



NATIONAL VETERANS GOLDEN AGE GAMES

National Competitor Profile

Marilyn Hilliard – A Woman with Bragging Rights

“It ain’t bragging if you can do it!” While the phrase is attributed to legendary baseball great Babe Ruth, it could apply just as well to retired schoolteacher and Army veteran Marilyn Hilliard. If she wasn’t so humble, you might think she was bragging when she speaks of her numerous athletic feats. If she is, though, she’s undoubtedly earned the right.

In 2007, the spirited and talented Hilliard entered the National Veterans Golden Age Games, the Pennsylvania Senior Games, and the Summer National Senior Games in Louisville, Kentucky. Out of the 13 events she entered, she medaled in 11.

Hilliard was the first veteran ever representing the National Veterans Golden Age Games to medal at the National Senior Games, taking the silver in horseshoes. “I pitched horseshoes for four and half hours on each day for two days,” she said, in a soft spoken voice that mixed a certain degree of exhaustion with some well-deserved pride. She was only one game shy of winning the gold medal. She wasn’t disappointed though.

What she didn’t know was that Dewayne Vaughan, Director of the National Veterans Golden Age Games and David Krueger, National Meet Director, were both in the stands nearby, silently cheering her on. “I didn’t know they were watching until after I was done pitching,” she said. It’s a good thing she didn’t know, since Hilliard admits she gets a bit tense if she knows she’s being watched. “I get as nervous as a cat on a tin roof,” she laughs.

Hilliard, 76, from Butler, Pennsylvania, enlisted in the Army after high school in order to take advantage of the G.I. Bill. “I think its one of the greatest things. It gave me the opportunity to go to college that I otherwise would not have had,” she said. Stationed in Germany during the Korean War, she was a supervisor in the signal core, a statistical reporter and then worked in financing when she returned stateside.

The two degenerative discs in her back and arthritis in her thumb have not kept Hilliard from competing, although she is mindful of her health. “I’m very much aware of my health and hope I can hang on,” she says, attributing her physical fitness to helping stave off a viral infection that puzzled her doctors.

While her passion to participate in sports is remarkable, the love she has for her country is equal if not more, noteworthy. “I’ve always been patriotic,” she says in an endearing and solemn voice, launching into a description of the American flag she proudly displays at her home. “My flag is never tattered or torn, and I always get the flag with the stitched on stars and stripes.”

With her many accomplishments in sports, proud military service and unwavering patriotism, Hilliard has the right to brag. She’d make the Babe proud.

