

Athlete Stories

70-74

Ajao, Rita

I am a 70-year-old female senior athlete born in 1950 in Ada, Oklahoma and raised in Pawhuska, Oklahoma. My father J. T., a chef from Mississippi, worked for Don Soderstrom at the Manhattan Café on Main Street. My mother Murphie Lee, born and raised in Ada, worked as a domestic after having five daughters, including me as the eldest. Neither of my parents finished college but both believed that it was extremely important to have an education. They had five daughters who excelled in academics: Rita, Marilyn (who drowned at the age of seven in 1959), Freeta, Doris, and Karen. I grew up in a segregated system in a town that did not have any physical education for females, who were also a minority in the town. My ancestors are African-American, Caucasian, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw, so my family has many traits available in our DNA pool. The Pawhuska Journal Capital newspaper, Booker T. Washington School, and Pawhuska High School hold very special places in my memory and heart, as do the Pawhuska Huskies and the people.

I made excellent grades in school at Booker T. Washington graduating as the 8th grade Valedictorian from this wonderful all African-American school. The teachers were Miss Agnes Roe for 1st and 2nd grades, Mrs. Edna Baucom for 3rd and 4th grades, Ms. V. Ross for 5th and 6th grades, and finally Principal Mr. John Baucom for 7th and 8th grades. I attended Pawhuska High School, which was just starting integration for the elementary grades, and I graduated as Salutatorian in 1968. There were several wonderful teachers at Pawhuska High School like Mr. Lewis, Mrs. Ahrend, Mrs. Marak, Mr. Wilson, Mrs. Oaks, Mr. Burton, Mr. Reber, Mr. Arnold, Mrs. Hill, and Mr. Cox. I was an academic but wanted to be an athlete too!

Pawhuska started a physical education program my senior year. I needed chemistry for my nursing program so I chose chemistry, which was during the same class hour as physical education. I attended the University of Oklahoma at Norman, Oklahoma on an OU academic scholarship plus a Pearl M. and Julia J. Harmon of Nowata, Oklahoma scholarship. I worked in the financial aid office in the work-study program also. I graduated from OU in 1968 cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and later graduated from the University of Central Oklahoma in 1979 summa cum laude with a Master's in Professional Health Occupations Education.

As a Christian from the age of seven, I had been taught and believed that you treat people like you want to be treated and that Jesus, as my personal Lord and Savior, would always help me! The Holy Spirit would guide and comfort me since all people have problems but do not have to succumb to these problems. I have always been a "warrior" and learned to do many things well for my parents taught me and my sisters that "if you are not the best then be among the best" and "God will help you to accomplish anything that you are willing to work at and put time and effort into doing." My seven-year-old sister drowned in 1959, so we had a lot of adjusting to do to handle this tragedy! My sisters and I all finished college at the University of Oklahoma and have been very successful as nurses and teachers. Each of my sisters achieved a remarkable level of success in her profession. One sister Doris is also a senior athlete and plays basketball with me on the Angels USA team. I am still working on Freeta and Karen to join us as senior athletes. My desire is for my sisters and I to have a relay team in the Senior Games in the near future.

I really began my major involvement in athletics with my children who all excelled at every sport or extra-curricular activity that I encouraged them to try. My husband Maurice Roberts and their father, a superior athlete in basketball and football in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, was very supportive and a definite asset. Raymond, Renee, and Regina were raised and competed in Bartlesville, Oklahoma and received full ride basketball scholarships when they graduated from Bartlesville High School. I was their first coach and had learned the sport by reading books, attending games and playing in my neighborhood as I grew up. I was very successful as a coach because I coached like I play chess with strategies and basic knowledge of the game. I taught all of the children that were on my teams to think in the games, to watch the opponents, have several options available, to do the best that they can fairly, to learn the rules, to learn all the basics, and to follow their coach's instructions. I did not know that the basics would make the team excel until after I had coached for a few games and sports.

