



**Other Builders  
Blush**

**D-R HORTON** DRI NYSE  
*America's Builder*  
Continental Series

[HOMES](#)

[JOBS](#)

[AUTOS](#)

[CLASSIFIEDS](#)

[ADSEARCH](#)

[TRAVEL DEALS](#)

Thursday, May 27, 2004

# DENVERPOST.com

Denver, CO

**NEWS**

- [BLOGHOUSE](#)
- [BUSINESS](#)
- [Al Lewis](#)
- [Stocks](#)
- [Special Reports](#)
- [Wall St. Journal](#)
- [CAMPAIGN 2004](#)
- [COLUMNISTS](#)
- [FRONT PAGE](#)
- [LOCAL NEWS](#)
- [NATION/WORLD](#)
- [OBITUARIES](#)
- [SPECIAL REPORTS](#)
- [WEATHER](#)

**FEATURES**

- [BOOKS](#)
- [COLUMNISTS](#)
- [ENTERTAINMENT](#)
- [FOOD / DINING](#)
- [HEALTH](#)
- [LIFESTYLES](#)
- [MOVIES](#)
- [TRAVEL](#)
- [TV LISTINGS](#)

**OPINION**

- [COLUMNISTS](#)
- [EDITORIALS](#)
- [LETTERS](#)
- [PERSPECTIVE](#)
- [KEEFE CARTOON](#)
- [MESSAGE BOARDS](#)

**SPORTS**

- [AVALANCHE / NHL](#)
- [BRONCOS / NFL](#)
- [COLLEGES](#)
- [COLUMNISTS](#)
- [NUGGETS / NBA](#)
- [OLYMPICS](#)
- [PREPS](#)
- [RAPIDS / MLS](#)
- [ROCKIES / MLB](#)
- [SCORES](#)
- [OTHER SPORTS](#)

**SERVICES**

- [ARCHIVES](#)
- [CONTACT US](#)
- [ABOUT US/HELP](#)
- [E-MAIL NEWS](#)
- [SUBSCRIBE](#)

**ADVERTISING**

- [AUTOS](#)
- [HOMES](#)
- [JOBS](#)
- [MARKETPLACE](#)
- [MEMORIALS](#)
- [NEWSPAPER ADS](#)
- [PNN WEBSITES](#)

[EMAIL ARTICLE](#) [LINK TO ARTICLE](#) [PRINT ARTICLE](#)

Article Published: Sunday, March 21, 2004

## Lawyer overcomes life's trials

### Paraplegic attorney in Qwest case respected for tenacity

By [Kris Hudson](#)  
Denver Post Business Writer

Steve Peters knows trials and tribulations. Only a few, however, are related to his work as a lawyer.

Twenty-five years ago, Peters was terribly injured and his wife was killed in a car crash with a drunken driver. Paramedics thought Peters was dead, too. Five hours passed before they realized he was alive and transported him to a hospital. He ended up a paraplegic at age 22.

While Peters was prosecuting a drug case in 1987 for the U.S. Justice Department, someone tossed a Molotov cocktail into an elevator at his apartment building. He escaped unharmed.

Peters, who works for the Denver office of Lindquist & Vennum, has spent the past month defending former Qwest vice president John M. Walker against fraud and conspiracy charges. It's the highest-profile corporate fraud case to date involving Qwest, the Denver telecommunications company sent into a tailspin in 2001 as the technology boom imploded.



Post / Jerry Cleveland  
Lawyer Steve Peters and wife Renee Mona Peters share lunch Thursday afternoon outside the U.S. District Courthouse in Denver.

**RELATED**

- Apr. 18:**  
⇒ Qwest jurors say prosecutors dwelt on irrelevant
- Apr. 17:**  
⇒ Blame pinned on bosses' orders  
⇒ Emotions run high for defendants, kin  
⇒ Notable recent business scandals
- Apr. 18:**  
⇒ Qwest trial ends in no convictions
- Apr. 17:**  
⇒ White-collar cases prove difficult for feds
- Apr. 18:**  
⇒ Qwest trial timeline  
⇒ Round 1 of Qwest trial was no KO
- Apr. 14:**  
⇒ Qwest jurors have verdicts on 24 charges
- Apr. 13:**  
⇒ Judge in Qwest case denies jury request for transcripts
- Apr. 10:**  
⇒ Qwest jurors recess, will resume Monday
- Apr. 2:**  
⇒ Ex-Qwest exec's lawyer: Case weak
- Mar. 27:**  
⇒ Ex-Qwest exec says he broke no laws
- Mar. 25:**  
⇒ First of ex-Qwest executives testifies
- Mar. 24:**  
⇒ Qwest 4 seek acquittal, say feds' case is flawed
- Mar. 19:**  
⇒ Certified public amnesiacs

**OTHER BUSINESS STORIES**

5/27/2004

- [Work record attacked](#)
- [Comcast tests Net phone service](#)



