



Saturday, August 9, 2003

## Opening Ceremonies

This year's torch carrier at the Opening Ceremonies was Adrienne Mohammed, 2002 George Gangi Inspiration Award recipient.



L-R: Mohammed with Miss Maine 2003

Hosted by the  
**Togus VA Medical/Regional  
Office Center**

Co-sponsored by the:



Veterans of Foreign Wars



Department of Veterans Affairs

## New Beginnings

by: Susan DeKeyzer  
VAMC Alexandria, Louisiana

Making his first trip to the National Veterans Golden Age Games is 57-year-old Bruce Johnson, from Los Banos, Calif., a combat-wounded Marine Corps veteran of Vietnam, and a former POW.

"I had broken my back seven months ago; I was in the Palo Alto VA Health Care System, Livermore Division, in a wheelchair and down to 103 pounds. The doctors, nurses, and (coach)

Kathy Kelly gave me inspiration to keep going. They made me realize that I could make the best of my situation.

"Kathy told me about the Games and asked if I wanted to compete, I thought she was

crazy. But she convinced me I could do it; she gave me a goal and a lot of support."

Johnson started training for the events by pushing himself back and forth around the medical center in his

wheelchair. "I'm now doing 3000 to 4000 reps a day with weights. They have to make me stop."

Johnson is not new to competitive sports. As a senior in high school, he qualified as an alternate on the swimming team in the 1964 Olympics held in Tokyo. He also

coached the Stanford University water polo team from 1985 - 1990.

Johnson will be competing in pentathlon, billiards (nine-ball), and shuffleboard. He is hoping to compete in swimming next year.



Johnson

## It's in the Mail

by: Amalea Smirniotopoulos  
Washington, D.C.

Competitors at the National Veterans Golden Age Games should not be surprised if they start receiving postcards from such strangers as T. Doff, N. Velope, and Isabel Ringing. For fifty years, Nicholas Nugent has sent a postcard a day to anyone and everyone he knew who was ill or in the hospital, signing each with these and similar names.

A retired school teacher, Nugent began sending his signature postcards in 1953, when he was still in the Marine Corps. On a tour of duty in the Mediterranean, Nugent started sending postcards to single girls, signing them "The Mediterranean Mailman." The name, however, took up too much space.

"One day, there was some guy shaking off his dandruff as he walked past my bunk and I thought, Dan Druff. That was the first name I used."

Since then, Nugent estimates that about 500 people have received his postcards. He writes up to fourteen a day, catching moments while his wife shops or waiting in the dentist's office. One person received a card a day for three years. For his service, he received an award from the Knights of Columbus and a citation from his local VA.

"I get a lot of personal satisfaction out of it," Nugent said. "People really appreciate those cards." Some, however, do not even know who sent them. Nugent rarely signs his own name.

Nugent draws inspiration from his mother, who would start writing cards

"the very hour" someone went in to the hospital to make sure they received them the next day.

When Nugent himself had a heart attack, a former colleague arranged to have people send him his own cards. Nugent soon had 800 pieces of mail on his wall.

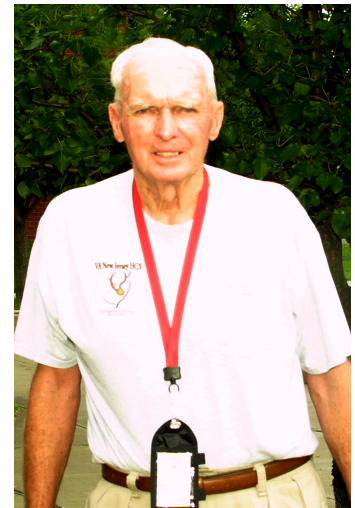
He brought his tradition to his first Games three years ago in Dallas. "I'd collected postcards from around the country," he said. "So I sent a Florida postcard to the girls in Dallas saying I'd missed my flight and was stuck in Florida. One of the volunteers actually believed me."

Over the years, his list of pen pals has expanded beyond his family and friends to include some who Nugent has never met.

"People say, 'Oh, a good friend of mine is in the hospital, could you write them a card?'" Nugent said. Among his current pen pals is Joe Duff, a former competitor at the Golden Age Games who was unable to make it to the Games this year.

Nugent has received many contributions to help him continue his tradition. For a surprise party on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, his wife asked everyone to bring 20 cent stamps. By the end of the night, he had accumulated 1800. Family and friends continue to bring him blank postcards from their vacations.

"For this year's Games, I bought \$50 in stamps and \$3 in red pens," Nugent said. "That's my vacation."



*Nugent*

# Wall of Heroes

by: Amalea Smirniotopoulos  
Washington, D.C.