I believe that a person can be healthy, wealthy, and wise when they learn and apply basics to their life, actions, words, and plans. God wants us to have an abundant life and has given us dominion with choices between life and death according to Proverbs 18:21 with our tongue as the catalyst, and so I watch what I say. I have a sincere desire to help people and especially older people to be as healthy as possible with appropriate words, thoughts, actions, behaviors, foods, drinks, and fun!

Senior Games offer the opportunity for people to do amazing things. I have been participating since I was 50 years old and have won over 90 Gold medals in several different sports with numerous silver medals, bronze medals, and many ribbons. I wrote to the Guinness Book of Records to apply for a spot since I had won so many gold medals and they rejected me due to "no one being interested in someone my age." Guinness is wrong and I will eventually get a spot in the records! I do not give up because I can creatively come up with another option.

Being an athlete allows me to exercise and really enjoy my time. I like winning and having my family to come out to support me and the team. I have really enjoyed traveling for the National Games and have met Pat Boone in Cleveland, Ohio. He was on a team playing basketball. I have met Venus and Serena's father while playing basketball in Palo Alto, California. I was even able to get Venus's autograph after watching her and her sister play doubles. I have been to the biggest mall in America when we went to Minneapolis, Minnesota. I have seen museums and historic sites in Birmingham, Alabama. I have formed wonderful relationships with team members and other teams as we have met at various tournament sites. I have enjoyed traveling to the different areas where the Senior Games are set-up.

I would like for people to know that you have to be active to stay healthy and that the Senior Games offers a perfect venue to stay healthy, to travel, to form great relationships, to see the USA, and to just enjoy life more. We need to nurture our spirit, soul, and body regularly and participating in the Senior Games is an excellent way to do just that. I am a travel Registered Nurse who has worked in nine different states. I have been able to demonstrate what a senior who is healthy and active can do and maintain with Senior Games activities. I have Humana insurance because I appreciate their support of the Senior Games. I was also introduced to the 23 and Me DNA testing at the Palo Alto, California games and really have enjoyed the family contacts and information provided. Each time that I attend nationals I get the full workup that is offered for physicals and new products and excellent general information. The majority of the workups and products are provided free with the option to purchase more products and services if desired.

I am looking forward to the Florida Senior Games and pray that the COVID-19 situation will be completely resolved in the Precious Name of Jesus Christ, my personal Lord and Savior, and with the guidance and comfort of The Holy Spirit! I have family members that are also excelling in academics and in sports at all levels. I also want to thank Lu King of the Pawhuska City Library for her wonderful input into this information about Senior Games and Rita.

Bishop, Catherine

As I look back at my athletic career, I realize that many things contributed to shaping the female senior athlete that I now am at 71 years old. Most of these things weren't done as part of a plan, but each activity was part of a foundation that has served me well as I've taken up serious track and field competition.

In all seasons, children in the neighborhood where I grew up in the 1950s were outside from first light until after dark. Most houses weren't air-conditioned and few families had televisions, so there was nothing to hold our interest if we stayed inside. With lots of children living on my street, there was always someone to play with, and we ran races, rode our bicycles, jumped rope, roller-skated, walked on homemade stilts, climbed trees, and played backyard baseball. Games like tag, hide-and-seek, and kickball kept us moving, and we learned to try hard not to get caught or found, or to miss the ball.

I used to wish I could join the boys who played Little League baseball, but there were no organized sport teams for girls. My high school had football, baseball, and basketball teams, but only for the boys. I earned a bachelor's degree at Transylvania College, a small four-year school that had an active program of intramural sports, and I played on volleyball, basketball, and softball teams. There was a limited extramural schedule for women's teams, and though we didn't have uniforms or actual coaches, we did play against a few other small universities. There were no tournaments, playoffs, or trophies, but I enjoyed the competition even in field hockey, which I had never even heard of before I went to college. I picked up the fundamentals, grabbed a stick, and gave my best effort for my team!

