

## Betsey's Personal Essay

I'm Betsey Peryea: A 28 year-old adaptive athlete with a fully-fused spine from scoliosis and a nerve disease. I grew up on a wee farm in Vermont close to Smugglers' Notch in a log cabin with outdoorsy parents who introduced me to skiing, climbing, camping, and foraging at a young age. At fourteen, I had my first of five scoliosis fusion surgeries and had to spend the rest of high school mostly in bed. I had my second and third surgeries the summer before college started, and began to get back outdoors after that! My friend and I hiked all the 4k' peaks in VT and NH during breaks from college, I started gym climbing again, and then I had to go in for my fourth scoliosis-related surgery. I turned 21 while on bed rest recovering, I immersed myself in adventure novels and documentaries to help quell my antsy-ness, and did my physical therapy listening to Kiss or Kill by Mark Twight on audiobook. When I was finished my recovery, I adopted a dog and modified a '99 Honda CRV into a fused-spine-friendly housecar and drove West to experience the mountains I'd only heard about. I re-acquainted myself with skiing at Big Sky Resort with awesome, encouraging help from some incredible friends; and what a funky learning experience it was to get used to skiing without any spine mobility! Since then, I've skied some cool lines all around WY, MT, CO, and back home in VT. I got back into climbing and had the opportunity to climb routes in the Black Canyon, Beartooth Range, Mt. Rumney, and the routes I watched my dad climb when I was a kid in Smugglers' Notch. I worked as a snowmaker and snowcat operator at Big Sky and skied+toured in my spare time until my scoliosis-related spine problems progressed to the point that I had to get my fifth spinal fusion. Nowadays, I live out of a DIY sprinter van and trailer with my partner and our two dogs and I spend my time volunteering and advocating for inclusivity in the outdoors and nature conservancy projects. I've been training with Summation Athletics since May '21, 5-6 says a week, to get my mountain fitness back for this ski traverse (and hopefully more adventures after that!).

As an adaptive athlete, I'm aware that my body has limitations and I cannot perform all the same actions as the regular person can, but I still have some big goals! I am planning an adaptive ski traverse of the Wind River Range in Wyoming during May '23. It will be roughly 100 miles of self-supported ski touring through some incredibly remote alpine terrain, north to south, through the entire mountain range. There will be 3 of us: the adaptive athlete, the photographer/videographer, and one experienced friend to help with support. We will start by the Green River Lakes Campground area, north of Pinedale, and tour south to Sinks Canyon area by Lander. During our traverse, we have some side objectives we hope to ski depending on conditions: Gannett Peak, Dinwoody, Mount Helen, Fremont, Pyramid Peak, and a line between Overhanging Tower and Wolfs Head. All three of us will be hauling sleds and carrying packs. We think it will take us around 10 days to 2 weeks to complete. To my knowledge, this will be the first attempt by an adaptive athlete to traverse this mountain range!

I want to be accepted for the Flyin' Ryan Adventure Scholarship for a couple reasons! As an adaptive athlete, I have more expenses than the average athlete does. I have to pay for medical care and afford gear: a double whammy to the wallet if I ever heard one! To afford my last surgery, I had to sell my lightweight expedition equipment. There are still a few things I need to make this traverse possible like a lightweight expedition sled, harness appropriate for glacier travel, and a four season tent. If I was a recipient of the scholarship, I would be able to get the kind of gear my funky body needs to make my goal a reality! I'd use any leftover funds to pay for gas to help shuttle cars to the access/exit points. Through this traverse, I, and my fantastic teammates, want to show the outdoor industry that with cooperation and kindness, different people can work together to achieve big, awesome things!