



# BREAKING NEWS

*Long Beach, California*

Issue 5

Wednesday, July 9, 2003

## Leon Thompson Has Seen a Lot of Changes in 23 Years

*By Amalea Smirniotopoulos*

A lot has changed since Leon Thompson competed in the first National Veterans Wheelchair Games in 1983. "I had no idea what it was going to be like," Thompson said. "No one else did either. It was new, completely disorganized."

Thompson is one of a handful of veterans who have competed in all 23 Wheelchair Games, including Jimmy May, of Midlothian, Va. "Every year it gets more organized," he said.

A Marine Corps veteran, Thompson credits his involvement in the Games to the influence of Les Rothman, his recreation therapist at the VA medical center in Tampa, Fla. "He got a lot of people involved in wheelchair sports," Thompson said.

At the first Games, Thompson competed in six events, including archery and weightlifting. Since then, he and his wife Pat have been here every year, often driving across the country to each year's site from their home in Bay Pines, Fla. Over the years, he has won what his wife describes as "a whole closetful of medals."

"I never come away without one," Thompson said.

According to Thompson, his wife is responsible for keeping him coming back, year after year.

"I want him to keep on going,"

she said. "He thinks it's so much work, it's so hard."

Even in 1995, after a severe heart attack, Thompson made it to the Games. His wife drove him to Georgia and back so he could compete.

"I slept on the way there, I slept on the way back, I slept every moment I wasn't competing," Thompson said.

After the heart attack, the Wheelchair Games "kept me going," Thompson said. "Doc thought I wouldn't even be alive without exercising as much as I did."

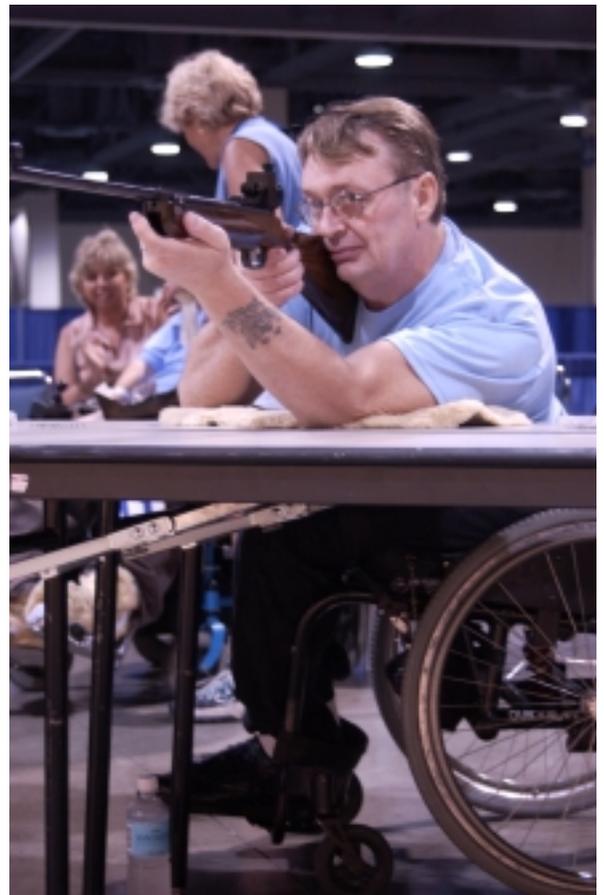
"I almost didn't make it this year," he said. "But I thought, if I don't go, I won't be happy with myself."

This year, Thompson is competing in air guns, bowling, and three field events.

"It's nice to come to the Games," he said. "We've all gotten a chance to grow old together."

In between Games, Thompson said he bowls and practices with his air rifle. In addition to the Games, he also competes in bowling tournaments.

Thompson said he will

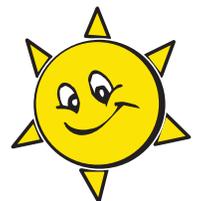


*Thompson, a Marine Corps veteran from Florida, takes aim in air guns.*

definitely make it back next year. "I gotta get my thirty in," he said.