During the summers of my college years I worked at Girl Scout resident camps, teaching horseback riding, canoeing, swimming, and campcraft skills. Marriage, children, and jobs kept me busy in the years after graduation, but I always found time to walk and run a bit, though I never found the ease in running that all the books promised I would achieve if I just kept at it.

My husband was a cave enthusiast and we got involved in a decades-long project to explore and map two extensive cave systems that revealed miles of horizontal and vertical passages. Surveying trips were long and hard, and I was glad I had the strength and endurance to put in up to 22 hours underground, carrying heavy gear and rappelling down deep pits and squeezing through wet, muddy crawlways. Caving was unlike anything I had done before, and it was exciting to be part of a group that was dedicated to unlocking the secrets of an uncharted cavern.

When our son and daughter joined the cross-country and track teams at their high school, I watched them practice and compete and wished I had been given the same opportunities. I yearned to try some of the things the kids were doing, but I accepted the fact that I was too old.

The epiphany arrived one summer as I watched my son compete in the Blue Grass State Games. This track and field competition was open to amateur competitors of all ages, and in

between my son's races, I watched the women's shot put event. The oldest woman had to have been in her eighties, and when she entered the throwing ring, I was sure she would either drop the shot on her foot or maybe fall down. She did neither, but instead calmly sent the shot into the sector with a creditable effort. An exciting idea came into my mind: "I could do that!"

I went home, opened the encyclopedia, and read up on the basics of shot put. I certainly wasn't going to tell anybody what I had in mind, but while my husband was at work and the kids were in school, I went out to the backyard and practiced throwing a brick. It didn't seem too hard, but after realizing that I needed to learn proper techniques, I approached a man who coached young people for Special Olympics track events. When I explained that I was afraid of being laughed at, he said, "*We never laugh at anybody,*" and then walked me through the steps for proper delivery of the shot. I ordered a real shot put and kept practicing. The next summer, I signed up for Blue Grass State Games and won the shot put event in my age group, defeating six other women. I was hooked!

That was more than 25 years ago, and I still treasure that first gold medal. Since then, I have tried many more events in track and field. I often manage to compete in at least ten events at a track meet, sometimes setting meet or state records in things as diverse as hammer throw, triple jump, 100-meter dash, and 1500-meter steeplechase, but shot put is still my favorite! There are more than twenty sports at Blue Grass State Games and I've also competed in 5K road races, swimming, canoeing, and air rifle shooting.

For middle-aged women, it's unusual to discover there's something you're good at, especially when it's something you've never done before. That's very satisfying, but it's not the best part of athletic competition. What I really enjoy is helping Senior Games newcomers through their first competition, cheering for my opponents when they make an especially good throw or jump, and catching up with friends I see only at out-of-state meets. Also, it's a good feeling to arrive at a track meet, knowing that I still have the mental capacity to keep to a tight schedule and arrive at each event with the right equipment and at the right time. I've entered Senior Games track meets in 24 states, and while the locations have varied, the sense of accomplishment has always been present.

Senior athletes are usually a joyful and upbeat group, though almost everyone has experienced injuries and disappointing performances over the years. Each competitor wants to give the best possible effort, and there's plenty of adrenaline flowing, but at the end of the day, along with the medals we've collected, I think all senior athletes are uplifted by a feeling of strength, health, and well-being. Sometimes I get the feeling that my non-competing friends think I'm a bit odd, and maybe they're right. That doesn't bother me. They just don't know what they're missing!

I believe that senior athletes are beginning to get the respect that has been somewhat slow to appear, but there is still a huge gap between the respect given to male athletes as opposed to female athletes, especially in events like shot put and hammer throw that seem to be linked to strength. Although proper technique is at least as important as physical power, there's a lingering feeling that women can't do those events, or maybe *shouldn't* do them. At times, I sense that even the officials share this prejudice. Regardless of the bias against female senior track and field athletes, we keep competing, knowing that it is our own attitude that matters. If we train, compete, achieve results, and continue to encourage newcomers to the sport, the attitudes of non-participants may change when they see our beaming faces at the close of a meet. We'll rest up tonight, and tomorrow we'll register for the next competition.

