



National Disabled Veterans *Winter Sports Clinic*

Skier Profile

Jonathan Lujan – Keeps On Moving

Colorado native Jonathan Lujan knows how to ski, and now that he has adapted to hitting the slopes with a disability, he has overcome yet another obstacle. Lujan, a 38-year-old Marine Corps veteran, personifies what it means to adapt and overcome.

In 1993 at the age of 23, Lujan first signed up for the Marines. The reason? “My wife and I thought it would be good to get out of Denver and see some new places,” he said. After serving a four-year hitch, he moved back home to Littleton. He was living there in 2001 when terrorists flew the planes into the World Trade Center buildings.

“I was brushing my teeth and saw the second plane hit,” he recalled. “That night, I made up my mind and by November 1, I was re-enlisted.”

Lujan’s specialty in the Marines was electrical equipment repair – specifically, working on generators and mobile power supplies. His unit arrived in Kuwait on January 27, 2003 and crossed into Iraq on March 19. Four days later, Lujan was riding in the back of a five-ton truck in a convoy when enemy forces fired on it. When the driver swerved to avoid getting hit, the truck went off the road, tossing Lujan around in the back.

Wanting to keep moving on with his unit, Lujan initially refused any medical treatment. His superiors thought differently, and he was medically evacuated to an Army hospital in Kuwait. After receiving treatment, Lujan wanted to get back to his unit but the doctor was reluctant. “He told me if I could bend over and touch my toes, he’d let me go,” Lujan said. So he touched his toes successfully and went back to his unit.

As his unit’s combat duties began to wind down, Lujan and several others were selected to join a Marine Expeditionary Unit and headed back to the States aboard the USS Cleveland. The ship arrived in July 2003. “I still had a lot of pain, but I figured I would work through it,” he remembered.

In February 2004, a medical exam revealed that his injuries were serious enough for back surgery. He went into surgery in July 2005. “When I woke up, I was paralyzed from the waist down,” he said. Through treatment, he progressed from using a walker for about six months, to using a cane for another three months, and now he has braces on his legs to help him stand and walk. Lujan’s disorder is medically classified as peripheral neuropathy. He was medically retired from the Marine Corps on Memorial Day 2006.

While receiving care one day at the VA medical center in Denver, Lujan learned about the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic from a representative of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. Last year was his first time participating in the VA-sponsored event in Snowmass Village in his home state of Colorado. “I started skiing when I was a kid and I was excited about learning to ski with my disability,” he said. “Being a Colorado native, skiing has always been a favorite sport of mine.” Because of his positive attitude and his experiences at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sport Clinic, skiing is likely to continue being on Jonathan Lujan’s list of favorite sports.



[Above information provided by veteran.]

Miracles on a Mountainside!

