in 2010 didn’t keep Ray from resuming inspections after he had recuperated. His work ethic was commended when he earned an award from Protection and Advocacy for outstanding volunteer service.

Balancing his commitments with leisure time, for many years Ray enjoyed traveling by himself around the Carolinas. He had a soft spot for “little towns and fishing villages” and liked the flexibility of “being able to do what I wanted when I wanted.” Caring for his older sister keeps him around Spartanburg these days, but he still appreciates an occasional nice meal at a local restaurant. He also loves a good cup of black coffee, admitting that he probably drinks six cups a day.

If caffeine is a vice, it may be one of the few Ray has developed throughout a long, active life. So what’s his secret to longevity after a spinal cord injury so many years ago? He relates a story in which an acquaintance asked him, “Ray, how the hell have you made it this long?” Ray admitted that he didn’t have an answer for the man. “I have spent more than 75 percent of my life in a chair. I don’t think about it; I just handle it,” he said.

Sixty Years Post-Injury, Continued From Page 3.

He had a soft spot for “little towns and fishing villages” and liked the flexibility of “being able to do what I wanted when I wanted.”

“I loved the speed and thrill of going tubing.”

“It was the first time I’d been on a boat in 15 years.”

“I’d never been on a Jet Ski before. I had a blast.”

There was no doubt about it. Individuals with disabilities who attended the 3rd Annual Splash Bash last August thoroughly enjoyed the day’s lineup of adapted water sports and leisure activities.

This year’s Splash Bash is scheduled for Saturday, September 10. Sponsored by HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of Columbia, the event will be held at the Shaw Air Force Base Lake Wateree Recreation Area in Camden and is open to adults and young adults (age 14 and older) with disabilities and their families. While Splash Bash is free, registration is required.

To register, or for more information, contact Michelle Azarigian-Rogers at 803-401-1347 or Michelle.azarigian@healthsouth.com or Rafe Ellisor at 803-401-1365 or Rafe.ellisor@healthsouth.com.

Coming your way this Fall! Find out more info on Page 6.
Lowcountry Hospitality for Individuals with Disabilities

Live in the Lowcountry? Have problems with accessibility? Brenda Parent is the person to contact.

The Accessibility Coordinator for the disAbility Resource Center in Charleston, Parent has a long history of addressing accessibility issues for individuals with disabilities. Twenty-three years ago, before the passage of the American’s with Disabilities Act, Brenda was a new mother with an incomplete spinal cord injury. She was touched when her church in a small New Hampshire town presented her with plans to build a beautiful wrought iron ramp at the main entrance to its early 1900’s façade. “At the time there were no laws, no reason other than to get me and other members into its facility as independently as possible,” she said.

When Brenda and her family relocated to Charleston a couple of years later, she immediately ran into obstacles trying to pay property taxes and register vehicles. “Government services were virtually inaccessible and unsafe to access for someone using a wheelchair, or with any other kind of disability,” she recalled.

She spent the next ten years initiating several accessibility projects and chairing various committees on a volunteer basis. This extensive involvement eventually led to her current employment with the disAbility Resource Center. With the 20th anniversary of the ADA, Brenda realized that more efforts are still needed to bring about compliance with the law. In her current position, her focus is on holding local governments and businesses responsible for ADA compliance.

For help with accessibility issues in the Lowcountry or for more information, contact Brenda Parent by phone at (843) 225-5080 or toll- free/TTY at (866) 874-7730 or e-mail at BParent@drcilc.org.

Looking for assistance with funding for college? SpinLife, an internet retailer of mobility equipment, offers one $500 award in its annual SpinLife Innovation in Motion Scholarship program. Recipients must be over the age of 18 and be enrolled at a four-year school at the undergraduate level.

To be eligible, students must also be a legal resident of the United States or possess a valid student visa, and must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0. In addition to completing an application, students must submit an essay. This year’s essay question focuses on mobility challenges at college and the student’s recommendation on making his or her school more accessible. The deadline for the 2011 award is August 1.

For more information, consult the SpinLife website at www.spinlife.com/scholarship.
Where can you try out an obstacle course with an all-terrain wheelchair, learn the latest in spinal cord injury research at The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, and take in a wheelchair fashion show -- all in one day? The answer is at WIND (Wheeling in New Directions), a day-long discovery of life after spinal cord injury. Scheduled for Saturday, October 15, WIND is sponsored by the South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Association and funded by a grant from the S.C. Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund.

