



# Heroic Spirit on the Mountain

by Brett Vess, VA Bronx, N.Y. &  
Pete Dougherty, VA Washington, D.C.

Everyone who participates at the Winter Sports Clinic knows that you don't leave without taking back some spirit from the Mountain. That spirit comes from the veterans who have challenged themselves and enriched all of our lives. Two newcomers to the Clinic are prime examples of this spirit: Jose Rodriguez and Todd Russell.

Rodriguez, a retired Marine Corps veteran from the Bronx, was preparing to ski for the first time Tuesday morning and looked around at the other disabled veterans setting up to ski with their instructors. "I was nervous, but I felt supported because I was surrounded by real-life soldiers, and we are all soldiers undertaking this mission together," he said.

It's been 14 years since Rodriguez injured himself on night training maneuvers at Camp Pendleton, California. Back then, Lance Corporal Rodriguez was driving a truck across a mountain with eight fellow Marines when the road suddenly started to give way. The truck turned over and was about to tumble 700 feet down a cliff. Rodriguez managed to direct everyone out of the vehicle, and saved the life of his best friend by throwing him out of the passenger window to safety just in the nick of time. Rodriguez did not escape, however, and was paralyzed in the fall.

While completing his rehabilitation at the Bronx VA Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Center, Rodriguez was presented with the Navy Achievement Medal, the highest award given by the Navy during peacetime.

When asked about how he feels to be at the Clinic, he said, "I feel like a prize fighter, who just made his weight and is ready for the title fight." Originally denied admission to the Winter Sports Clinic due to the weight restriction, Rodriguez asked his wife to help with a rigorous exercise and diet program so he could meet the requirement. Holding back

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## Challenge Aspen—Ability in Action

By Pete Dougherty  
VA, Washington D.C.

In front of the large signs directing participants to their events, sits the field commander of **Challenge Aspen**, Amanda Boxtel. As Challenge Aspen's executive director, Boxtel explained that the organization began as a nonprofit in 1996. It lives up its motto—"Making Possibilities for People with Disabilities." The genesis began when Boxtel was paralyzed in an accident on the mountains here in 1992. Challenge Aspen co-founder, Houston Cowan, worked with her to turn the Challenge Aspen concept into a reality. This year, the organization is assisting more than 500 people in its winter adaptive ski school. Year-long activities at the school include cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, ice-skating, snowshoeing, whitewater

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## TODAY'S SCHEDULE

*ST=Staging Time*

- 6:45 - 8:45a **Breakfast**
- 8-11:30a **Downhill Skiing (ST= 8:00):** Dream Team 4, Moonshine, Wildcat, Slider
- 9-11:30a **Cross Country Skiing, Snowshoeing (ST=7:45-8:15 at Max Park Room)**  
**Scuba Diving:** Silver Tree Pool/Inn at Aspen  
**Snowmobiling:** T Lazy 7 Ranch
- 9:30-11:30a **Sledge Hockey:** Aspen Ice Rink
- 10-11:30p **Educational Workshop:** "Communication Between Patients & Providers: How to be Part of a Healing Team."
- 10-12 noon **Rock-Climbing:** Conference Center Circle/Inn at Aspen parking lot
- 11:30-1:00p **Lunch**
- 12:30p **Downhill Skiing: (ST=12noon)** Dream Team 3, Rock Island, Granite, Sneaky's
- 1-3:00p **Rock Climbing:** Conference Center Circle/Inn at Aspen parking lot
- 1-3:30p **Cross Country Skiing, Snowshoeing (ST=12:15-12:30p Max Park Room)**
- 1:30-3p **Sledge Hockey:** Aspen Ice Rink
- 2-4:00p **Scuba Diving:** Silver Tree Hotel Pool  
**Snowmobiling:** T Lazy 7 Ranch
- 4-5:30p **Dinner**
- 4:15p **Ski Instructor Mtg:** El Dorado Rm, Silvertree
- 4:30p **Team Leader Mtg:** Stonebridge Inn Council Room
- 5:30-7p **Educational Workshop:** "Learn to Relax! It's Therapeutic!"
- 7-8:30p **Educational Workshop:** "Adventure Therapy"
- 7:-9:00p **Educational Workshop:** "Self Defense for the Visually Impaired" presented by Special Agent Mark Camillo, U.S. Secret Service. Location: Conference Center Ballroom
- 7-9:00p **Wheelchair Basketball Game:** Aspen High School



—“challenge” con’t—

rafting, hiking, cycling, horseback riding, golf, paragliding, fly-fishing, tennis and technical rock climbing.

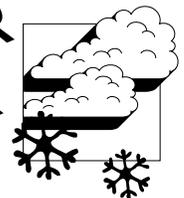
“The Clinic is the largest single event Challenge Aspen has been involved with, and we’re thrilled to be a part of the nation’s premier winter sports event for veterans,” said Boxtel.

Since the Clinic and Challenge Aspen share the same philosophy, it’s been a great partnership. “We’re one big family,” said Boxtel. “Everyone—including friends and family—gets involved. We’re trying to transform lives...and allow that potential to be realized into all parts of an individual’s life.”

When the ski season ends, Challenge Aspen will begin working on a two-week trip down the Grand Canyon and a trip to Antarctica.

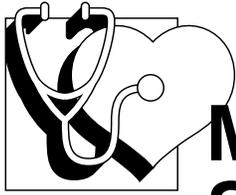
Boxtel hopes that Challenge Aspen, Snowmass, and the Winter Sports Clinic will stay tied together for years to come.

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**WEATHER  
CORNER**



Chance of snow again today. Mostly Cloudy.