Bell, Mike

My name is Mike Bell and I live in El Reno, Oklahoma. I began my athletic career in the ninth grade. When my school decided to begin wrestling in 1962, I wasn't interested because I was a bookworm. My older brother made me participate. At first I really didn't like wrestling, but after a while I began having success and it blossomed from there. I qualified for state the next three years and placed my senior year. Meanwhile, I played football and participated in track. In my senior year, my football team finished state runner-up and I was given a scholarship to play football in college. I only played one year before I was drafted in the military.

After I was released from active duty, I participated in intramural wrestling and finished first in my weight the next three years. During that time my major was pre-med. I soon found out that it was not "what you know, but who you know." It was then I changed my mind and decided to become a biology teacher and coach.

My field was education, and I taught all the science courses as well as coached football, cross-country, wrestling and track for over for 35 years. At 73, I am still helping with wrestling and track at Piedmont High School.

At age 65, I heard there was a Senior Olympics in Yukon, Oklahoma and they had track. Since then I have competed in local, state, and nationals. I love to throw the disc, shot put, javelin, hammer, weight, super weight and weight pentathlon.

I will compete until I am no longer able. I have had great success in accomplishing my goals. I don't like to lose and this drives me to work harder. It keeps me young because I'm active. I have had a heart attack, five shoulder surgeries, and four knee operations, but track has allowed me to continue despite all the surgeries. I have my support groups that include my family, former athletes and friends that I have met while competing.

I would suggest to anyone who is over 50 to try one of our sports events and continue competing. It will begin a new life for you and give you some of the best friends that you have ever met. Oklahoma used to have only one local game and the Senior Olympics every year. Our state organization has introduced other cities to the Senior Olympics. In the future, many older athletes will have a chance to change their lives. You are only as young as you feel.

Burke, Bill (William)

Bicycle racing in 2020 is more about "The Covid" than racing. Covid had the effect of canceling almost all bicycle races in the country. It also affected the more important parts of our lives as well. As my son used to say in his younger days, "that sucks whale balls."

The Oklahoma Senior Games had been postponed earlier in the year due to the fear of a bunch of old people getting together to race bicycles becoming a case for being a super spreader event and killing off the participants. The organizers apparently decided that shouldn't stop the competition and so, even though the numbers of cases in the state were much higher at the time of the games, they had the races.

Due to the dearth of events and the iffy nature of the possibility of doing the Senior Games, most of my time on the bicycle this year was spent riding as opposed to training. When I finally decided to compete I made changes in the gearing on the bike and did as many days doing tempo rides and wind/hill sprints as possible. None of my training companions were preparing for races and so all of that training time was done without anyone pushing me or having someone else with which to compare my conditioning. I was very nervous about my ability to compete in the October races. For the road race I put lightweight sew-ups with an 11/28 cog set on my lightest road bike, which was great for the hills.

The morning of the 10th of October was an early start. We were to check in and get race numbers at 7:15 at Draper Lake. We left the house at 6:00 and discovered as we drove out of town that the world was covered in a dense fog. When we drove into the parking lot at the lake it was so foggy that I was driving two or three miles an hour so as to not hit something or someone. To make a long story short, the first race was postponed from 8:00 to 10:00 thus bumping all the racing back two hours. I had registered for the 22k road race as well as both the 5k and 10k time trials. The 22k road race was the first of the day and I anticipated a fast start. The organizers had the 50+ to 65+ age groups start together and after a three minute delay, they started the 70+ to 85+ age groups.

