



Members of the Class of 2003

John Sands

For the person of John Sands, the well-planned purpose of the stars in the heavens was to remind and motivate mankind of the moral imperative to reach beyond their grasp of living. As a paraplegic he was given the difficult assignment of coping with a physical malady, the extent of which would have mentally saddled many a man. In his typical fashion however, he accepted his assignment and utilizing a stout and unimpaired spirit, John wrote history as the first Bahamian international medallist in paraplegic sports.

Thusly, John cast the mould for excellence which typified the level of achievement that paraplegic athletes of The Bahamas have managed to attain from the time of their inaugural international excursion in 1971. John was a part of that two-man team which travelled to the Jamaica Wheelchair Games in Kingston Jamaica. He next participated in the Paralympics Games in Heidelberg, Germany in 1972. The exposure proved an invaluable learning experience, permitting John to mature as an athlete, evidenced by the Silver Medal that he later won in the discuss at the Pan American Wheel Chair Games at Stoke Mandeville, England in 1978.

The significance of this achievement by John is that it marked the first time that a paraplegic athlete from The Bahamas had succeeded in medaling at a major International competition. This first medal was what propelled John and a growing number of physically challenged athletes to achieve even greater international successes.

John led The Bahamas team to the Paralympics Games in Manheim, Holland in 1980. The team returned home with medals in track and swimming. He next led The Bahamas to the Pan American Wheelchair Games in Halifax, Canada in 1982. At these games John was outstanding, combining with his team mates to accumulate fifteen medals. This collective performance was the best to date by The Bahamas in international paraplegic sports.

John's greatest as an athlete was tied directly to the sheer power of his will and the Philosophy which he internalized to reach beyond his grasp.