

CPAF History

FOUNDER OF THE GAMES

Duke was born in North Dakota on May 8, 1929. After high school he joined the Navy during World War II. Following a 2 year stint, Duke attended Arizona State University where he took up archery. Duke was part of the Archery Team for 3 years at ASU and joined the San Diego Archers when he moved to San Diego in 1952.

Duke joined the San Diego Police Department on July 5, 1955. Duke rose through the ranks retiring as a Deputy Chief on August 12, 1983. Among his assignments, in 1978, Duke was the Commanding Officer for the Police Departments response to the PSA Flight 182 plane crash in San Diego.



Veon "Duke" Nyhus
GAMES FOUNDER

In 1967, with help from a few like-minded colleagues, Duke founded the California Police Olympics and spent his life nurturing and guiding this concept into today's United States Police and Fire Championships and World Police and Fire Games. During the last fifty plus years, his efforts have positively touched the lives of hundreds of thousands peace officers and firefighters worldwide. In this era, he actively stewarded these great events through both challenging and prosperous times; all the while, he has never let us forget that these Games are by and for peace officers and firefighters. Veon "Duke" Nyhus, our games founder, passed away, on September 24, 2013, at his home in San Diego. He was 84 years old. Let us not forget him or his message.

FEDERATION ADMINISTRATION

In 1970, the California Police Athletic Federation was established as a Federal “501 (c) 3” Non-Profit Corporation to administer and perpetuate the Games. CPAF is governed by a Board of Directors made up of active and retired police officers.

To better manage the Games, the World Police and Fire Games Federation, and the United States Police and Fire Championships Organizing Committee were created under the umbrella of the CPAF. The WPFGB Federation Board of Directors includes fire service and law enforcement personnel from the U.S., Australia, Canada and Belgium.



GAMES CREATION

The first Police Olympics were held in San Diego, California in 1967. San Diego Police Captain Veon “Duke” Nyhus recognized the need to promote physical fitness and camaraderie amongst members of the law enforcement community. Duke formulated the idea of the Police Olympics and created the competition with an eye towards promoting physical fitness and sport as both a means for officers to, improve their overall fitness, reduce stress, and to increase their professional abilities.

That first year 504 competitors registered for competition in 16 sports held over 2 days. Following those first Police Olympics Duke wrote the following in the “Fall In” (San Diego Police Department’s magazine):

“One year ago, the announcement was made in San Francisco that the San Diego Police Officers Association would host the 1st Annual California Police Olympics. Now that event is history.

Frequently, time is necessary to determine the success or failure of a project. Not so with the Olympics. From the moment contestants began to arrive...comments were made about the program that warmed the hearts of the many officers that worked so hard to make the Police Olympics a successful venture. After the competition and awards presentation, the praises came fast and furious. Everyone was highly impressed and did not hesitate to tell us so.

There is only one way to account for this success. The men and women that believed in the idea of the Olympics worked hard to make this idea a reality. Every event came off without a major hitch. My hat is off to all that contributed to the establishment of what should become a great annual event.

The competition in every event was excellent. It was not until the competition began did anyone realize there were so many champions in law enforcement. State and National champions were found in Archery, Tennis, Weight Lifting, Pistol Shooting, Karate and Judo.

Competitors came to San Diego to compete and compete they did. The main comment heard from the losers was 'wait until next year. '

Duke's words and vision proved prophetic. What began in 1967 as the California Police Olympics is continuing to spread its influence across the United States of America and throughout the world. Today, there are a number of Police and Fire multi-sport athletic programs taking place throughout the United States and in several countries around the world. Many of these competitions publicly recognize Duke as the father of the movement.