



## **CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING AND SPECIAL OLYMPICS**



**BILLY THE KID, TALKING TO TWO SPECIAL OLYMPIANS**

# THE 1977 WINTER SPECIAL OLYMPICS

## "LOOK AT ME I DID IT"



BY: TANNA ECK AND SHARON KELLEY

President John F. Kennedy once said, "A nation's greatness can be measured by how they treat their weakest members."

In February of 1977 the people of Steamboat Springs showed their greatness by opening their homes and hearts to over 500 mentally retarded people who had come to participate in the games and events of the Special Olympics.

The Special Olympics was created by Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation in 1968. There had been only summer Special Olympics until Ted James, director of Horizons for the Handicapped, made a trip to Minnesota and got the idea to have winter games for the retarded. The Steamboat Springs Rotary Club picked up the idea and put Mr. Mike Barry in charge of it. After much preparation and work, Mike Barry made a trip to Washington, D.C., and gave a presentation to the Kennedys. The result of this presentation was : The 1977 Steamboat Springs Winter Special Olympics.

In the Special Olympics, the contestants are not there to win. Their beauty, wealth, age, size, speed or brightness doesn't matter. What matters is courage and steadfastness. The Special Olympians aren't rewarded for the number of medals they finish in, but for trying and having the courage to stay in the race.

The mentally retarded have always been told, "You can't do it." But the Special Olympic program encourages the handicapped and tells them they can. All they need is a chance. The Special Olympics was formed in hopes that the Special Olympians would learn self confidence, courage, and get a chance to participate in things they have always had to watch and never been able to do.

There are many misconceptions about the mentally retarded. Many think of the mentally retarded as crazy, scary, strange, or mean. There is a big difference between the mentally ill and the mentally retarded. At the Olympic games and training sessions the mentally retarded weren't mean or scary, but more affectionate than most.

The Olympians never forgot once someone talked to them. They might have forgotten the name, but they never forgot the person. They always had time to talk and were never too busy to give one of their heart warming smiles or friendly waves.

Many of the contestants that were here had never skied or ice skated before, but by the end of their intensive two day training period, most were skiing and skating a lot better than the average beginner.

THE CLOWNS KEPT EVERYONE LAUGHING.



Most of the contestants flew into Denver and were brought to Steamboat by bus. Registration was in the basement of the gondola building and there was a lot of excitement and confusion caused by the energy, but volunteers soon had things under control and registration was underway. There were townspeople that opened their homes and hearts to the contestants, as well as high school and young volunteers that helped with training.

MANY PEOPLE ENTERTAINED THE OLYMPIANS.



EVEN THE CLOWNS ENJOYED IT!

The host families picked up the kids that would be staying with them and met their sponsor and chaperones. After registration was over the contestants went with the host families to get to know them better and work out the week's schedule.

The training was strenuous and the contestants were usually ready for bed by the time they got home. Being at the gondola building at 7:30 a.m. and usually not retiring until 10 or 11 p.m. made for a long day.

There were many activities to take up the Olympians' time. Luncheons were held in their honor; picnics occurred on snow banks; dinners in the evenings were common, plus a music concert and a final victory dance.

Well known performers were present to demonstrate their expertise in such events as nordic jumping, freestyle skiing, cutter racing, ski joring and ice skating for the Olympians.



EVERYONE MET THE HOT DOG.

After two hard days of training on Friday and Saturday came the opening ceremonies. Every state in the union and thirteen foreign countries were invited, but as it turned out there were contestants from 35 states and Canada.

The opening ceremonies were quite impressive with the Steamboat Springs High School band playing the Olympic March. The Olympic flag was raised as the contestants filed in, carrying their state banners. The crowd of thousands cheered as the special ones came, with extra applause for these from the audience's home states.



AN OLYMPIAN WATCHING THE EVENTS.

Eunice Kennedy Shriver gave the opening speech along with Colorado Governor Richard Lamm and Mike Barry. As the contestants said the Olympic oath, "Let me win, but if I can not win, let me be brave in the attempt!" You knew they were there to try their hardest. They had their hearts and souls dedicated to conquering a sport that many had never tried.

Tears welled up and spines tingled as Mrs. Shriver's voice rang out over the crowd.

"One hundred years ago, these beautiful mountains stood cold and untouched above this town. Nobody dreamed that within a few years, thousands of skiers would cover these slopes, filling Steamboat Springs with excitement, color and fun. In the same way, few of you Special Olympians ever dreamed that you would be here today, to ski these slopes, to skate these rinks and to show the world your ability, your courage, your determination and your character.



MS. SHRIVER CONGRATULATING AN OLYMPIAN.

"This is, indeed, a week of giving. The families of Steamboat Springs are giving you a home and kindness. Your instructors are giving you the finest skiing and skating instruction in the world. But You Olympians are giving something back to them and to the millions who have watched on TV. This week, you are giving them the news that it is not the strongest body nor the most dazzling mind that counts; it is the human spirit which is as great as any mountain. You are giving them reassurance that although there is in this world much loneliness and suffering, there is also the surprise and wonder of possibility--the reaching out of one person to another and the marvelous unfolding of hope.

