



Brothers Reunited at the Winter Sports Clinic

by Andrea Strobel, VACO IGA

When Army veteran Frank Miller came to the Winter Sports Clinic for the first time four years ago, he expected to improve his skiing ability and make new friends among other participants. While Miller has enjoyed these aspects of the Clinic, the event has also provided a surprising benefit -- the chance for him and his brothers to be together for the first time in 24 years.

Frank and Mark Miller are full brothers raised together in West Palm Beach, Florida. They share a father with their older half-brother Mike Miller, a former Marine who served in Vietnam. Until the 2002 Winter Sports Clinic, Frank and Mark had not seen Mike in person since their father's funeral in 1975. "We had communicated sporadically in Christmas cards and things like that through the years," explains Mark, "but we'd never been able to get together in person."

That all changed last year. After making arrangements by mail and phone, Mark and Mike flew to Colorado to join Frank at the Clinic. "I hadn't seen these guys in 24 years. I was worried that I wouldn't recognize them," said Mike. After exchanging pictures, Mark said he had no trouble recognizing his brother in the Denver airport. "I knew who he [Mike] was right away, I was 19 when I last saw him, and 45 then," Mark said.

What was the brothers' meeting like after being so long apart? "We spent hours talking, telling stories, and sharing pictures. We didn't even sleep," says Mark. They laugh about being the last patrons in local bars, and Frank and Mark marvel at the resemblance between Mike and their father. Mike, who lived apart from the men's father from the age of nine, treasured the chance to hear stories about his dad. Mark and Frank looked forward to being with the older brother they had looked up to as children.

"When I was a little kid and he [Mike] was in Vietnam, I thought the idea of a soldier was so cool," said Mark. "Mike had received some medals, and I wrote and asked him to send me some...so I had some of Mike's medals." The brothers say they hit it off at their meeting last year and will remain friends for the rest of their lives.

All the Miller brothers were moved by the Winter Sports Clinic. "It is really inspiring for everyone up here," said Frank. "It was life-changing. Now, both of the brothers sponsor our group." Frank, who is an amputee, takes part in a variety of activities at the Clinic but says that skiing is his favorite. He hopes to get his brothers with him on the slopes next year. "They're making it a point to come back here and hopefully we'll get on the mountain with all the bros!"

One more Miller sibling has yet to attend the Clinic reunions. The only Miller sister has not yet been able to make it to the Clinic but hopes to attend next year. The Miller brothers, their spouses and children all got together at Frank's house for a family Christmas last year. "All of our families had a great time!," he says.

Now that they have re-established their bond, the Millers plan to meet at the Winter Sports Clinic each year. For them, it is not only a chance to witness "miracles on the mountainside," it's also a chance to reconnect with the brothers they thought they might never see again.

6:30 8:30

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Horsefeathers??

Is VA Rocky Mountain Network Deputy Director, Ken Maffet, M.D., switching his specialty from internal medicine to veterinary medicine? Responding to an urgent request at the horseback riding activity on Wednesday, "Are you a doctor? We've got a horse down here!," Dr. Maffet responded to the code. We're happy to report that the horse (which had tripped), the veteran (who was on the horse at the time) and the doctor (who lost his voice earlier in the week) are all doing fine. Enough horsing around already, Doc!

Lost and Found

LOST

- Minolta camera in black case

FOUND

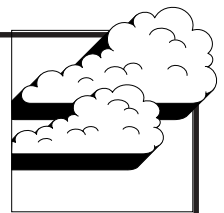
- Chair cushion, red & white
- Green ski cap
- Black left mitten
- Black right ski glove
- Smith goggles from snowmobiling
- Child's black glove
- Pair of light brown gloves
- One pair clip-on sunglasses in case
- Black fleece jacket, size M
- Navy fleece jacket, size S
- Arctic Zone water bottle

See the Host Room staff to drop off or claim items.

Web site for the
Winter Sports Clinic:

www.va.gov/vetevent/wsc/2003/

**WEATHER
CORNER**



**Afternoon Snow
50% chance**

UV Index 6 - Moderate

**Today's High: 37
Tonight's Low: 23**

Don't Forget the Time Change !!!

Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, so be sure to turn your clocks **forward one hour** before you go to bed tonight! Remember, spring forward, fall back.

Important Travel Information for Participants

Flight Information

It is very important that you call and confirm your out-bound flight itinerary. Check your flight out as well as your connections which may have changed. Please call **1-800-241-6522**. These changes are directly related to the war effort, which has reduced flights. United is very sorry for any inconvenience.

Additionally, weather may affect your departure this weekend. The following information numbers may be helpful:

Aspen Airport 970-920-5380
Local Roads 970-920-5454
State Roads 303-639-1234

Luggage Information

All veterans need to have their bags packed, labeled, and left outside their hotel doors (at the Silvertree or the Wildwood) no later than **four hours before** their flights. If you are on a flight between 7:00 - 9:00 a.m., luggage will be picked up starting at 4:00 a.m. Every piece of luggage must be clearly identified with both your full name AND flight number. Additional identification tags are located at the bell stand at the Silvertree. Luggage will be picked up by hotel staff and brought to the lobby for transport to the airport. All luggage must be unlocked for security screening. If your luggage is locked, the locks will be broken by airport security personnel. If you have any questions about airport transportation, please contact the Host Room and ask them to contact the Clinic Transportation Coordinators.

Medical Information for Participants

PHONE: 970-923-2000, extension 381

Medical Emergencies:

- Call 911 for an ambulance for transport to the local emergency room.

Non-Emergent Care, Saturday 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m., and closed Sunday:

- Bedford A conference room, one level below mall, across the street from Mountain Chalet Hotel. Stairway access from mall is next to Christy Sports.
- Wheelchair access must use elevator at far end of mall above main bus terminal to get to medical room level.

Transport:

- Van transport is available from Silvertree Hotel to medical room. Find medical van in front of hotel, or call medical room for transport.

After Hours:

- Call medical room for recorded instructions for contacting "On Call" medical provider. If unsuccessful, call the hotel operator.

Final Thoughts ...

“This is really an amazing experience. I am impressed by the camaraderie among the veterans and the dedication of the staff and volunteers. It’s an incomparable atmosphere, and I recommend it frequently to other veterans.”

Michael Doyle, #7, Roanoke, VA

“This was my first time skiing and I am almost 77 years-old. I was amazed, and I only fell twice. I enjoyed skiing tremendously!”

Paul Fonteyne, #10, Largo, FL

“This is so cool, to have the wind whistle between my hearing aids!”

Walter Brewer, #124, Schoharie, NY

Message from the Commander

“The Winter Sports Clinic conveys our compassionate commitment to never forget the battles that our military men and women have fought and continue to fight as they overcome their disabilities,” said DAV National Commander Edward R. Heath, Sr. Since 1991, DAV has co-sponsored the event with VA.

Till We Meet Again...

Our sincere thanks to all of the participants who so willingly shared their stories with us this week at the 17th National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. We have all been busy preparing news releases for you, writing up articles for the daily *SkiGram*, working with more than 10,000 news media to let people know about this wonderful event, getting photographs of our inspiring participants as you skied, and posting lots of information on the Clinic web site.

When you get home, please check out the web site at www.va.gov/vetski/wsc/2003 — and tell your friends and family to take a look as well. If you wanted a news release and we got a photo of you skiing, it will be there under your name, in “Participant Information.” We were able to get photographs of some 240 participants who were wearing their bibs.

Many thanks to all of the team leaders, instructors, and other staff and volunteers who helped us throughout the week – telling us about interesting stories and photo opportunities, tracking down interviews, and helping us get quotes and missing information. Your help was invaluable.

As always, we go home inspired by all we have seen this week, and we thank you for reminding us not to be limited by the challenges we face, but to let those *Miracles on a Mountainside* keep happening each and every day. We look forward to seeing you back in Snowmass Village next year!