Before the race started one of the guys took a black magic marker and wrote our age group on our calves so we knew who our competition was. I managed to get clipped in without too much trouble at the start but already had two competitors ahead of me as we headed out. I closed a small gap to the 70+ rider in front of me and together we closed the gap to a 75+ competitor who led out the race. The first mile and a half were rollers, but mostly uphill. We let 75+ pull that first part of the race. When we made the turn east there were three miles of steep hills and when we hit those I moved to the front and pulled the pack. It wasn't until we turned back south that I got some help at the front. The conditions were great for the race as there was no wind and cool temperatures. Also, due to road work the course was changed to include a neutralized turnaround at the midway point.

When we made the turn the three of us (we dropped everyone else in the hills) were still taking turns at the front. This lasted until we hit the three miles of hills again. I again ended up at the front pulling. When we made it back to the turn south towards the finish line I slowed down and forced the other two to get in front of me. By then another 70+ had caught up with us. I sat in at third wheel until 75+ hit the afterburners and I jumped on his wheel. I ended the race in first place in the 70+ age group and was spent.

It was 1:30 before the 5k time trial got under way. The course was the first mile and a half of the road race with a turnaround and then back to the finish line. I had not been on my time trial bike in a year and had decided to use my System Six (aero road bike) to do the time trial. There are no aero bars but I decided I would do about as well on it as on the TT bike. The race was uneventful except for my friend and cycling nemesis, Gary Ferguson, who passed me with less than a half mile to go. There was also the fire truck with sirens blaring that passed both of us on the course just prior to the finish line. I finished 44 seconds behind Gary for second place.

During the first part of the 5k one of the younger competitors was coming into the finish line and the policeman controlling the traffic did not see him coming and allowed a pickup to roll through the intersection as the rider was crossing the finish line. He collided with the truck and hit it and the ground hard. This arrangement of the finish line at the intersection was dangerous and the 10k was going to be worse as that same spot was going to be both a turnaround and the finish line. I decided to forego the 10k as I had already qualified for the National Senior Games in Fort Lauderdale, Florida next November.

Bicycle racing isn't a very good spectator sport so the long suffering spouses of those racing are to be commended, especially my wife. They spend long periods at the start and finish lines waiting, never knowing what is happening on the road. I don't know what our racing season will look like next year but I am hoping to be able to compete in more races as well as the nationals for a full season. That only works if "The Covid" is under control by then.

Hogue, Skeeter

When I was about 55 years old, my doc told me I needed to quit smoking after 37 years. Well, I laid them down. A couple years later, my doc told me I needed to lose some weight and five months after that, I lost 70 lbs. Doc was proud of me and I kept the weight off for a few years.

I got a chance to do maintenance work for a school. One day, while working in the wood shop, I saw some high school kids doing their warm-up run for cross-country. In high school, I did not run any more than I had to, so I started walking circles in the shop. Soon, I began running in the shop pretty regularly. That summer, I decided to go to the track during my lunch break, and before long I was running three miles. That same summer I decided to try a race, and I ran 26:27 and got second place in my division. I was hooked after that, and at 58 years old, I got a medal. All of a sudden, I was competitive. Now, at 74 years old, I get first place in nearly all the races I run.

I've run over 850 races in 18 years and have never felt so good. I've met so many great people in 15 states so far and I plan on going to the nationals next year. What a life! I could talk for hours about my running but here is my short story.

Jones, Kenny

I started training in 2008 when our son was invited to tryout for the 2008 Olympics. He was a junior in high school doing the 26.2-mile race walk. I started training with him so I could lose some weight and enjoyed it so much that I tried out for the 2013 senior Olympics and qualified in the 5k and 1500-meter race walk. The rest is history as I have traveled all over the USA to meets and have qualified for a total of five senior Olympics. I have also continued to lose a total of 80 pounds and my health is doing a lot better. I try to walk a total of eight to 15 miles a day both indoors and outdoors while training for the next meet. I'm looking forward to the 2021 senior meet in Florida in November. Thank you. –Kenny Jones

“Just keep moving”

Reddish, Rodger D.