Combining education with fun, WIND will present speakers on a variety of topics relevant to spinal cord injury, and offer participants opportunities to relax and network with each other. Breakout sessions will include traveling with a disability, navigating the dating scene, and preventing and managing common secondary conditions. A band will provide entertainment during a casual barbeque lunch, and two wheelchair tennis exhibitions will be held. Attendees can learn about various products and services at the vendor expo, while earning a chance to win door prizes at the end of the day.

The reasonable $20 registration fee (before August 15) includes lunch. Scholarships will be offered for those who need assistance to cover the cost of the registration fee. In addition, the association will be providing free transportation from locations across the state for South Carolina residents who do not have their own means of transportation. Individuals requesting scholarships and/or transportation must register or contact the Spinal Cord Injury Association by August 15.

Detailed information on WIND and the registration form are available on the association’s website at www.scspinalcord.org/wind.php. Questions about scholarships and transportation can be directed to: scscia@att.net or 803-252-2198 or toll-free at 866-445-5509. Individuals without Internet access can obtain the WIND brochure and registration form by calling the state office at the numbers above.

**Sign Up Today!**

**WIND**

**Wheeling In New Directions**

**Saturday, October 15**

**10 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

**Saluda Shoals Park**

**Columbia, S.C.**
The South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Association is proud to honor Dr. Marvin S. Murdaugh, Jr., who served briefly on SCSCIA’s board of directors before he passed away in October 2010. Dr. Murdaugh served in the U.S. Army in Vietnam and as a family practitioner in the Charleston area until he had a C3 spinal cord injury in 2005. The association extends its deepest sympathy to Marvin’s widow, Cathie Murdaugh. With a desire to help families whose lives have been changed by spinal cord injury, Cathie has since accepted a position on the association’s board.

Memorial Donors
Sincere thanks go out to the following individuals for their generous donations to the association in memory of Dr. Murdaugh.

Ms. Georgia Lucas Barnett
Mr. and Mrs. Howard Brilliant
Mr. and Mrs. W. James Clees
Mr. and Mrs. Harland Cofer
Drs. Bill and Rolasie Crouch
Dr. and Mrs. F. Strait Fairey, Jr.
Ms. Karol Gobel
Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Higerd
Mr. and Mrs. Walter McElveen

Dr. Benjamin McInnes, III
Mr. and Mrs. James McNamara
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas McTeer, Jr.
Ms. Barbara Neligan
Ms. Amy Parker
Mr. and Mrs. Capers Poulnot
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Smith
Dr. Dahlmon Smoak
Ms. Phillis Wilson

The Dr. Marvin S. Murdaugh Opportunity Grant
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Mr. and Mrs. Robert Smith
Dr. Dahlmon Smoak
Ms. Phillis Wilson

The Marvin S. Murdaugh Opportunity Grant
The Spinal Cord Injury Association is pleased to announce the establishment of the Dr. Marvin S. Murdaugh Opportunity Grant. The grant was made possible by donations in memory of Dr. Murdaugh.

In 2011, two $300 grants will be awarded to South Carolina residents with spinal cord injuries. The grants will help provide opportunities to pursue employment, educational, or recreational goals or help meet needs that will enhance quality of life. The types of requests that could be funded by the grants include assistance towards the purchase of hand controls, college textbooks, a sports wheelchair, or construction of a ramp.

Applying for the Dr. Marvin S. Murdaugh Opportunity Grant involves completing an application form, writing a short essay, and submitting one letter of reference. The deadline to apply is September 7, 2011.

The application form and guidelines are available on the association’s website at www.scspinalcord.org/opportunity-grant.php or can be obtained by calling the state office at 803-252-2198 or toll-free at 1-866-445-5509.
Spinal Cord Injury Nursing Advice Line

Have a medical question that doesn’t necessarily require a doctor’s appointment?

Wondering if specific physical changes are normal?

Need assistance in orienting a new caregiver?

A free Spinal Cord Injury Nursing Advice Line at Craig Hospital in Colorado can address all of these issues and more. The new service offered through the acute care and rehabilitation hospital has a database of more than 150 health issues that have been compiled by experienced nurses. In addition to fielding health-related questions, nurses staffing the advice line can provide resources on healthy living with spinal cord injury.

Caring exclusively for patients with spinal cord and brain injuries, Craig Hospital had routinely fielded calls from people living with spinal cord injury throughout the country. Two of the most common concerns have been bowel or bladder problems and skin issues. The nursing advice line was created out of the needs identified by the volume of these calls.

To reach the Spinal Cord Injury Nursing Advice Line, call: 800-247-0257 or 303-789-8508
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Mountain Standard Time

South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Association

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