

› MARCH 15, 2011

# AMERICAN WAY



AMERICAN AIRLINES • AMERICAN EAGLE

The winners of our  
**9TH ANNUAL  
ROAD WARRIOR CONTEST**  
hit the slopes  
of Park City, Utah



# A Mountain Story

TWICE MONTHLY



Our Road Warrior winners' guests with *American Way* editor Adam Pitluk: (FROM LEFT) Mary Hilderbrand, Erin Cassin and Elaine Desrochers

# Westbound and Down

WE WERE SOMEWHERE ON THE EAST SIDE OF the mountain when I started to panic. Not so much because I feared that I couldn't ski this neck-breaker of a run, nor because I didn't have the utmost confidence that my skiing partner could make it down. No, I panicked because our presence on this part of the mountain — a seemingly straight-down drop, accented by moguls the size of Subarus — represented a broken promise to Elaine Desrochers. And when you break a promise to Elaine Desrochers, you risk the wrath of a Bostonian who has no reservations whatsoever about telling you where to go and how to get there. You also risk enraging her husband, Roy, a lineman of a man who drinks beer for a living. Combining two outspoken Bostonians — one of whom could crush me like heat crystals in a hand warmer — with broken promises leads to one painful week for your humble editor.

"Adam, I can ski pretty well, just no black diamonds, ya hear?" was Elaine's one standing order before setting off on an afternoon of skiing at the Park City Mountain Resort in Park City, Utah. It was a reasonable-enough request for two reasons: A) As the wife of our Road Warrior second-place winner, her presence here in Park City for the Road Warrior photo shoot was supposed to be relaxing, and B) since I was Elaine's self-appointed mountain guide for the day, I, too, knew I had no business skiing myself, let alone her, down black diamonds.

"Elaine, do I look like I'm crazy?" was my reply.

"I live in Dallas. The highest hill in the city is the 22-degree slope of my driveway."

Satisfied with my answer, Elaine and I got on a chair lift and smiled as it slowly climbed into the thin mountain air. I had Elaine's confidence, and I talked a mean game. And even though I'm not the best skier, at that moment, as we prepared for our very first ski run of the day, I looked resplendent in my new Mountain HardWear Artero jacket, my Head Edge+ LTD boots and my Kombi Phoenix gloves. The first rule of alpine skiing, as far as I was concerned, was that it doesn't matter how well you ski, it's how well you look like you can ski. And with pricey clothes as my qualification to lead a mountain tour, Elaine followed me to Single Jack, a nice, smooth, groomed blue square run — the kind of run that anyone who's ever spent a day on skis would tackle easily. I was in the lead. The sun was comfortably at my back as I lollied down Single Jack. Perhaps I was thinking about all five winners getting fitted for clothing and readied for their *American Way* cover shoot back in the valley that made me stray off course, or maybe it was because the view of Utah and the surrounding mountain ranges from atop a Park City ski run is among the most striking visuals in the world, but regardless of my thought process, I clearly wasn't thinking about a promise I had made to Elaine.

Not only did I ski us into a black diamond run — a run that is for advanced skiers only — but the run I accidentally skied us into, a black diamond called Lower Single Jack, had no escape route.

Whereas most expert ski runs have escape routes to easier terrain so as not to maroon a stray novice on the mountain, the run that I skied us into was flanked by Motherlode Meadows, a wooded, moguled double-black diamond run. Not just black: double-black. Elaine didn't talk to me the whole way down. Not that I could have heard her; I was lost in thought of my own survival, and I was subconsciously wondering if/when we finally made it back to the hospitality suite at the Waldorf Astoria, who would beat me up first, Elaine or Roy?

After a few near wipeouts and a stern reminder — avowed aloud and to myself that I'm no Heidi Voelker (page 24) — Elaine and I looked at each other and doubled over with laughter. This scene of amusement, accented with educational lessons and late-night discussions (and barring any other near-death experiences), was the essence of our 9th Annual Road Warrior contest photo shoot.

All of our winners and their guests engaged in a beautiful alpine week of great food, great drinks, great friends and, thanks to a top-notch art team, great photographs (page 56). We hope you enjoy the annual Road Warrior issue as much as we enjoyed meeting the winners and making the magazine.

As for Elaine and Roy, rather than blacken my eyes, they opted for a nice pour of smoked porter, compliments of the local Red Rock Brewing Company.

A special thanks to everyone in Park City, to the *American Way* staff, to the Road Warrior winners and to their accompanying guests, Mary Hilderbrand, Becky Noon, Erin Cassin and the always-forgiving Elaine Desrochers.

  
ADAM PITLUK  
Editor

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