I salute you all in admiration, and welcome you with joy!"



THE CLOWNS WERE EVEN SERIOUS FROM TIME TO TIME.

Members of the Steamboat Ski School and the National Ski Patrol presented a torch light parade skiing down Headwall in a crisscross pattern. Special Olympian, Brenda, set the Olympic torch aflame after which the sky was brilliantly lit with a fantastic display of fireworks that continued almost an hour.



preparation preceded the training sessions, as well as community meetings headed by Bill Gardner, to help organize registration, housing, transportation, food, and activities for the Olympians.



The All American Fireworks Inc. headed by Jerry Wald came from Kansas City to insure the best possible presentation of these fireworks.

The Medicine Springs Skunk Skinner and Beaver Trappers Association closed the ceremonies by firing musket loaders and cannons in salute to the Olympians.

The Olympians chose the event that they wanted to participate in; Cross-Country skiing with Sven Wiik at the head of training, downhill skiing with Ronnie Connelly heading that department, or ice skating headed by Vernon Graham. These professional trainers first taught many volunteers how to instruct the Olympians in one of the three events. Months of

"LONDON BRIDGE IS FALLING DOWN..."

The town of Steamboat Springs actually hosted the week of events, but many celebrities were here including Bruce Jenner, Billy Kidd, Hank Kashiwa, Michael Cole, Dick Sargent, Lyle Alsado, and June Lockhart. All these people plus colorful clowns added to the excitement of the festivities, but they weren't the stars of the show by any means. Only the Olympians themselves could be classified as stars. The Olympians were the special ones. They could touch hearts with just a smile. The host families that the Olympians stayed with, all experienced a new kind of joy, with love and affection constantly being exchanged.



"WATCH HOW I DO THIS"





Medals were given by the International Special Olympic committee and were being constantly awarded as the national Olympic music played in the background and contestants stood on multi-leveled platforms to receive gold, silver or bronze medals on red, white and blue ribbons for their accomplishments. Not all Olympians received medals for winning, but most received them for being in the games. All ages of competitors showed their skill and were awarded -- whether they were 72 like Millard, or 7 years old like little Bruce.



#### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3

**DOWNHILL TRAINING—OLYMPIC RANCH—MT. WERNER**  
 A's and B's 9:30 am-11:00 am and 12:30-1:30 pm  
 C I's 10:00 am-11:00 am and 1:30 pm-2:30 pm  
 CII's 11:00 am-12 noon and 2:30 pm-3:30 pm

**CROSS COUNTRY TRAINING—SCANDANAVIAN LODGE**  
 A's 9:30 am-10:30 am and 12:30 pm-1:30 pm  
 B's 10:30 am-11:30 am and 1:30 pm-2:30 pm  
 C's 11:30 am-12:30 pm and 2:30 pm-3:30 pm

**SKATING TRAINING—HOWELSEN HILL SKATING RINK**  
 A's 9:30 am-10:30 am and 12:30 pm-1:30 pm  
 B's 10:30am-11:30 am and 1:30 pm-2:30 pm  
 C's 11:30 am-12:30 pm and 2:30 pm-3:30 pm

**DEMONSTRATIONS—HOWELSEN HILL**  
**NORDIC JUMPING, FREESTYLE SKIING**  
 9:30am-10:30am and 2:00pm-4:00pm

#### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4

**DOWNHILL TRAINING—OLYMPIC RANCH—MT. WERNER**  
 A's and B's 9:30 am 10:30 am and 12:30 pm-1:30 pm  
 C I's 10:00 am-11:00 am and 1:30 pm-2:30 pm  
 C II's 11:00 am 12 noon and 2:30 pm-3:30 pm

**CROSS COUNTRY TRAINING—SCANDANAVIAN LODGE**  
 A's 9:30 am-10:30 am and 12:30 pm-1:30 pm  
 B's 10:30 am-11:30 am and 1:30 pm-2:30 pm  
 C's 11:30 am-12:30 pm and 2:30 pm-3:30 pm

**SKATING TRAINING—HOWELSEN HILL ICE RINK**  
 A's 9:30 am 10:30 am and 12:30 pm-1:30 pm  
 B's 10:30 am-11:30 am and 1:30 pm-2:30 pm  
 C's 11:30 am-12:30 pm and 2:30 pm-3:30 pm

**DEMONSTRATIONS—HOWELSEN HILL**  
**CUTTER RACING, SKIJORING, ICE SKATING**  
 9:30 am 10:30 am and 2:00pm-4:00 pm

**CONCERT—STEAMBOAT SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM**  
 All participants and chaperones 7:00 pm-9:00 pm

#### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5

**DOWNHILL TRAINING—OLYMPIC RANCH—MT. WERNER**  
 A's, B's, C I's,  
 and C II's 9:00 am 12 noon

**CROSS COUNTRY TRAINING—HOWELSEN HILL**  
 A's, B's, & C I's,  
 and C II's 8:30 am 10:30 am

**ICE SKATING TRAINING—HOWELSEN HILL ICE RINK**  
 A's, B's, & C's 9:00 am-11:00 am

**DOWNHILL RACE—HEADWALL—MT. WERNER**  
 A's and B'S 1:30 pm

**CELEBRITY/AMATEUR SLALOM—HEADWALL—MT. WERNER**  
 2:30 pm-3:30 pm

**V. I. P. BROOMBALL GAME—MT. WERNER ICE RINK**  
 2:30 pm-3:30 pm

**OPENING CEREMONIES—PLAZA—MT. WERNER**  
 6:30 pm-7:30 pm

**PARADE OF THE ATHLETES**  
**INTRODUCTION OF VIP ATHLETES**  
**INVOCATION BY BISHOP FRY, EPISCOPAL BISHOP OF THE COLORADO**  
**DIOCESE**  
**RAISING OF THE FLAGS AND NATIONAL ANTHEMS, PLAYED BY THE**  
**STEAMBOAT SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL MARCHING BAND**  
**WELCOME BY MIKE BARRY, STEAMBOAT SPRINGS SPECIAL OLYMPICS**  
**DIRECTOR**  
**WELCOME BY EUNICE KENNEDY SHRIVER**  
**RAISING OF OLYMPIC FLAG**  
**OLYMPIC OATH RECITED BY BILLY KIDD**  
**TORCH PARADE—LIGHTING OF OLYMPIC FLAME**  
**GAMES DECLARED OPEN BY GOVERNOR LAMM**  
**FIREWORKS AND MUZZLELOADERS CANNON SALUTE**

#### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6

**SKATING COMPETITION—HOWELSEN HILL ICE RINK**  
 A's, B's and C's 9:00 am

**SLALOM RACES—HEADWALL—MT. WERNER**  
 A's and B's 9:30 am

**CROSS COUNTRY & SNOWSHOE COMPETITION—HOWELSEN HILL**  
 A.s, B's, and C.s 9:00 am

**SLALOM RACES—TORIAN BEGINNER AREA—MT. WERNER**  
 C I's and C II's 10:30 am

**RELAY RACES—TENNIS COURTS—MT. WERNER**  
 All participants 1:30 pm

**CLOSING CEREMONIES—PLAZA—MT. WERNER**  
 3:30 pm-4:00 pm

**VICTORY DANCE—STEAMBOAT SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL GYM**  
 All participants and  
 chaperones 7:00 pm-10:00 pm

To name all the volunteers who worked so hard for this occasion would be impossible, but many must be mentioned. Ted James, director for Horizons for the Handicapped, Stella Jones, Colorado State Coordinator for the Special Olympics, the staff of Horizons for the Handicapped and the Steamboat Springs Child Study Center all worked strenuously to make the winter games occur. Many businesses, clubs, and organizations contributed equal shares in finances and products distributed to Olympians. Bonne Bell furnished chap sticks for each, which they proudly wore around their necks; Head Skis provided racing bibs; Kentucky Fried Chicken contributed countless chickens and employees to serve the contestants; Norm's TV donated walkie-talkies and communication devices and video tape equipment so the Olympians could see themselves; local ski shops furnished equipment for the Olympians to ski and skate with; and LTV magnanimously opened their premises for dining, conferences, press and communication centers for such a large happening.

#### THE CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TRACK.



Events were challenging and varied. Contestants could participate in the pole toss, speed skating, one or two turn downhill, cross country racing in a single track or the decathlon. Many Olympians succeeded and were met at the finish line by "huggers" and well wishers. Often times national press officials were standing close by to take pictures for television, newspapers and magazines. Each Olympian had an expression worth capturing on film or in one's heart.



INSTRUCTOR ON DOWNHILL COURSE FOR THE OLYMPIC GAMES.

The ending of the games brought the closing ceremonies. The Olympians once again marched in carrying their state banners and formed the five olympic circles and sang, "This land is your land, This land is my land."

Mrs. Kennedy along with Mike Barry gave the closing speeches commenting on the fact that these olympians proved to the world that they "could do it!"

As the host families hugged their guests good-bye many seemed filled with a tender feeling knowing that the experiences they had shared would be unforgettable ones.



16 "WOW THIS IS EASIER THAN I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE"



"THANKS STEAMBOAT, WE ENJOYED IT"

The winter of 1976-77 was a tough one in Steamboat Springs Ski area with the lack of snow and regular tourist trade. The Special Winter Olympics gave this small town new incentive and understanding of their fellow man and brought this community closer together than has been evident for many years. The reward for residents was to see an Olympian cross the finish line holding both arms in the air, screaming, "Look at me! I won!" -- or even -- "Look at me! I made it!"

Many people contributed to this story especially:

Mike Barry - Games Director

Ted Bentley - Housing Coordinator

Stella Jones - Colorado State Coordinator of Special Olympics

Duncan Craighead & Caroleen Lewis - Typing

Andrea Roman - Supporting suggestions

Debbie Stout - Darkroom



SHARON KELLEY, TAKING A FEW PHOTOS