I had a patent ductus arteriosus heart operation when I was in the eighth grade and because of this, I was never permitted to be in a gym class until the tenth grade (other kids had gym class and I had double study halls every day). This meant that I did not properly understand any team sports and I was waaay behind the others in most physical activities. I was the oldest of six brothers and two sisters, so I learned how to wrestle (a.k.a. squeeze their necks and bend their arms). My "cross training" was learning how to change diapers.

My first public physical activity was to take an American Red Cross senior lifeguard course because it was free and I could afford it. At the age of 19 I was "good enough" to be drafted into the military. At this time, I started learning how to be physically active in other manners. This is when my inner drive to be part of what others were doing began to somewhat bloom.

In the summer of 2016, someone asked me what I knew about the Senior Olympic Games (I was now 68.) I knew enough for it to be dangerous. On something related to a dare or bet, I entered my first Senior Olympic Games event. I came away with some bling because of unknown reasons. This is when I started to properly realize that "Some Older Guys Rock."

Since competing at The Senior Olympic Games, I have learned there is a lot of camaraderie between the competitors even though there are some fierce and hardcore drives. Also, I am starting to enjoy it when I go for my medical checkups and they see that my heart rate, blood pressure, and cholesterol are not the same as some other 70 year olds.

Sometimes I have noticed that some others misconstrue senior athletes for para-athletes or special athletes. This leads to "corrective learnings" and I spend a moment trying to explain what is true and what is not.

Walker, Craig

Take a Minute for Hope

Just three weeks before citizens in California were ordered to self-isolate, we were in Florida participating in the Polk Senior Games. It was a beautiful, sunny, and warm Florida morning as we made our way to the swimming pool, where I had signed up for six events.

In Senior Games, I compete against men in my own age group, ages 80-84. For a few wonderful hours, I forgot that I was an old man with a variety of aches, pains, and medical conditions. It was like rolling back the hands of time. Just a few days before we left for Florida, I had managed to pull a muscle in my back and I was unable to bend over. I could not go off the blocks but had to start in the water.

When they called the 50-yard freestyle, I jumped into lane four and held on to the wall, awaiting the start. I was seeded second out of five competitors. The guy in lane five was also 80, had a faster seed time, and was starting from the blocks. I was really going to have to move to beat him. I hoped that I could do it, but that was all I had. Now I learned years ago in my military officers' training that hope is not a plan. Sure, that is correct, but hope can be a driving force used to overcome the obstacles of life.

Towering over me and high on the blocks, my competition was poised to unwind like a spring, while I could only push off gingerly from the wall, not too hard—I needed my back to last. What did it matter if he beat me? This was all about fun and trying to win a gold medal when you are an old man.

The starting buzzer went off and I was immediately confronted with a tidal wave of Biblical proportions as all 240 pounds of him came down right next to me. When I could see again, he was half a body length ahead of me. I hoped that I could make up this distance, and make up the distance I did.

We were now swimming head to head. One thing that you need to know about senior swim meets is that they are kind of boring. Lots of people spread out all over the lanes with little excitement. But once in a while, two swimmers will be evenly matched and will fight it out, head to head, stroke for stroke, pounding their way to the finish line with as much urgency as any Olympic swimmer.

That's exactly what was happening, causing undue excitement among the spectators. The oldsters jumped to their feet, shook their canes in the air and roared their approval. A crowd of gray-haired admirers lined the edge of the pool and shouted encouragement as two 80-year-olds thundered down the lanes, each trying to beat the other.

Everything was going fine from my perspective. I was surprised at myself for keeping up with him. But then I realized that I was literally going to hit the wall. Because of my back, I would be unable to flip my turn and that would cost me about half a body length. It did. Now I was looking at his belly button when I turned my head to breathe, instead of at his head.

