

Disabled Veteran of the Year

Jumping out of a perfectly good airplane doesn't make good sense to most people. For Sgt. 1st Class Dana Bowman, a member of the U.S. Army's Parachute Team, the Golden Knights, it's just another day at the office. Well . . . almost. Sgt. Bowman, the DAV's Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year, lost both legs in a tragic skydiving accident in 1994.

Sgt. Bowman, a life member of the DAV's National Amputation Chapter, joined the Army in 1981. Since his initial enlistment, he has completed some of the Army's most rigorous and demanding training, including the Special Forces Qualification Course and Ranger School.

Sgt. Bowman joined the prestigious ranks of the Golden Knights in 1993. He gained world-wide attention when he and another member of the team collided in midair during the team's annual training in Yuma, Ariz., on February 6, 1994.

The two experienced sky divers were practicing a maneuver known as the "diamond track." The free fall maneuver called for Sgt. Bowman and teammate Sgt. Jose Aguillon to jump simultaneously at 12,500 feet and "streak" up to one mile apart before turning 180 degrees and flying back toward one another, crisscrossing in the sky. Sgt. Bowman and Sgt. Aguillon had performed this particular maneuver more than 50 times.

The two best friends jumped from the plane and began fading away from each other. Then Sgt. Bowman made a pinpoint turn, pulled his arms tightly to his sides, cupped his palms and pointed his toes — his body position resembling that of a ski-jumper — and hurled toward Sgt. Aguillon at approximately 150 mph. They would cross at an altitude between 4,000 and 3,500 feet before opening their parachutes.

Sgt. Bowman streaked toward the cross point, expecting Sgt. Aguillon to pass at least 20 feet above. In an instant, something went terribly wrong. Instead of breezing past, the two men slammed into each other at a combined speed of 300 mph. Sgt. Aguillon died instantly. Sgt. Bowman's legs were severed from his body, one above the knee and one below. His parachute opened when he collided with Sgt. Aguillon, and he landed face down in a parking lot. A helicopter sped him to a hospital in Phoenix, where doctors closed his leg wounds and stopped his internal bleeding.

Eight days later, against his doctor's advice, Sgt. Bowman attended Sgt. Aguillon's funeral. After two months, he ordered reluctant doctors to remove two inches of his leg that had become infected, so he could be fitted with prosthetic limbs and begin his miraculous recovery.

Nine months later in November, Sgt. Bowman turned tragedy into triumph when he became the first double amputee to reenlist in the U.S. Army. He skydived into the reenlistment ceremony making his dream a reality.

"My accident made me a stronger individual. If you refuse to quit, you can do anything. Life's about perseverance," Sgt. Bowman said.

Throughout his ordeal, Sgt. Bowman refused to dwell on the misfortunes life had dealt him. "I had to deal with losing my legs, losing my best friend, and losing my wife who left me after the accident," he explained. Instead, Sgt. Bowman chose to focus on his rehabilitation and his goals. "There is a reason for me to be like I am now. I think it's to help other people."

Sgt. Bowman thrives on the opportunity to inspire and encourage others with disabilities to live active and productive lives. He has often spent his own time and money traveling to visit others with disabilities. "I get a lot of satisfaction out of helping others," he said. "Many will discover, as I have, that just being active and productive will improve your health, relationships, and quality of life."

Sgt. Bowman was among the more than 200 permanently injured veterans who attended the 1995 National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Crested Butte, Colo., in late March for six days of skiing, snowmobiling, and other indoor activities, including wheelchair basketball, scuba diving, and horseback riding.

The Winter Sports Clinic is an annual event sponsored by the DAV and the VA, with financial assistance from both private and corporate donors. Participation is open to male and female military service veterans with spinal cord

injuries, orthopedic amputations, visual impairments, certain neurological problems, and other disabilities.

The opportunity to ski for the first time was a big attraction for Sgt. Bowman. "It's given me a whole new can-do feeling. I've never seen one place where there is so much dedication and caring," he said.