**Today's High: 40**  
**Tonight's Low: 20**



# Mountain Medical School 101

Class is in session! Today we're going to go over lesson two, but first I'd just like to make a comment about yesterday's column. When I said you could call me by my first name, last name, or other names, that did not include being called "Dr. Doogie Howser." I may look young, but I'm not *that* young. By the way "Dr. Bombay" is unacceptable as well.

Okay, now back to Mountain Medical School...

## Lesson #2: Sunscreen vs. Sun-scream

Please wear your sunscreen! Snowmass Village is located at over 7,900 feet elevation. This brings low-landers much closer to the sun. What's even worse is that sunlight is reflected off the snow and increases your exposure even more. Pick a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or greater and apply it often. Also, remember to wear sunglasses! If you don't do this, you will flunk out of this class and I'll have to send a note to your parents with your report card.

Stay tuned for Lesson #3 tomorrow...

## —"Heroic" con't—

emotion, he credits his wife, Ana, for his participation. "My wife has shown me love and inspired me to really appreciate my life. She has given me five beautiful children and even motivated me to train and lose weight to prepare for the Clinic."

After his ski debut, Rodriguez described the experience as "unbelievable." His exposure to the Clinic this week has left him with two goals: to share his experience with the veterans at the Bronx SCI Center, and to be back next year with his family.

One can't spend a minute with Todd Russell, a thirty-one year old Navy veteran

without recognizing him as one of the great spirits of this Clinic. Russell, a first-time participant at the event, describes his experience as "joyfully overwhelming." He credits his friends and family in getting him here and thanks all the volunteers and organizers for making this the best experience he has had in the past nine years.

Russell also finds the friendships he is making to be inspiring. "If I had never been a quad, I might never have known how the atmosphere and friendships are making my life better," he said. The opportunity to meet with veterans from across the country is inspiring Russell to

## Odds & Ends

- The hockey game between the "Mother Puckers" and Team WSC is still on schedule for 1:00 p.m., **however no transportation will be provided due to other demands on our vehicles.** You must make your own transportation arrangements.

- Lift tickets are still on sale for \$25 at the Host Room. Cash or checks only.

- Found: 1 pair sunglasses; 4 goggles; and a ton of gloves. Reclaim in Host Room.

do more traveling in the future. "This week, I recognized that there are a number of places a person like me, who needs spinal cord injury services, can travel." After talking with some of the veterans here, he is thinking of visiting southern California, knowing VA has an SCI clinic there to provide services to him while visiting the area.

The former Navy Corpsman says with all sincerity, "I'll be back as long as the Winter Sports Clinic exists."

"I've never felt this good," Russell added. "I feel

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## Gossip Goodies

# Tattle-Trails



by Spilzie Beans

If anyone says the Winter Sport Clinic doesn't have an impact on the general public, they haven't been to Snowmass. Just yesterday, when one of our Vietnam veteran participants was getting ready to ski, a group of young school kids skied by. One of the kids looked over at him, came over and said, "Thank you for being in the war." There are no more words I can say that can beat that.

Participant George Fischer has a similar story. While getting out of his gear on the slope, he overheard two teenagers behind him talking. One said, "Hey, I saw a blind man skiing today!" The other answered, "Yeah, and I saw a man with no legs skiing. It was so neat!" You are educating the world, veterans.

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### —"Heroic" con't—

free for the first time in nine years."

At home in Texas, Russell does some substitute teaching. He says he can't wait to share his experiences at the Clinic with the kids. He is particularly pleased that his presence in the school, given the severity of his injury, inspires students—especially those who face their own challenges.

Rodriguez and Russell are our kind of heroes!

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## Eats

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### Menu for Today

**Lunch (11:30a.m. - 1:00p.m.):** Hamburgers, hot dogs & brats; black bean or veggie burgers; sauerkraut potato salad; grilled veggies; chips; assorted sodas and water.

**Dinner (4:00p.m. - 5:30p.m.):** Tossed salad with assorted dressings; zucchini, yellow squash & red onions with green goddess dressing; diced fresh fruit with grenadine orange grapefruit sections; Cajun catfish; chicken breast with supreme sauce; baked cheese-filled manicotti; hot veggie; rolls & butter; coffee, teas and iced tea

**Breakfast for tomorrow (6:45a.m. - 8:45a.m.):** Sliced fresh fruit; assorted dry cereals; oatmeal with raisins, brown sugar, bananas; grilled hash brown potatoes; biscuits & apple butter; bacon & sausage; coffee, tea & chilled juices.

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## Zany Zodiac

**Aries** —Okay...no more teasing about your age. Now let's discuss your tacky ski wear.

**Taurus** —You passed scuba but you failed the "weed-a-rita" test. Go back to the climbing wall.

**Gemini** —You talk too much. Better zip it and ski today. No, not that zipper!

**Cancer** —We told you to have fun yesterday, but dancing on the tables at the Talent Show may have crossed the line. Lay low today.

**Leo**—Stop roaring Leo. You rule and you know it. Chill.

**Virgo**—You sure are picky. So the surprise wasn't under the bed after all. Did you check between the sheets???

**Libra**—You hate to be alone, but unless you find mouthwash—and soon—you will be. Deodorant wouldn't hurt either.

**Scorpio** —You're always curious. Just what were you looking for in the Silvertree Hotel trash bin anyway?

**Sagittarius** —You want the truth, don't you.? Well, YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH! Wear rose-colored glasses for the rest of the day.

**Capricorn** —You'll be famous by Friday...but *not* for your singing talents.

**Aquarius** —How many Aquarians does it take to change a light bulb? We lost count.

**Pisces**—You're focused on an inner journey—to your stomach apparently. Just how much weight have you gained this week?