The 2003 Winter Sports Clinic Public Relations Team

Kim Byers	Jim Haines	John Markowski	Tammy Thomas
Elaine Buehler	Lupe Hernandez	Ivonne McDowell	Robert Turtill
Clayton Cochran	Mike Hormuth	Leslie Morgan	Annie Tuttle
Jerome Cooper	Jeff Honeycutt	Sharon Palmer	Denise Vialpando
Gene Davies	Bob Klear	Bob Pederson	Jeff West
Wendy Desjarlais	Jose Llamas	Andrea Strobel	

A Message from Above

The love story between Ralph Jones, 82, and his wife of 57 years, Doris, has extended through World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam War. Ralph, an Army and Army Air Corps veteran who is attending his first Winter Sports Clinic, met Doris in high school. Their first dates were with each other. They courted via letters sent between California and England, where Ralph was stationed and flew 25 combat missions against Axis targets during WWII. When Ralph returned to the States, he and Doris married and started their family.

Ralph's military career was filled with the dangers of leading his men against enemy forces, the forging of lifelong friendships, and the excitement of life in foreign lands. Of all his military memories, though, the one Ralph most treasures happened as Doris and their daughters were set to arrive in Okinawa, where Ralph was stationed as a Squadron Commander during the Korean War.

The Jones family had been separated for nearly a year, and Ralph knew the ship carrying Doris was set to arrive on Okinawa the next day. He desperately wanted to find out the ship's position so that he could pinpoint when she would arrive. In exchange for a ride in a B-29, one of Ralph's Navy friends arranged for Ralph and his crew to "tour" a Navy facility. "When we were there, we looked up the coordinates of the ship and memorized them," said Ralph. Then, the Navigator of Ralph's crew figured out where the ship would be at 9 a.m. the next day.

Soon, Ralph, his crew, and his Navy co-conspirator prepared to begin their search for the ship. "We took off to meet her," said Ralph, "but before we did that, the guys in my crew had figured out what I wanted to do. Two of the other guys had wives on the same ship. They had gotten red, six-inch duct tape, and on the bottom of the plane they had written 'Alice' and 'Melba' in 10-foot letters. On the other side of the plane they had written 'Hi D. Jones.' I did not know they were doing that until I came and saw the plane!"

As the ship carrying their wives came into view, Ralph and his men circled low overhead to the cheers of the people aboard. "It had been a horrible journey," said Doris. "It was so hot the butter was melting before it got to the tables, and we had lost two people on the journey over." Doris was called to the deck to view the plane overhead. Everyone saw the side of the plane with the names of the wives of the plane's other crew members. One of the ship's officers knew Doris' husband was piloting the plane above them and asked why her name wasn't on it. "I told him it was military discretion," says Doris. "Then the plane turned and I saw my name. He turned to me and said, 'So much for military discretion!' After all that we had been through, that flight improved morale aboard the ship tremendously."

Many veterans treasure their service because of the pride they felt serving their country, the educational and travel opportunities it provided, or the people they met and friends they made. After 34 years in the military Ralph Jones treasures those things, but when asked about his favorite military memory he talks about the time his service allowed him to tell his wife he loved her in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

If Your Dogs Could Talk ...

by Wendy Desjarlais, Cheyenne VAMC

Dog lovers, veterans, VA staff and volunteers appreciate the beauty and intelligence of the service dogs present at this week's Winter Sports Clinic. Many of these four-legged comrades are repeat visitors to the event. Some of the owners were contacted to comment on their dog's experiences during the week and to interpret what their dogs would say "if they could talk."

Hovi, a three year old black male German Hovawart, is assisting owner George Jones of Mountain Village, Colorado, with the veterans' scuba diving program. Jones said that Hovi, a search and rescue dog, was bred to party. "He loves people and having a good time," said Jones. He adds that Hovi can't really be German "because he doesn't like to drink beer."