### Today's Weather

Mostly sunny;  
High 86, Low 66



## Closing Ceremony Set for Tonight

The Closing Ceremony for the 23<sup>rd</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games will be held tonight at 7 p.m. in the arena at the Convention Center. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m.

Dignitaries from the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America will attend. Special guests will include former Pittsburgh Steeler Lynn Swann, a member of the President's Council on Physical Fitness.

The Spirit of the Games Award will be presented to the single participant in the Games who best exemplifies athletic excellence, sportsmanship and character. The ceremony will conclude with the passing of the torch to next year's National Veterans Wheelchair Games hosts from St. Louis.

## 'The Fab Four'

## More About Tonight's Entertainment



If you saw "The Linda McCartney Story" on CBS or the trailer for the hit MGM movie "Heartbreakers," you've already heard The Fab Four and probably didn't know it!

Chosen over hundreds of other sound-alike bands, The Fab Four entered Hollywood's Capitol Records studios in March 2000 and to the delight and amazement of movie executives, the band faithfully recreated The Beatles hits "I Want To Hold Your Hand," "Please Please Me," and "Kansas City." Just six months later, the band delivered again when MGM asked for an exact replica of The Beatles version of the song "Money."

It's their precise attention to detail that elevates The Fab Four far above every other Beatles tribute. With uncanny, note-perfect live renditions of Beatles' songs, The Fab Four will make you think you're watching the real thing and they do it all without any tapes, sequences or backing tracks!

This incredible stage show includes three costume changes representing every era of The Beatles' ever-changing career. The prestigious Hollywood Bowl asked The Fab Four to open their box office season not once, but twice. This loving tribute to The Beatles has amazed audiences around the world.

It seems everywhere they go, The Fab Four sell out. We are thrilled to have them perform tonight after the Closing Ceremonies. So Twist and Shout, Get Back, and get your (free) Ticket to Ride.

## Medical Assistance

**Hotels:** The medical suite is fully operational through tomorrow at the Westin and Hilton Hotels. The rooms will be open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. for treatment of minor injuries and illnesses. Look for signs to direct you to the medical suite, or call the hospitality desk for directions. After hours, a Games physician will be on call, and can be reached by calling the hotel operator. In the event of a life-threatening emergency, dial the hotel operator to call 911. There is no medical suite at the Hyatt; however, a Games physician is still on call each night. For services needed during the daytime hours, call or visit the medical suites at the Westin, Hilton or Convention Center.

**Convention Center:** A medical room in Suite 301 on the Seaside Meeting Level at the Convention Center will remain staffed from 7 a.m. until the banquet is over tonight.

**Games Sites:** Medical staff will also be present at each Games venue on Wednesday, easily identified by their red T-shirts with the white cross on the front. The medical personnel can care for minor injuries. A severe injury or illness will be referred to the VA Long Beach Medical Center.

## • Today's Schedule •

7:30 a.m.	Handcycling		El Dorado Park
8 a.m.	Archery		El Dorado Park
	Motorized Wheelchair Rally		Rainbow Harbor
9 a.m.	5K Road Race		El Dorado Park
1 p.m.	Quad Rugby Finals	<i>Consolation Game</i>	Convention Center Hall B
	Basketball Finals	<i>Consolation Game</i>	Convention Center Hall B
3 p.m.	Quad Rugby Finals	<i>Championship Game</i>	Convention Center Hall B
	Basketball Finals	<i>Championship Game</i>	Convention Center Hall B
7 p.m.	Closing Ceremonies and Banquet		Convention Center Arena

## Shuttle Schedule for Today

TIME	EVENT	DESTINATION
6 a.m.-11p.m.		Hilton/Convention Center/Hilton
6 a.m.-noon	Handcycling/5K/Archery	CC/Eldorado Park/CC
6 a.m.-noon	Motor Rally	Convention Center/Rainbow Harbor/CC



\* CC-Convention Center

\*\*Transportation to venues is available only from the Convention Center

## DME and Wheelchair Repair

Durable Medical Equipment (DME) rooms are available at all hotels to pick up and drop off equipment. Wheelchair Repair is located in the Westin Hotel only. If your wheelchair needs repair, you should go to the Westin Hotel. If the repair is an emergency or occurs after-hours, contact the Hotel Team Leader or the Co-Team Leader at the phone numbers listed below at each of the hotels. They will contact Wheelchair Repair to come to your hotel. Invacare provides wheelchair repair at each venue site.

