



NATIONAL VETERANS GOLDEN AGE GAMES

Competitor Profile

Roy Gantt – Korean War Combat Hero “Lives”



“You can live or exist,” said Roy Gantt, a Korean War combat veteran from New Athens, Ill. “I choose to live.” Gantt’s energy and athletic prowess is sure to shine as he prepares to make his twelfth appearance at the National Veterans Golden Age Games in Houston, Texas, August 27-31, 2007.

“Living” for Gantt, who will be 72 years old at the Games, involves competing at the highest level year after year and relishing time with family and old friends. He’s a multiple gold-medal award winner in events such as swimming, bowling and horseshoes. Despite a past with significant medical challenges, Gantt is jovial, thankful and loves his time at the Golden Age Games.

After spending two years in the Army, Gantt was discharged at 9 a.m. and then joined the Air Force by 11 a.m. on the same day. “I didn’t have much of a home life and I wanted to serve my country,” he recalls. However, disaster struck on April 11, 1953; when on a reconnaissance mission in Japan, his B-29 plane crashed. The impact broke most of the bones in his body, hospitalized him for six years and required that his right leg be amputated from the knee down. Gantt has used a prosthetic device for most his life and now uses a wheelchair for mobility.

Four years ago, Gantt was involved in a brushfire accident at his home that burned 85% of his body. In a coma for six weeks, Gantt once again proved his desire to “live” and willed himself to heal. Gantt competes at the Games year after year as a survivor.

At the center of all his Golden Age Games medals and accomplishments has been his wife, who along with a recreation therapist at the VA, encouraged Gantt to compete in sports. Gantt keeps busy! His work-out schedule puts youngsters to shame as he swims, bowls, lifts weights and does aerobics three times a week. It’s good that he stays in shape so that he can keep up with his five children, six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Roy Gantt embodies a competitive spirit is unique and inspires. He was the 2004 “George Gangi Most Inspirational Athlete” winner for his athletic excellence, sportsmanship and spirit. An honor he says was the thrill of his life. “If you stay active physically even through your golden years, you’ll enjoy life more,” he says. It’s a pleasure to watch Gantt compete year after year because he the living definition of what it is to “live.”

