



# BREAKING NEWS

*Long Beach, California*

SPECIAL EDITION

Wednesday, July 9, 2003

## 2003 Spirit of the Games Award Winner

# Wayne Miller is Always There for His Fellow Athletes



*Wayne Miller shows his patriotic spirit at yesterday's field events.*

**By Stephen Gaither**  
**Columbia, Mo., VA Medical Center**

Participants and spectators at the 23<sup>rd</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Long Beach easily identified Wayne Miller's leadership, drive and competitive spirit this week. As the 2003 Spirit of the Games Award winner, Miller personifies the best qualities of a

wheelchair athlete.

"Wayne Miller is a great competitor at every event. He is an outstanding team player, always cheering on his teammates and offering encouragement," said fellow participant James Milliken, of South Bend, Ind. "He helps the newer athletes with advice and tips. Wayne's spirit and enthusiasm is always there."

Miller, a combat-wounded Marine Corps veteran of Vietnam from Silver Spring, Md., is an amputee (left leg above the knee) who has competed in these Games nearly every year since 1995. A frequent medal winner, he competed this year in softball, basketball, swimming, discus and shot-put, winning two silver and one bronze medal in those events as of noon today.

"The Games give me the opportunity to meet my mentors and become one myself," said Miller. "It gives me strength and perseverance in life knowing others like me can have self-respect for our abilities. At the Games, we do not have to worry about impressing everyone else."

Born Aug. 17, 1950 in Washington, D.C., he grew up in the D.C. area and graduated high school in Maryland. His father, a 100 percent

combat-injured WWII veteran, did not object when Wayne enlisted in the Marines at age 17. Miller turned 18 while in boot camp and by his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday was in a military hospital. A self-described "0311 grunt," he was severely wounded on July 4, 1969, in the Quang Nam Province while serving in K Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division. After stays in military hospitals in Vietnam, Japan and Philadelphia, Miller was discharged in January 1970. He currently receives his medical care at the VA Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

A supervisory social worker at the VA Vet Center in Silver Spring, Md., Miller has logged 15 years of employment with VA. He serves as a team leader and counsels returning war veterans. The vet center counseling program assists veterans with PTSD, substance abuse, marital, family and employment issues. Miller earned his master's degree in social work from Catholic University and also holds a master's degree in special education from George Washington University. In addition to job-related community outreach activities, Miller spends considerable time teaching school children about Vietnam and persons with disabilities.

A talented singer (he won a gold medal in the 2000 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Prescott, Ariz.), Miller often performs in area nursing homes and other venues. He is especially proud of his rendition of

*(continued on page 2)*

# Hosting and Competing: A Winning Combination

Athletes come to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games for any number of reasons. Many arrived at the Games this past Saturday looking for competition and camaraderie.

Ramon Reevey has found those and more. In addition to competing in his own events, he is also responsible for supervising the entire Games as director of the VA Long Beach Healthcare System. This is the first time a VA director has ever competed in the Games.

"I've always wanted to compete, but the opportunity always seemed to be wrong," said Reevey. "There were health reasons, work reasons."



*VA Long Beach Healthcare System Director and competitor Ramon Reevey captured the bronze in 9-ball.*

Reevey began his involvement with VA as a patient at the Long Beach VA following a car accident in 1968. He returned to school shortly afterward and received degrees in hospital administration from both Cal State and UCLA. After working in VA facilities from Newington, Conn., to Las Vegas, Reevey returned to his roots in Long Beach.

"Long Beach has always been special to me," Reevey said. "When the opportunity came to come up to Long Beach, I had to take it."

When given the opportunity to host the Wheelchair Games, Reevey jumped at the chance. "Putting on the Games has been a hell of an experience," he said.

Participating in the Games has enabled him to be closer to the athletes. "The fact that I'm the director doesn't mean a thing," Reevey said. "I'm out there to compete, they're out there to compete. That's what I've enjoyed most. As a host, you're so consumed with all the things you have to do."

On Monday, Reevey won a bronze medal in 9-ball. VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi presented him the award. He also competed in the air guns event.

"It's been fun," Reevey said. "Competing gives me another point of gratification. I really enjoy the camaraderie with the veterans."

A long-time competitor in the Games is Reevey's co-host, Ron Amador, vice-president of the national Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) and the president of the California Chapter of PVA.