DME can be returned prior to your departure tomorrow. DME will remain open today at the Westin and Hilton hotels today from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. DME will re-open again tomorrow at 3 a.m. at the Westin and Hilton. Please bring your yellow copy of the DME loan form with you when you return the equipment and/or have it attached to the DME upon pickup. If the DME is not returned, a bill of sale will be created and mailed to the Team Coach. Once the DME is returned, the Hotel Team Leaders will mail the refundable deposit to you after the Games.

**Hotel Co-Team Leaders:** Hilton (Mediterranean, Pacific I/II Rooms) - Sue Kulvinskis (Cell phone: (562) 244-8929); Westin (Tokyo, Vancouver, Shanghai Rooms) - Realean Maxwell (Cell phone: (562) 244-8936)

**DME Chair:** Gina De Ocampo (Cell phone: (562) 244-8906)

### A Proud and Grateful Veteran Presents Gift to the Games

On the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, Japanese naval air forces launched a surprise attack against the U.S. Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor. Only a few U.S. planes were able to respond; one of them was a P-36

flown by 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Phillip Rasmussen. Rasmussen was awarded the Silver Star for his service on that fateful day that forced the U.S. into World War II. He is proud of his service and proud of the athletes competing in the Games at

Long Beach. He has presented the National Veterans Wheelchair Games an attractive commemorative display which will be donated to the Library of Congress. Thank you, Mr. Rasmussen.

*Determination shows on Daniel Palacios' face as he makes his way through the slalom course.*

***Goin'  
for the  
Gold!***



*August Krieser gets in racing position.*



*Enrique Cotto prepares to give it all he's got in javelin.*



*Kerry Conway comes up for air.*



*With a big exhale, James McGilberry goes for the big lift.*

Want to see more photos from the week's events? Visit this year's Wheelchair Games web site at [www.wheelchairgames.org](http://www.wheelchairgames.org).

# Athletes Find Their Gateway to Victory in St. Louis

Named the Greatest Sports City in America in 2002 by *Sporting News* and known as the Gateway to the West, St. Louis has been selected as the site for the 24<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games next summer, June 15-19, 2004. Both America's Center and Edward Jones Dome (home of the St. Louis Rams, just a stones' throw from the Mississippi River), will host many of the week's competitive events as well as the opening and closing ceremonies. Adapted martial arts and self-defense will be one of the featured exhibition events.

Other events include a 5K road race in Forest Park, site of the 1904 World's Fair, and track and field events at historic Washington University, where the 1904 Olympic Games were held.

Since all of the athletes will be staying together in the beautiful, newly renovated, and fully accessible Renaissance Grand

Hotel, there will be ample time for catching up with old friends and making new ones. America's Center is located just a "push" across Washington Avenue, where local sponsors will host a block party in celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1904 World's Fair.

The St. Louis VA Medical Center and the Gateway Paralyzed Veterans of America will ensure that athletes who come to the 2004 Games will experience St. Louis' big city excitement with a small town feel. After competing in the Games, athletes and their families can enjoy a wide array of opportunities, including tours of the Anheuser Busch Brewery; Grant's Farm; the International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame; Busch Stadium; and the St. Louis Cardinals. Participants may try their luck at a Casino or cruise the Mighty Mississippi on a paddle wheel riverboat. Other *free* world

class attractions are the St. Louis Zoo, Science Center and museums.

Come to St. Louis to explore your abilities and face new challenges in the "Gateway to Victory."

