

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Athlete Profile (Local)

Roy “Bud” Bemis – The Games in Spokane Instill A Special Pride

To some, Roy “Bud” Bemis, 60, of Moon Lake, Washington, could still be considered a newbie when it comes to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, having participated in just the last three of the past 28 Wheelchair Games. You would never guess that, though, by the enthusiasm he exudes when asked about the annual event.

A Navy veteran who served as a cook in Vietnam, Bemis received a purple heart for injuries he received while traveling back to the base. “I was returning from R & R and caught a boat ride back to Ca Mau,” Bemis explained. “The boat came under fire and I got shrapnel in my arm and a couple of other places. But it’s the multiple sclerosis that put me in the wheelchair.”

After serving for nine years, Bemis returned to the northwest and worked in a variety of jobs. He worked in the milling end of the magnesium mining industry as both a truck driver and mechanic. He also crafted leather saddles – a hobby he attributes to his cowboy background. Ironically, Bemis is also part American Indian and is a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, which is made up of 12 separate tribes. Bemis’s heritage is with the San Poil and Nez Perce tribes.

Bemis’s first time competing in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games was in Anchorage, Alaska in 2006. It was the persistence of his recreation therapist, Julie Adams, that saved his life, he said. “I was doing rehab in Seattle and she wouldn’t take no for an answer. She dragged me to Anchorage and it saved my life.” From that point on, Bemis has become a staunch supporter of the event, encouraging fellow veterans to participate and see for themselves all the benefits the Games provide through the camaraderie and sportsmanship the event is known for. “You have to experience these Games for yourself to know that life goes on,” he tells others. “It’s like that old saying that the sun still comes up tomorrow.”

When the Games come to Spokane, Washington in July 2009, Bemis expects to experience a lot of hometown pride. Although he now lives 40 miles north of Spokane, his loyalty to the town where he grew up and raised a family remains strong. “I’m really working toward these Games because they are in my back yard,” he said. “I can finally show my family and everyone else what I’ve been talking about. They’ll take home more inspiration in one afternoon than they could in a lifetime.”

“In a sense, the 2009 National Veterans Wheelchair Games are my Games,” Bemis said. “It’s like I invited 600 of my favorite people over to play, and we’ll go *Roll’n on the River* together.”