The idea for the Wall of Heroes came as a bolt out of the blue for Sherry Kempter, Director for the Medical Team of this year's National Veterans Golden Age Games.

"It woke me up in the middle of the night," she said. "I thought, we have a Wall of Heroes for our soldiers in Iraq, why not for our veterans?"

Much like its namesake, the Golden Age Games Wall of Heroes is a collection of photographs commemorating the competitors. After meeting with the Steering Committee for the Games, Kempter sent a letter to each veteran registered for the event asking them to bring a photograph of themselves when they were in the service.

"The response was overwhelming," Kempter said. "One guy even sent his photograph by overnight mail."

Standing at the wall, veterans are struck by the contrast between their fellow competitors current and younger selves. "I know some of these guys, but I don't recognize them," said Lee D. Williams. "Everyone looks different now."



Williams

For C.C. Paxton, the Wall of Heroes is a way to turn the past into current friendships. "We can go up to the wall and go, 'Oh yeah, I knew him at such and such a place and such and such a time. I wonder how I can get in touch with him?'"

The Wall has inspired Paxton and other veterans to search for their own photographs. He hopes that the Wall will continue next year, and grow in the years to come. "Every time, people should come and add something," Paxton said.

After the Games are over, the photos will be displayed at the Togus Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Kempter hopes to arrange to have them displayed at next year's Games in Fresno to continue this fledgling tradition.

"I really think this is magnificent," said Williams. "There are lots of unsung heroes here. I'm proud of each and every one of them."

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## First Event - Bicycling... by: Dick Spicer, volunteer

Patrick Scanlan, from San Diego, Calif., not only competed in bicycling, but he will be competing in swimming and shuffleboard. Scanlan credits his coach, Ellen Berman, with being his inspiration. "Last year it was all about the competition" Scanlan said. "This year, it's about the total experience of the Games. The camaraderie and reaching out to others are the real enjoyment. I am more humble this year, and that has helped with my attitude." Scanlan has a twin brother, Michael, who works at the Northport VAMC in NY, had hopes of a military career, but those hopes were cut short after a car accident. Scanlan decided to take his place and enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. He served in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969.



Scanlan

# Today's Activity Schedule

8:00 a.m.	Nine-Ball (55-59 & 75-79) Table Tennis (60-64 & 70-74)	Field House Field House
10:00 a.m.	Nine-Ball (60-64 & 70-74) Table Tennis (65-69 & 80+)	Field House Field House
1:00 p.m.	Nine-Ball (65-69 & 80+) Table Tennis (55-59 & 75-79)	Field House Field House
8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.	Re-Creation Show	Under the Tent
10:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.	Disco	Under the Tent

## Alternate Activities



### Moose Safari

Buses leave from the Orchard Parking Lot at 5:00 a.m., returning at 11:00 a.m and also at 5:00 p.m. returning at 8:00 p.m.

### Puffin-Whale Watch

Buses leave from the Orchard Parking Lot at 6:00 a.m., returning at 2:00 p.m.

### L.L. Bean Shopping

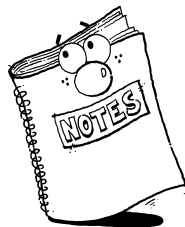
Buses leave from the Orchard Parking Lot at 8:00 a.m., returning at 4:00 p.m.

### Public Transportation to Bangor Mall

Public Bus picks up every hour on the quarter hour, through Saturday, beginning at 6:15 am, from the Memorial Union Building.

## Educational Workshops

Saturday, August 9



**“Planning Physical Activity for Individuals with Chronic Cardio-Respiratory and Metabolic Health Conditions...Part I”**

7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Memorial Union, Bangor Room

*For: Golden Age Games Staff*

## Today's Weather

Mostly Cloudy  
Chance of Showers  
Low 66° High 85°



## Meals/Hilltop Commons

### Breakfast: 6 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

Scrambled Eggs, Cholesterol-free Eggs, Bacon/Egg/Cheese English Muffin, Egg/Cheese English Muffin, Buttermilk Pancakes, Home Fries, and Bacon

### Lunch: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Chicken Noodle Soup, Turkey Stew, Italian Stuffed Peppers, DownEast Fish Sandwich, Grilled Cheese, Sliced Carrots, Fries, Bread, and Dessert

### Dinner: 4:00 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.

Baked Ham, Spaghetti w/Meatsauce, Broccoli Peanut Stir Fry/Rice, Au Gratin Potatoes, Green Beans, Choice Vegetable, Bread, and Dessert

## Veterans History Project

The *Veterans History Project* interviews are being held today and on Sun., August 10, in the Doris Twitchell Allen Village Community Center, Room 411.