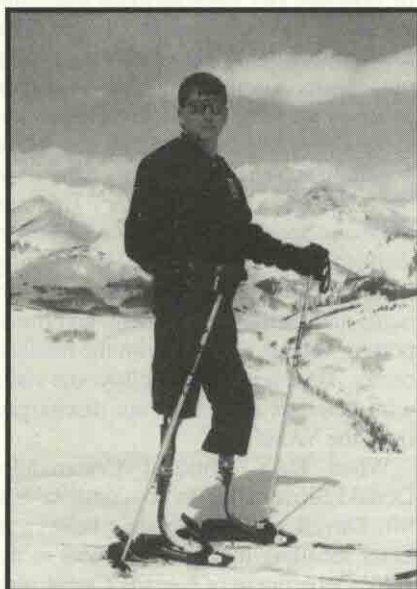
In typical fashion, Sgt. Bowman attacked the mountain and demonstrated the perseverance and grit of a true survivor. Cruising down Ruby Chief, a fast, rolling hill, was a "sensational experience" for Sgt. Bowman. "I crashed and burned a few times, but I figure if you ain't falling down, you ain't trying hard enough," he said.

It's hard not to be inspired by the determination and dedication of Sgt. Bowman. Yet he insists it's others that really inspire him. "Everybody has a story to tell and everybody is different. I really like to share other people's stories — it helps me," he said.

Based at Fort Bragg, N.C., Sgt. Bowman currently serves as assistant director of media relations for the Golden Knights. His duties include supervision, coordination, and preparation of all publicity and public information for the team.

The Golden Knights make parachuting look easy. Their amaz-

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Sgt. Dana Bowman



Time Out for Recognition . . .

Taking time for a brief presentation . . . during the frantic pace of DAV Mid-Winter meetings are DAV 14th District National Committeeman/Finance Committee Member Michael Dobmeier (left) and National Service Officer Gregory A. Seurer (right). The two met with Senator Kent Conrad (R) North Dakota, center, to present an Appreciation Plaque in recognition of his outstanding support of veterans programs and services.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS BALANCE SHEET (Unaudited)

ASSETS	March 31	
	1995	1994
UNRESTRICTED OPERATING AND DESIGNATED FUNDS:		
Current Assets	\$ 16,722,707	\$ 9,191,078
Investments	58,190,935	46,056,201
Total Unrestricted Operating and Designated Funds	\$ 74,913,642	\$ 55,247,279
FIXED ASSETS FUND:		
Land, buildings and equipment (less depreciation)	\$ 8,946,314	\$ 7,774,502
Total Fixed Assets Fund	\$ 8,946,314	\$ 7,774,502
RESTRICTED LIFE MEMBERSHIP FUND:		
Current Assets	\$ 2,522,127	\$ 1,640,003
Investments	72,759,084	80,388,508
Total Restricted Life Membership Fund	\$ 75,281,211	\$ 82,028,511
LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES		
UNRESTRICTED OPERATING AND DESIGNATED FUNDS:		
Current Liabilities	\$ 26,737,466	\$ 22,670,517
Operating and Designated Funds:		
Undesignated Operating Fund available for General Activities	47,437,608	32,045,561
Funds Designated by National Finance Committee for:		
Scholarships	506,402	252,262
Disaster Relief	232,166	278,939
Total Fund Balances	48,176,176	32,576,762
Total Unrestricted Operating and Designated Funds	\$ 74,913,642	\$ 55,247,279
FIXED ASSETS FUND — Fund Balance		
Total Fixed Assets Fund	\$ 8,946,314	\$ 7,774,502
RESTRICTED LIFE MEMBERSHIP FUND:		
Liabilities	\$ 87,017	\$ 98,552
Reserve for Future Distribution of Membership Dues	75,194,194	81,929,959
Total Restricted Life Membership Fund	\$ 75,281,211	\$ 82,028,511

Sweepstakes Winners

(Continued from page 4)

ably the luckiest of the prize winners. No, he didn't win the Grand Prize. He wasn't even among the first 104 winners drawn. Mr. Mesa's name was drawn after another DAV generous member said he didn't need the money and asked to have his prize awarded to someone else. Mr. Mesa was that lucky someone.

