

# Skier Profile

## Edwin Harris – Helping the Younger Guys

Edwin Harris, a 62-year-old Air Force veteran from St. Petersburg, Fla., has been anxiously waiting to travel to Snowmass, Co., to participate in the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic for his first time. “I already have my hat, gloves and sweatshirts packed,” he said. “I haven’t skied in forty-three years!”

Harris, a native of Indiana, voluntarily joined the Air Force at the age of 19. Stationed at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, Co., he served from 1963 to 1967, with two tours as a Sergeant in Vietnam. Harris is a combat-wounded veteran, having lost his right leg below the knee when his helicopter was shot down over Vietnam while he was serving as a door gunner.

After the service, Harris learned how to adjust to life as an amputee and his strong motivation lead him to owning two restaurants. Since retiring, he has volunteered at the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System in Florida for the past five years. “I volunteer primarily at the nursing home and with the new amputees from Iraq and Afghanistan,” he said. “I enjoy helping the young guys – and they are really so young. At first, they are shell shocked with accepting life’s changes as amputees. That motivates me to encourage them. As amputees, we can still do so much with life and I share that with them. They don’t have to feel alone.”

As a fellow veteran, Harris is committed to helping his younger comrades in their long term rehabilitation and adjustment to society. In his role as post commander of AMVETS Post 7467, he also serves as an advocate for all veterans in his community.

Harris first learned about the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic through a veteran friend who attends the event. While he was stationed at Lowry Air Force Base, Harris went snow skiing many times at places like Aspen and Vail. “I am grateful that I can ski again at this event,” he said. “I lost my leg, but I didn’t lose my heart or my head. I have always volunteered to do things. Attending the Clinic is no exception. It is a great opportunity for me to stay healthy and push myself. More importantly, this experience will give me the opportunity to give hope and inspiration to the young guys at Bay Pines and show them what amputees can do.”

This April, Harris takes on a new challenge on the slopes of the Rocky Mountains as he relearns how to Alpine ski as an amputee. He looks forward to making new friends and enjoying all that the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic has to offer. “There is a lot to life,” he said. “Being an amputee is not the end.”