Danny Garrison of Albany, New York, can't bend over without the risk of falling down. He said he used to fall down every day until he got Samson, a three year old black male Labrador Field Retriever, seven months ago. Samson, or "Sammy," knows 25 commands and does all of Garrison's picking up and retrieving. Sammy opens doors, picks up nickels, dimes, quarters, pennies and other items from the floor, fetches Garrison's sack lunch or a drink from the refrigerator, and even gives his checkbook to the bank teller. Garrison said that Sammy is enjoying playing in the snow. When asked what Sammy would say if he could talk, Garrison replied with a smile, "Get it yourself!"

Alex, a 2 1/2-year-old male black Labrador belonging to David Wilson of Davie, Florida, is a special canine friend to Sammy. Mrs. Wilson said that the two dogs wrestle and play together in the snow. If Alex could comment on his trip to Snowmass, Mrs. Wilson thinks he might say, "I'm having a ball!"

Jean Van Trump of Lake Park, Florida, said if her Golden Retriever, Jonah, could speak, he would have exclaimed, "Oh boy, snow!" "He has been pulling me like a champion," said Van Trump. "Being from Florida, going up and down the hills here has been extra work." Van Trump added that Jonah loves rolling and playing in the snow.

"Moss" is a 5 1/2 year old yellow Labrador Retriever seeing eye dog belonging to Bob Holt of Salt Lake City. This is Moss's sixth Winter Sports Clinic. Holt indicated that he introduced Moss to Bo Derek this week, and when Bo knelt down to pet him, "Moss kissed her right on the lips." Holt also said he noticed that working dogs interact more respectfully with each other than they do with pet dogs.

If Dudley, a Yellow Labrador seeing eye dog could speak, owner Michael Somsan of Tucson, Arizona, said Dudley would proclaim, "The prime rib is really good!" Somsan said that Dudley has been eating plenty of prime rib this week, according to Samson.

According to Andrew Roca, his dog Jake would say, "I'm having a blast!" Jake, a 3 1/2-year-old Husky/Golden Retriever, also helps Roca, of Converse, Texas, write up their travels for the Texas Hearing and Service Dog Association Newsletter.

Final Thoughts ...

“Skiing teaches those who are in a wheelchair that they can still do things that a walking person does. I encourage all disabled veterans to try it once, because I’m pretty sure they would want to return.”

Steve Martinez, #256, Las Animas, CO

“It felt like a flying dream. There was nothing above or below me but blue sky.”

Roland McCutcheon, Jr., #260, Aurora, CO

“Skiing at the Clinic has made a difference in my life and now I ski every chance I get. Without an event like this, a lot of us would never have learned that we can do some of the things that others take for granted. I encourage all disabled veterans to try it.”

Wayne Miller, #265, Silver Spring, MD

“I am 61 years old and had never been on skis, so I was stressing out at first, but it was fantastic. I can’t wait to get out there and do it again!”

Andrew Roca, #306, Converse, TX

“Being able to ski almost let me forget that I am paralyzed.”

William Knippel, #226, Lee’s Summit, MO

“Just because you have a disability doesn’t mean you can run and hide from it, or that life stops. You get dealt a hand of cards and you can either play them or fold. This helps you play them. Skiing here is awesome!”

Derec Chumley, #139, Bakersfield, CA

“We are proving to ourselves that we can do things we never thought we could do.”

Samuel Work, #67, Lansing, MI

“Skiing is like love -- it only hurts the first time you fall. The more you ski or love, the less you fall.”

Lexiane Dunn, #156, Waite Park, MN

“It was an exciting experience -- about the closest I’ve been to Heaven!”

Raymond Fulton, #175, Memphis, TN

“Skiing is the most independent and rewarding sport I’ve tried since my injury. Once I’m on the mountain, I can get up and down just as well as able-bodied skiers.”

Michael Guilbault, #191, Attleboro, MA

“I like the feeling of skiing down the mountain, especially since I can’t walk up.”

Christopher Jefferson, #212, Roaring River, NC

“Attending the Winter Sports Clinic has allowed me to enjoy the beauty that God has created and the happiness of the other skiers. Skiing is a little different and more difficult now, but the Clinic has taught me that I can adapt to almost anything.”

Frederick Garraway, #177, Killeen, TX