"I was a little surprised to win," he said. "I didn't expect to win anything. I contribute to support the DAV. I plan to put my prize money in the bank and save it for when I need it—I'll probably use some for the next sweepstakes."

Another \$1,000 winner gratefully acknowledged his win with a \$100 contribution to the DAV. And among the stack of thank yous that poured into National Headquarters from sweepstakes winners, Robert Walsh of Vermont wrote: "I was amazed to be one of the sweepstakes winners. You can be assured the money will be put to good use. In fact, my wife and I have already figured out enough ways to spend it that we may have to enter some more sweepstakes just to keep up with the many ideas. Again, many thanks."

Mr. Walsh isn't the only one thinking about future sweepstakes. Lots of members have already called and wrote to ask when another sweepstakes is planned.

"You and your wife keep coming up with the ideas, Mr. Walsh," National Adjutant Wilson said. "The sweepstakes were so successful and popular that everyone will get a chance at another sweepstakes next year. Good luck!"



Here Is a Listing of \$1,000 DAV Sweepstakes Winners!

Lawrence J. Alther FL, Frank Archer, Jr. GA, John E. Backman CA, Ray Barnes PA, Charles E. Berman AR, Paul R. Betker MD, James M. Blaylock TN, John J. Boyle MA, John J. Brose PA, Curtis K. Brown CO, Raymond E. Brown ND, Vladimir H. Bucek MN, Jimmie H. Busby TX, Rosendo Casados CO, Edward C. Cashman MA, Joseph B. Chiappetta PA, Cecil C. Colvin VT, Harvey Cummings GA, John C. Cutrell SC, Raymond E. Dale RI, Charles N. Daniels FL, Arthur H. De Coste MA, George W. Detritch OH, L. R. Dominiczak WI, Ray P. Dominique MD, Ralph C. Eme PA, Leland S. Everett TX, Jim F. Everette, Sr. IN, Vernon H. Fledderman ND, Aime C. Fountaine, VA, L. H. Frederick, Jr. OH, Harris G. Frisque WI, Julio C. Galvan TX, David J. Ghrist MI, Luis A. Gonzalez MA, Wayne E. Gors SD, Leonard Graham OR, John J. Hardesty OK, Arthur L. Hines AZ, Duke Holland GA, George E. Hollodick NC, Bruce Holloway MD, Henry C. Hurtle FL, Edmind B. Kesicki TN, Raymond A. Kjonas MN, Herman Klinge WA, William K. Kohlmeier CA, Robert C. Kralle PA, Walter J. Langa MI, William W. Lewis MT, Kenneth W. Lyon NY, Joseph Madonia MI, Carl Malakahanian MI, Alan S. Margolias NJ, William M. Marino OR, Gurman V. Marney OR, John H. Mattson MI, Harvey L. Maxam WI, Charles G. Mayer TX, Ray E. McVey KS, Joseph C. Mesa PA, James O. Miller OK, Charles R. Mills CA, Ciro Miriocca FL, John E. Morin CT, Manuel G. Negrete MI, Henry L. Oden NY, Willard D. Packman OH, Jack E. Patterson, Jr. VA, Terry L. Pearson WY, Angelo W. Peccini MA, Robert L. Petersen NY, Charles E. Powell TX, John J. Rice MD, Melvin P. Roeger MN, Steven Rowland MI, Rey Saliva GU, Charles F. Sanfore PA, Walter L. Savage CA, John H. Schwab NJ, Robert H. Settle MI, Carl H. Sever CO, Daniel Shaughnessy MA, Daniel M. Sheehan NY, Andrew J. Skapinac PA, Nathan Sloan FL, Franklin W. Smith, Jr. MD, William C. Smith KY, James M. Sparks CA, Floyd P. Stephens MN, E. C. Stephenson FL, James R. Taylor GA, Tommie L. Thomas CA, E. R. Trimmer IL, James J. Tvorak NH, Robert L. Walsh VT, James E. Wendt MN, James J. Whalen NJ, Vernon M. Wing MI, Robert L. Zai, Sr. KY.