WEDDINGS  
YELLOW PAGES

HOME  
ETHICS POLICY

SEARCH

**SITE SEARCH:**

- Enter search term, hit enter key
- [Click here for advanced search](#)

**WEB SEARCH:**



**9NEWS.com**

## Advertisement

**GLOBAL CAREER MANAGEMENT**

**Executives Managers Professionals**

*Competing in the Big Leagues?*

Put Global Career Management to work for you to:

- Increase Salary, Achieve Career Goals, Shorten Job Search, Maximize Job Satisfaction

"He is one of those people - and there are many - who go on to do remarkable things with their lives," said longtime friend Kenny Hosack, who counseled Peters at Craig Hospital in Englewood after the crash. "His disability is

certainly an annoyance, an aggravation, but I think he's transcended it."

Neither Peters, 46, nor his wife, Renee Mona Peters, whom he married in November, would comment during the trial.

But conversations with friends and associates painted a portrait of a sometimes stubborn, always competitive man who has never accepted defeat. That steely drive has allowed him to become an elite ski racer, as well as complete the arduous Ride the Rockies cycling trek in 2002 on a hand cycle.

"He was well regarded as a prosecutor," said former U.S. Attorney Tom Strickland, now at the law firm Hogan & Hartson. "He's tenacious, aggressive, smart, gives no quarter and is extremely bright."

It was a summer night in Kansas in 1979. Peters; his wife, Annabel; and a friend, John Kellstrom, climbed into the couple's Opel Manta and headed home from a party.

Peters had just graduated from Kansas State University. He and Annabel planned to leave for Duke University in North Carolina, where Peters would study law, his dream since watching "Perry Mason" on TV as a kid.

As they motored along just after midnight, another vehicle driven by an 18-year-old came toward them. The young female driver was drunk. Her car drifted across the center of a highway about 4 miles west of Abilene, Kan., and struck the Peterses' Manta head on.

The impact killed Annabel, who was driving.

- [United: Fares follow jet fuel](#)
- [NEW: Rapid growth in 4th quarter](#)
- [NEW: Telemarketing settlement](#)
- [City agency defends loans](#)
- [Contractors fight Xcel plans](#)
- [SUV sales sputter](#)
- [PeopleSoft rejects fourth offer](#)
- [Business briefs](#)
- [Qwest shareholders reject 3 plans](#)
- [GI now fights in court for job](#)
- [Comcast opens its archives](#)
- [Chicago gay bars boycott Coors Co.](#)
- [Rate-hike fears boost home sales](#)
- [Renewal loans draw scrutiny](#)
- [Business briefs](#)
- [Retailer growth enriched Kroenke](#)
- [Lofty hopes unfulfilled](#)
- [Lewis: U.S. firms branded as enemies](#)
- [Parting gift: Aspen hotels offer gas](#)
- [Fuel prices risk United loan](#)
- [Vending machine firm to be sold](#)
- [A DVD and fries, please](#)
- [Spy-satellite firms target public](#)
- [Oil prices surge amid output uncertainty](#)
- [Denver-based Forest Oil to buy rival](#)
- [Cook estate battle lands in court](#)
- [Study touts renewables](#)
- [Mistrial denied in bilking case](#)
- [WorldCom ex-CEO faces new charges](#)
- [Business briefs](#)
- [Business Calendar](#)
- [Stewart's statement on the verdict](#)
- [Chronology of Stewart stock scandal](#)
- [Key figures in Stewart case](#)



Kellstrom ruptured his spleen. Paramedics whisked Kellstrom and the 18-year-old woman, who had a broken ankle, to the hospital. They left the Peterses for dead.

The crash ruptured Steve Peters' spleen and his aorta, the primary artery pumping blood from his heart. He could hear but could not speak or move. He laid there motionless, semiconscious for nearly two hours. His extremities, primarily his legs, were getting no oxygen.

When paramedics returned, they found a weak pulse, but a driving rainstorm kept the medical helicopter grounded. So Peters took a 100-mile ambulance ride to a Wichita hospital. Five hours passed between the crash and his surgery.

The young man wheeled himself into Kenny Hosack's office at Craig Hospital in the spring of 1980. He sat in an old wheelchair ill-suited for him. He had survived a horrible car crash but was still suffering.

Hosack and Peters introduced themselves. Peters began telling his story. Both men ended up in tears.

"Typically, people that have a spinal cord injury are grieving the loss of who they used to be and the uncertainty of how life can be in the future," Hosack said this month, recalling his counseling of Peters. "He was also grieving the loss of his wife and trying to figure out what he was going to do with his life."

The injury to Peters' aorta had stemmed the flow of blood to his legs and damaged his spine, paralyzing him from the waist down.

He spent a year in physical therapy, learning to walk again with straight-leg braces and crutches.

Peters recovered physically. His athletic torso, shoulders and arms added thick muscle, while his legs atrophied. He went on river-rafting trips with Hosack and others, strapping himself to the gear-chest at the raft's center.

