



Newsday Photo by G. Argeropoulos

Ken Kunken, eight years after the injury that made him a quadriplegic

Eight years later, he won't quit

In just a fraction of a second eight years ago, **Ken Kunken** of Oceanside went from being a star athlete to a quadriplegic who needs an attendant to help him bathe, eat and dress.

Kunken, who had lettered in football and wrestling at Oceanside High School, was paralyzed when he broke his neck making a tackle on a kickoff return in a Cornell-Columbia football game. Except for slight movement that has returned to his left arm, Kunken's physical condition has remained the same since that football game.

But aided by \$38,000 raised by residents of Oceanside, \$40,000 by Cornellians, the support of his friends and relatives and teachers, and personal fortitude, 28-year-old Kunken has earned three academic degrees, is working as a counselor and has applied for admission to Hofstra University law school.

"I said to myself you can either lie back and give up, or you can try to do the most you can with what you've got," Kunken said yesterday at the Human Resources Center in Albertson, where he works helping handicapped people with college education get jobs. "It really wasn't a choice for me. I could still use my mind."

Aided by a full-time attendant to care for his physical needs, Kunken earned a bachelor's degree in engineering at Cornell in 1973, a mas-

ter's degree in psychological counseling and rehabilitation at Columbia in 1976, and a master's degree in counseling and personnel administration in 1977.

"I don't want anybody to think it's been great," he said. "At times it's been overwhelming."

But he persevered, painfully learning to type by moving with his left arm a rod-like device attached to his immobile left hand. Similar devices help him make phone calls and eat and move his electrically operated wheelchair.

"He's an outstanding person who truly pulled himself together when even doctors had no hope for him," said **Helen Sullivan**, who was one of the heads of the Oceanside committee that ran door-to-door drives and other fund-raising events to raise money to help pay for Kunken's bills.

Kunken sees a law degree as the natural next step in his dual goals of using his mind to its best advantage and helping handicapped people get jobs.

While laws have been written forbidding discrimination against the qualified handicapped, Kunken says there is a need to enforce them vigorously.

"It can be tough for the handicapped," he said. "Some people don't realize the abilities they have."
—Robert E. Kessler