



NATIONAL VETERANS GOLDEN AGE GAMES

Competitor Profile (National)

Donald Mullet – Still Competing at 91

Donald Mullett still lives in the same house in New Haven, Connecticut where he was born – 91 years ago. He takes care of himself, keeps up the house, does some gardening and goes swimming as often as he can. Only last year he stopped teaching a twice weekly class in ballroom dancing. The year before, he had to give up ice skating, a sport he's enjoyed since he was seven. Mullett says that his doctor told him, "Donald – you're not *getting* old, you *are* old. You can't do everything you did ten years ago!"

That was tough news for this WWII combat veteran of the Army Air Corps, who served from 1941-45 in the south Pacific in Guadalcanal, working on long range radar. After his military service, Mullett worked at a hardware manufacturing company for 45 years until his retirement in 1981. For the next 25 years, he's stayed active and kept in shape with callisthenic exercises, lifting weights, swimming, ice skating, and teaching his dance classes in both ballroom and country line dancing techniques. A model of healthy living, he has enjoyed the constant activity which he credits, in part, for his longevity.

In 1984, Mullett first attended the National Veterans Golden Age Games, the very first year the event took place. Since then, he's competed every year but one when there was a conflict with his teaching schedule. It's the competition, the camaraderie and the therapy that the Games inspire that continue to impress Mullett. "When I was at the Games one year, I saw a fellow in a wheelchair and he was bowling. He got a strike, and he jumped about a foot out of that chair. I'd never seen that before and I thought, 'wow, look at this – it really is good therapy!'"

Over the years, Mullett has most often competed in the swimming, table tennis and shuffleboard events, earning more than 45 gold and silver medals from those efforts. Although he won't be swimming this year, he did sign up for table tennis and shuffleboard once again, as well as croquet – competing in the oldest age group for veterans age 85 and up. "Being able to participate in the Golden Age Games has kept me working out to keep in shape for the Games," Mullett says. "Also, I've enjoyed meeting old friends and making new ones for the past 20 years. The camaraderie we have at the Games is one my favorite aspects."

Donald Mullett continues to encourage other veterans to take part in this annual event. "Sign up, train and learn the rules. You've got to do that no matter what age you are, but even if you haven't been active for a very long time, the Golden Age Games will turn you around." Take it from someone who knows.