The 50-yard freestyle is a very quick race. It's down and back in less than a minute. So, I had less than half a minute to do something. I immediately employed the method taught me by my world-class coach Jason Bradbury. When faced with having to go all out, the tendency is to tighten up causing the swimmer to slow down. I did the opposite. I lengthened my stroke and increased my kicking cadence. The noise of the crowd even came through my earplugs. I slowly gained until we were even. Some of the seniors were going into apoplexy. Then after just a few final strokes and a lunge for the timing pad, it was over. I looked up at the scoreboard. Lane four out-touched lane five by less than a second. I won. I could have raised my fist in triumph, but I reached over, took his hand and we raised them both together in victory and hope. This was victory over the aging of our bodies and it gave us hope for the future.

In our present health crisis, we need hope. Yes, planning is paramount, but let us not leave out hope. Hope was the driving force that got people through the 1918 pandemic when 650,000 Americans died. Hope was the force that Americans used in World War II when they had to turn the tide of battle in Europe and the Pacific at the same time. Nothing has changed. We will survive this crisis. We will celebrate growing old. We will continue to experience that life is good. Hope will carry us through.

Wilson, Del

I was born in Pittsburg, Texas in the winter of 1950. As in all small towns, there were not too many things to entertain a young high-strung male's interest except the usual things that school had to offer. With the speed of foot I developed, I was able to work myself into the highlighted positipluralons in football, basketball, track and baseball.

One early Saturday morning, I was dragged out of bed and taken to the local small 9-hole country club golf course by my dad. Six of my eight-year-old classmates were also there reluctantly against their will, where we were all given a small starter set of golf clubs and told to go play while they headed for the club house to drink beer. We were terrible but soon got hooked on this new adventure simply because it created a place to compete against each other. This competitive desire extended through my golfing in high school, college, and my adult life.

I have been very successful and I've won many titles, but as I got to a senior status, there seemed to be nothing else to accomplish. I had always wished that I would be good enough in some sports to compete in the Olympics, and was fortunate to witness just how talented those athletes were when I was in Atlanta in 1996. While browsing the Internet in 2008, I spotted something that I had no idea existed. It was results and information about seniors competing in Olympic style events. Boy did that catch my interest. I thought about finding anything among the massive events that I could try-out for. There it was, golf. I quickly called the Kansas director seeing that it was the last place to qualify for the 2009 Olympics in Palo Alto, California. She informed me that only one spot was left open and asked if I would attend the finals if I qualified. I quickly replied "Absolutely." I won Kansas and found out at the finals just how tough it was going to be as all participants there were very talented in all sports. I have always looked forward to attending the local, state, and national tournaments. They are so professionally offered and controlled that those seniors not participating are really missing out on an opportunity.

I must say that I practice and try harder to keep in shape and hone my game to be as good as I can be. These events are the reason my health is now close to the peak I had while a youth. They make me happy, excite me, and whether I win or lose, I can't wait to see the friends I have made over the years at each gathering. There's also the anticipation of meeting new ones. By the way, I have won a Bronze and Silver at the nationals and Gold in 13 straight state titles in three different states, but that is secondary to the fun and friendship that I have acquired with the Senior Games—what a terrific thing just for seniors.

Wolf, Roger

The Tallest Man I Ever Met

1950-2020

Let me let you know up front, Roger Wolf was a slight man but a giant among men, and, he had a heart of gold. He stood tall with his honesty and with his love for his family and friends. Roger was a U.S. Marine Vietnam veteran. He loved sports, especially baseball, and in his later years, the game of cornhole. He was a great player. He received second place in the over-70 age group and came in third in the Doubles for the Oklahoma Senior Games in Tulsa in 2020. Just two weeks before he passed away, we visited and he talked about how he was looking forward to playing in the Oklahoma Senior Games in 2021. He will be missed by anybody who has ever met him.