By the late 1980s, he was competing in 10-kilometer races and half-marathons in his wheelchair.

But age and strain eventually took their toll on Peters' shoulders, forcing him to abandon the braces and crutches for a wheelchair. Shoulders were not built to work as hips. He needed neither to practice law.

After graduating from law school at Duke in 1983, Peters returned to Denver. He joined the law office of Sherman & Howard, where he spent four years.

Jim Hautcinger, the now-retired Sherman & Howard equity partner who hired Peters, described Peters as "doggedly perseverant, never took the easy way out, always saw everything through to a conclusion."

In 1987, U.S. Attorney Bob Miller hired Peters as a federal prosecutor in Denver. In his first year, Peters' apartment was firebombed during a drug trial he was prosecuting. A witness in the case also was shot, but the FBI never solved the crimes.

Peters' highest-profile prosecution has been of bargain-furniture magnates Gary and Marcee Levine for bankruptcy fraud and embezzlement. In 1991, a federal judge sentenced both to 45 months in prison.

After seven years as a federal prosecutor, Peters went into private practice. He joined the Denver office of Reinhart, Van Deuren. In 1998, he went to work for Lindquist & Vennum, where he is a partner.

In addition to defense work, Peters began to draw clients in cases involving access for disabled persons. Craig Hospital, where Peters served as a board member for 10 years, became a source of referrals.

Of particular interest to Peters has been access and service for disabled passengers on airlines. He has helped clients sue airlines for alleged violations of the Air Carrier Access Act five times. Four of those cases yielded settlements. The fifth is pending.

In the pending case, Blair Strassenburgh, a resident of Hanover, N.H., who uses a wheelchair, sued Continental Airlines last year for access violations and negligence related to his fall from a chair while boarding a flight at Denver International Airport. He alleges that Continental employees were not properly trained to help disabled passengers.

Strassenburgh, 26, met Peters through mutual friends at Craig Hospital. A 1999 car crash in Vermont left Strassenburgh a paraplegic.

"He knows what I'm going through," Strassenburgh said of Peters. "That definitely played a role in hiring him as my attorney."

At first, Ronny Persson didn't know what to make of the intense, dark-haired skier on his Winter Park disabled monoskiing team.

Persson, an affable Swede who trains each year in Winter Park, admired how Peters drove between Denver and Winter Park several times a week to train. Before races, Peters was Persson's opposite - quiet and withdrawn.

Persson, who became a paraplegic after a four-story fall in his early 20s, pushed himself to become an expert monoskier. Peters did not begin competitive skiing until 2000, but he quickly became an elite amateur. He also became close friends with Persson.

"He's a good all-around skier," Persson said of Peters. "He can manage the whole mountain, and that is a good skill, in my opinion. He can take a double-diamond black (expert slope) if he wants to."

Peters mastered the monoski, riding in a sitting position with his legs in front of him and using modified poles for balance. Paraplegic skiers turn by twisting their shoulders and, subsequently, their waists.

"Able-bodied skiers use knees and hips," Persson said. "Instead of knees, we use hips and shoulders."

Before races, Peters becomes focused and unapproachable. His training and competitiveness have helped him to podium, or finish third or higher in a race, five times.

He has yet to finish first, but he's not done.

"Steve is really competitive," Persson said.

Peters married Renee, a nurse, in November after a three-year courtship that began with a blind date. Courtesy of a mutual friend at Craig Hospital, Renee found herself at a Colorado Avalanche game in October 2000 with a guy in a wheelchair. Peters' seats, reserved through season tickets, are in the Pepsi Center's front row on the glass.

The couple is now raising Renee's children from a previous marriage.

Renee, who works as a legal nurse consultant, has often watched from the gallery in federal court as her husband defends John Walker. She has witnessed his tenacity. Earlier this month, he made a pointed but unsuccessful call for a mistrial following a government witness' errant comment about the taboo subject of defense fees in the case. Peters said a prosecutor's leading questions induced the comment.

The move drew praise from an attorney representing another defendant in the case.

"Steve Peters is flat-out brilliant," said Jeff Springer. "He is a lawyer's lawyer."

And that, says Hosack, his longtime friend, is the kind of yardstick by which Peters should be measured.

"He's an attorney, he's a skier, he's recently married," Hosack said. "That's how he defines himself, not as a paraplegic."






## DENVERPOST.com

All contents Copyright 2004 The Denver Post or other copyright holders. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed for any commercial purpose.

[Denver Post Ethics Policy](#)  
[Terms of use](#) | [Privacy policy](#)

[DenverPost.com A to Z](#)

<p><b>Great Expectations</b> <i>Finding Singles</i> in your Area</p>		<p><a href="#">Megan177</a> Los Angeles, CA</p>		<p><a href="#">Willow08</a> Los Angeles, CA</p>	 <p><a href="#">Hea</a> Los</p>
--	---	---	--	---	--