To keep posted on all the latest Games news, go to the News Media 2004 Games link on [www.wheelchairgames.org](http://www.wheelchairgames.org). -**Laurie Zeveski, St. Louis VA Medical Center**

## Veterans History Project

Thanks to all of you who shared your stories for the Veterans History Project. The Library of Congress project collects audio- and video-recorded interviews, as well as letters, diaries, photographs, and other personal documents and preserves these stories of experience and service for future generations.

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## Attention Athletes!

**Awards Presentations** During the Wheelchair Games, awards are presented two ways: **Immediate awards** are presented as soon as results become available at the venue site at the following events: **basketball, softball, quad rugby, and weightlifting.** **Delayed awards** are presented for all other events throughout the day on the Awards Platform in the main lobby of the Long Beach Convention Center. A schedule of award presentations is available at the Awards Platform. Awards will be presented today between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. The last chance to pick up your award is today at 5 p.m. at the Awards Platform. Scores are posted as they become available in the main lobby and the Internet Cafe at the Long Beach Convention Center.

**Athletic Equipment** Athletes can pick up their equipment at the Westin Hotel (Ocean Ballroom) from 5 to 7 a.m., and from 5 to 7 p.m.

**Lost and Found** is located in the main lobby of the Convention Center by the exits to the departing buses. It is manned from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Items found: Navy blue and silver backpack; single eyeglass lens; "Reps" black leather gloves, 1 pair; collapsible Q-stick with black carrying case; Todd Kemery award picture. These items have been moved to the Command Center for safekeeping.

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## On the Menu ...



**Breakfast (6 to 8:30 a.m. at Convention Center, 6:30 to 8 a.m. at Hilton):** pancakes; country-seasoned sausage; fresh fruit/cups, assorted dry cereals; orange, tomato and grapefruit juice; coffee and tea.

**Lunch (11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.):** Italian pasta salad; homemade potato soup; assorted mini-sandwiches (turkey, roast beef, tuna and chicken curry) on soft assorted rolls; vegetarian wraps; assorted crackers and crisps; carrot cake squares; iced tea, lemonade, punch and coffee.

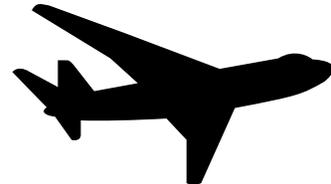
# Departure Information

**JOHN WAYNE/ORANGE COUNTY AIRPORT** For teams/coaches/athletes departing on Thursday, July 10 – a **luggage sweep** will be conducted on the evening of Wednesday, July 9, at 11 p.m. Luggage is to be appropriately tagged and placed outside hotel room door no later than 11 p.m. on Wednesday. All equipment (i.e. racing chairs, air guns, etc.) is to be delivered to the following locations:

Ocean Ballroom, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Westin Hotel  
Pacific I & II, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Hilton Hotel

## Departure Schedule

<u>Flight Time</u>	<u>Bus Loading Time</u>	<u>Bus Departure Time</u>
6-8 a.m.	3 a.m.	4 a.m.
8-10 a.m.	4 a.m.	5 a.m.



For all other flights you are advised to load buses for arrival at airport 3-4 hours prior to flight departure time.

The **luggage staging area** is located on the lower level, Terminal A (Alaska, American, American Eagle, Continental, Delta) is located on the North End; Terminal B (America West, America West Express, Aloha, Northwest, Southwest, United, US Airways) is located on the South End. Staff will be on hand to assist you in retrieving your luggage and checking in with the respective airlines. Elevators are located adjacent to the parking structure.

A separate area will be designated for Wheelchair Games participants for **security screening** to expedite this process.

**LONG BEACH AIRPORT** You are responsible for ensuring all luggage, racing chairs, air guns, etc. are loaded onto the buses for transport to the airport from your respective hotel.

## Departure Schedule

<u>Flight Time</u>	<u>Bus Loading Time</u>	<u>Bus Departure Time</u>
7-9 a.m.	4 a.m.	5 a.m.
10 a.m.- 12 noon	7 a.m.	8 a.m.
2-4 p.m.	11 a.m.	noon

**LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (LAX)** You are responsible for ensuring all luggage, racing chairs, air guns, etc. are loaded on to the buses for transport to the airport from your respective hotel.

