



National Disabled Veterans

Winter Sports Clinic

Skier Profile

Mark Drake – Healing Your Soul on the Mountain

Mental and physical hurdles won't stop U.S. Army veteran Mark Drake, 60, from conquering the Rocky Mountains at the 2009 National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. In spite of some significant challenges, Drake stays active and maintains an extremely positive outlook on life.

A strong family military history, coupled with his own desire to serve his country gave Drake the incentive to fight in the Vietnam War at the age of 20. Serving in the Army from 1969 to 1970 as a medic and x-ray technician, he was a member of the Medevac 1st Cavalry Division stationed in Tay Ninh, a small city north of Saigon.

Drake finished his x-ray training in a Sacramento hospital and continued to work in the field until 1993. He continued to work part-time in the hospital, while working full-time in the two bicycle shops he owned. In 1991, he was diagnosed with Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS) a condition that affects polio survivors between 10 and 40 years after recovery. "I got polio from the vaccine," Drake explained. "When I was in the second grade, I developed polio so badly that I couldn't walk for four months."

Drake's leg muscles have weakened to the extent that he uses a wheelchair for most activities, although he is able to stand for short periods. When he had to give up bicycling because of his disease, Drake turned his interest to handcycling. A resident of Longmont, Colo., he now competes in numerous handcycling races in his home state and is extremely active promoting adaptive sports. In addition, he develops and manufactures adaptive sports equipment through his at-home project, HandBike America: Adaptive Sports Technology.

This year's National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic will be Drake's fifth year skiing the slopes of Snowmass Village. He compares the event to winning the lottery, a true stroke of good fortune. "If you're going to win, you have to play," he said. "When you come 'play' at the Clinic everyone wins — it's true rehabilitation. The Clinic is the most amazing experience for someone who has had to deal with disabilities, especially our new veterans."

According to Mark Drake, attending the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic is one of the best ways to support our newly disabled heroes. He said, "Hopefully, a completely new area of sports will open up to these young men and women, providing spiritual and physical healing. The Clinic can't put your legs back together, but it can certainly help your soul."



Miracles on a Mountainside!



Department of Veterans Affairs



Disabled American Veterans