"The Games make you aware that you can overcome

obstacles," Amador said. "Only by trying can one learn what he or she can do. The most important lesson is learning to get up after being knocked down."

Wheelchair athletics are old hat to Amador. Just two years after being injured in a car accident at Travis Air Force Base in 1972, he began competing in intramural wheelchair sports.

Amador has been a frequent competitor in the Wheelchair Games since the event began in 1981. Over the years, he has won numerous gold and silver medals, and continues to compete regularly in track (100-1,500 meters), the 5K road race and weightlifting events.

"Competing in wheelchair sports improves self-worth, builds self-esteem, and encourages individuals to try things they didn't think they could do," Amador said. "We wanted people come out to enjoy the Games. The public needs to remember what veterans have done for our country."

*-Amalea Smirniotopoulos*

## Miller (cont.)

"God Bless the USA," where he stands one-legged and salutes during the appropriate stanza. He sang the national anthem at this year's Sponsor Dinner and is also scheduled to sing at the opening ceremonies of the National Veterans Golden Age Games in Bangor, Maine, next month.

When asked how he describes the Games to a newly injured veteran, Miller said, "There are 500 people just like you who go someplace different each year to compete against each other. They show their fellow veterans that world class athletes and first-time participants alike are in this together."

He acknowledges that several individuals have served as personal mentors who motivated him to compete – including how to play basketball and how to ski. "So many top-class athletes serve as mentors at these Games," he said. "I am motivated by these people and I want to do that for other participants."

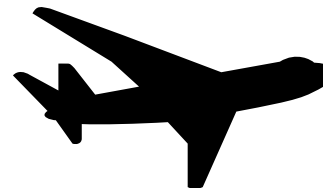
In addition to eight Wheelchair Games, Miller has competed in four National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinics and two National Veterans Creative Arts Festivals. He also volunteered at one previous Golden Age Games.

When asked about his favorite memory of these national recreation events, Miller recalled a moment at the 2001 Wheelchair Games in New York City when the mother of a fellow participant came up to him and thanked him for helping her son that week. Miller said, "I don't know what I'd do without the ability to participate and compete. The VA gave me an education, a job and an opportunity to be myself."

# Departure Information

**JOHN WAYNE/ORANGE COUNTY AIRPORT** For teams/coaches/athletes departing on Thursday, July 10 – a **luggage sweep** will be conducted **tonight** at 11 p.m. Luggage is to be appropriately tagged and placed outside hotel room door no later than 11 p.m. tonight. All equipment (i.e. racing chairs, air guns, etc.) is to be delivered to the following locations:

Ocean Ballroom, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Westin Hotel  
Pacific I & II, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Hilton Hotel



## Departure Schedule

<u>Flight Time</u>	<u>Bus Loading Time</u>	<u>Bus Departure Time</u>
6-8 a.m.	3 a.m.	4 a.m.
8-10 a.m.	4 a.m.	5 a.m.

For all other flights you are advised to load buses for arrival at airport 3-4 hours prior to flight departure time.

The **luggage staging area** is located on the lower level, Terminal A (Alaska, American, American Eagle, Continental, Delta) is located on the North End; Terminal B (America West, America West Express, Aloha, Northwest, Southwest, United, US Airways) is located on the South End. Staff will be on hand to assist you in retrieving your luggage and checking in with the respective airlines. Elevators are located adjacent to the parking structure.

A separate area will be designated for Wheelchair Games participants for **security screening** to expedite this process.

**LONG BEACH AIRPORT** You are responsible for ensuring all luggage, racing chairs, air guns, etc. are loaded on to the buses for transport to the airport from your respective hotel.

## Departure Schedule

<u>Flight Time</u>	<u>Bus Loading Time</u>	<u>Bus Departure Time</u>
7-9 a.m.	4 a.m.	5 a.m.
10 a.m.- 12 noon	7 a.m.	8 a.m.
2-4 p.m.	11 a.m.	noon

**LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (LAX)** You are responsible for ensuring all luggage, racing chairs, air guns, etc. are loaded on to the buses for transport to the airport from your respective hotel.

## Departure Schedule

<u>Flight Time</u>	<u>Bus Loading Time</u>	<u>Bus Departure Time</u>
7-10 a.m.	3 a.m.	4 a.m.
10 a.m.- 12 noon	6 a.m.	7 a.m.
2-4 p.m.	10 a.m.	11 a.m.