## Departure Schedule

<u>Flight Time</u>	<u>Bus Loading Time</u>	<u>Bus Departure Time</u>
7-10 a.m.	3 a.m.	4 a.m.
10 a.m.- 12 noon	6 a.m.	7 a.m.
2-4 p.m.	10 a.m.	11 a.m.

# Kids Day: Sharing the Spirit of the Wheelchair Games

Against a background of cheering fans, more than 87 kids yesterday stepped up to the plate to “compete” in shot-put and club toss alongside athletes from the National Veterans Wheelchair Games at the third annual Kids Day Event.

The veterans were joined by film star Bo Derek, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi, and former L.A. Dodger Steve Yeager, who greeted the kids and posed for photographs.

“It’s wonderful for the kids here today to share the experience with the veterans. They are wonderful role models for the kids,” said Nora Egan, VA’s chief of staff.

Among the participants were three Girl Scout troops and two Boy Scout troops, in addition to kids of all ages from around the Long Beach area. This year was the first time the Scouts have attended.

“We like to share the spirit of the Games with the community,” said Bob Ensinger, of PVA, one of the event coordinators.

Holly Koester, an Army veteran from Walton Hills, Ohio, and her fellow athletes kicked off the program by briefly sharing their

military experiences and how they were injured. They also led the kids in stretches and a cadence.

Each child, able-bodied or disabled, sat in the position of a wheelchair athlete for a moment as they learned about adaptive sports and recreational activities. Just like at the Games, each was cheered and encouraged as he or she participated, aided by the mechanical clappers handed out by volunteers.

“It’s really good that they have a mix of able-bodied and disabled kids,” said Koester. When Kids Day started three years ago, only disabled kids were involved.

Throughout the four-hour event, more veterans came over from the adjacent track, where they were participating in track and field events. Most of them spent their time talking to the kids.

“The athletes are here to share their stories,” said Ensinger.

“They inspire us to learn to do our best,” said Kristen, 17.

After eating lunch with the veterans, the kids were invited to watch the athletes participate in the wheelchair races.

“It’s really cool that they can still do Olympic things,” said

Steven, 11.

For Larry Foster, a Marine Corps veteran from Arleta, Calif., that’s what Kids Day is all about. “Even if you’re in a wheelchair, life goes on,” he said. “There are lots of things to get involved in.”

Koester hopes that Kids Day inspires the kids to reach out to the disabled. “You know, I race with other runners. I like to let the disabled kids know that they’re not going to be on the sidelines.”

The goal was shared by many of the participants. Alicia Rodriguez spent the day encouraging her 6-year-old niece, Jocelyn, to join in the events.

“We’re trying to open her up to interacting with different people.”

“We hope the Games will live on here through the memories of these kids and their parents,” said Ensinger. —*Amalea Smirniotopoulos*

## Beat the Heat

This is sunny California, so it’s important to take precautions to protect yourself from the effects of that strong summer sun when you’re participating in outdoor events. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- Drink plenty of fluids both before and during your event.
- Wear sunscreen and a hat whenever possible.
- Stay in the shade as much as possible before your event.
- Bring a towel to dry off and a clean shirt to change into so you can stay dry.
- Wear loose clothing.

If you feel any of the following signs of heat-related illnesses, make sure that you drink water, get out of the sun and get medical help immediately: dry mouth, weakness, nausea, clammy skin or confusion.

## Discovering Long Beach



**Long Beach Museum of Art**  
2300 East Ocean Blvd.  
Long Beach, Calif.  
Phone: (562) 439-2119

A magnificent bluff site overlooking Long Beach Harbor and the Pacific Ocean. The campus includes the historic Elizabeth Milbank Anderson house and carriage house (built in 1912), oceanfront gardens, and a new pavilion with two floors of expansive gallery space for changing exhibitions. The historic buildings are home to administrative offices, the museum store and cafe. In addition to changing exhibitions, the museum offers extensive educational programs for children and adults, musical programs, festivals and other special events.