



NATIONAL VETERANS GOLDEN AGE GAMES

National Competitor Profile

Walter Evans Jr. – “The Games Are What I Live For!”

If falling from the heights of a barn hasn't stopped Walter Evans Jr., 60, from moving forward with his life, not much else will. The fall occurred in 1999, severing Evans' spinal cord and leaving him a paraplegic. Since then, the Army and Marine Corps veteran continues to stay active, despite the pain in his lower back and legs. While the physical activity keeps his pain to a minimum, it's the competition that keeps him motivated. Lately, he's been busy preparing for his third appearance in the National Veterans Golden Age Games, set to take place August 20-24 in Indianapolis, Ind.

This year, his sports of choice are discus, shot-put, swimming and nine-ball. “This is something I really look forward to, and the closer it gets to the Games, the more motivated I become,” said Evans. “The Games are what I live for now!”

Evans, who lives in Lumberton, N.C., has been honing his competitive skills with help from his rehabilitation therapist at the Fayetteville, N.C., VA Medical Center. He now lifts weights, plays in a wheelchair basketball league and shoots pool to get ready for the competition. If this event weren't enough to keep him busy, Evans also participates in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games as well as the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. At two of those events last year, he managed to rack up four gold and two silver medals. “I am more active now than before I was hurt,” he says. “I am doing things now that I never did before I was in a wheelchair. I like that.”

Evans served in the engineer corps during his 1968-1970 Army tour in Vietnam. Thirty days after his discharge from the Army, he joined the Marine Corps. Later, he worked at an adhesive manufacturing company for nearly twenty years. Due to the injuries he sustained from his fall, Evans now uses a wheelchair for mobility, but is able to walk short distances.

The National Veterans Golden Age Games, now in their 22nd year, continue to offer new inspiration and motivation for Evans and hundreds of other veterans in their senior years. Some are in wheelchairs, some are visually impaired, and some are world class senior athletes. At the Games, all are given the opportunity to connect with themselves and each other; to keep the dream alive and moving forward. “I never thought I would be able to take part in these sports,” Evan says. “For me, this is really a dream come true.”

