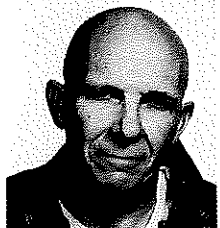


THE HISTORY OF "SPEEDY"



Wilder A. Johnson, Jr.

The history of "Speedy", the national symbol of PVA, as recounted by the late Ted Anderson in the July 1955 issue of the Paraplegia News. "The little man in the flying wheelchair,

who adorns our front page regularly has become, through the irresistible force of his personality, a national emblem for the PVA. As Editor John Price has commented: The little guy sure captures your imagination. We thought you might be interested in the original story of the pipe smoking lad."

"He was born in the latter part of 1946 at the Birmingham VA Hospital in Van Nuys, California, the first home of the California PVA. Wilbur Hyde, who was the Chapter's secretary at the time, asked Wilder A. Johnson, Jr. to have a suitable emblem drawn. He complied with two or three different sketches. From the sketches submitted, the high flying man was selected by the California PVA's Board of Directors. California immediately put the emblem on its stationery and lower left corner of envelopes and, later, on the automobile decal. Through the years, we have received many wonderful comments about the devil-may-care, get-the-hell-out-of-my-way fellow. "Some people may feel that the little man's attitude is too flippant to be a national emblem for paraplegics. We cordially do not agree. Leave us not become too pompous about this business of paraplegia. We think there is a good deal of worthwhile philosophy to be observed in the little man if one will take the time to study him carefully. First, he is happy.

He is not sitting around and crying the blues about being in a wheelchair. Second, he's got places to go and he's in a hurry. You better get out of this guy's way or he'll run right over you. Third, and most important, you don't feel sorry for him. On the contrary—you can't help admiring his spunk.

When you first see him, he puts a smile on your face. Maybe he isn't serious enough to be a national paraplegic symbol, but we think so. He's symbolic of happiness, energy, drive, admiration and guts . . . and those are respected qualities in the paraplegic way of life.

The Speedy emblem was unanimously endorsed by the 1958 Convention to be PVA's national emblem. A year later the symbol was registered with the U.S. Patent Office.

To this day Speedy remains an appropriate symbol of PVA. The qualities drawn in the original Speedy are evident today in the organization and its membership. The energy and drive are reflected in the continual expansion and improvement of PVA's programs. The professionally staffed veterans services program reflects the basic goal of assisting all veterans with VA claims. It also reflects Speedy's optimistic outlook on life. By profession and by personal example PVA's Service Officers

are there to help catastrophically disabled veterans. Speedy's "spunk" is reflected in PVA's new Advocacy program. That program is geared to take whatever action is needed to enhance and protect the civil rights of all disabled individuals.

The energy and drive of Speedy are recognized in another way, the Speedy Awards, two awards that recognize and honor the accomplishments of a disabled and non-disabled person and their contributions in the field of paraplegia. Adopted in 1956, this award has been presented every year since, with the exception of 1961, and is PVA's highest honor awarded. Recipients for the past two years have been:

Non Disabled

1977

Ahmed Z. El Ghatit, M.D.
V.A. Hospital
Wood, Wisconsin

1978

Jonas Salk
The Salk Institute
P.O. Box 1809
San Diego, California 92112

Disabled

1977

Odell W. Vaughan
Deputy Administrator
Veterans Administration
Washington, D.C.

1978

Carlos Rodriguez
Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association
432 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10016



Source:
PVA Annual Report
1978