



# SPM NEWSLETTER

St. Petersburg Masters | North Shore Aquatic Complex

## Teamwork Makes the Dreamwork

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Where to begin? There were so many events that took place this quarter, I had a hard time keeping up. Local swim meets. National swim meets. Open water swims around the country. ePostals. Triathlons. Socials. The SPM Facebook page and Instagram feed were buzzing away! And I worried that there wouldn't be very much material. Silly me. We are at 20 pages of thoughtful writing, shared experiences, and wonderful moments captured in photos.

The overriding theme of this issue is *teamwork*. It appears in some form of each article. Mike Zabel leads in with the theme in his President's Corner. Gary runs with it in his observations from Nationals. I heard it in Peter Betzer's voice when he contacted me about the 35-39 Women's 200m backstroke race in Sarasota. Relay teams help win banners, Top Ten, and All-American rankings. All the open water swimmers recognize their support teams. I may be biased, but I think that SPM is an extraordinary team with a rich history. Some members have been with the team for over 30 years, some over 40 years. Bob Beach started the team over 50 years ago. And what's even more exciting is that the team continues to grow with new members, young and old, every month. We were even recognized by the City of St. Petersburg as I was pulling this newsletter together! Stay tuned for details in the next issue.

On a somber note, while there was much to celebrate, there is also extremely sad news to share. We mourn the loss of three teammates who were taken from us far too soon. Friends and family have written heartfelt tributes to Andy Rogers, Vance Eaddy, and Jodi Schwartz. Each one of them has helped shape our team.

Thank you all who helped with this issue: Gary Bastie, Peter Betzer, Sheila Carpenter-VanDijk, Dawn Clark, Sherry Coval, Bruce Day, Nancy Eaddy, Stephanie Gibson, Alison Hayden, Megan Howson, Andrew Leone, Eric Menges, Chelsea Nauta, Greg Stanek, Gloria Smith, Mike Smith, Sarah Swoch, Brittany Tarwater, Valerie Valle, Karen Westerman, and Mike Zabel.

As always, all ideas, articles, photos are appreciated! Please them to me at [livia.zien@gmail.com](mailto:livia.zien@gmail.com). The next issue will cover events from October-December. Happy swimming, everyone!

## Upcoming Pool Events

**Oct 22: 3000/6000 ePostal Team Day – 8am**

**Nov. 11-12 / SCM: Shark Tank Meet. Sarasota FL. [Information & online entry](#). Entry deadline: online entry closes Monday, November 6**

**Dec. 2-3 / SCY: Florida State Senior Games. Temple Terrace FL. [Information & entry](#). Entry deadline: received by Tuesday, November 14. Senior games for 50+. USMS-recognized**

**Feb. 3 / SCY: Gulf Coast Games for Life. Sarasota FL. Senior games for 50+. will be USMS-recognized**

**Feb. 10-11 / SCY: Valentine's Meet. Clearwater FL**

## President's Corner

from the President's recently cleaned and vacuumed Guitar Studio

Unlike about 99% of you, I never really swam competitively much before I came to SPM four years ago. My entire swimming experience lasted from 1976 until 1978. Yes, about the finest two years of music the world has ever seen. Parliament, The Eagles, Doobie Brothers. All of whom are still knocking around, much like me. I swam for the Santa Clara Swim Club in Santa Clara California. I guess some of you may have swum there in our Long Course International Meet. I did ok as a 16–18-year-old, not bad but got to train with some Olympic swimmers including my lane mate Pablo Morales. I bring this up because those two years were fun, being with a team. Two a day practices, away swim meets. You really do become close to your teammates.

40 plus years later and after 27 years in the Navy, I can tell you that being on a Team is special. My closest friends to this day are those with whom I shared life in the Iraqi desert under fire. They are the aunts and uncles to my kids and brothers and sisters to me forever. In some cases, they are closer to me and my family than some of my “real” family.

I bring all this up because it can be easy to forget what we all have here at SPM. Think about your work. Are you so close, physically, and mentally to your co-workers where you can share a conversation in five second gaps? Have you ever spent 90 minutes, six days a week with a co-worker, dressed only in a small number of synthetic fibers with a cap on your head and goggles, breathing heavily? Well, that's not a great image but you can guess my meaning.

Everyone here at SPM shares most of our life experiences in such easy familiarity that we are in some cases tighter than most families. Each of us can tell when our lane mate is feeling great, low, or just so-so. We share family stories, how work, school, professional lives are going in such detail that we would never share at home.

The pool is our sanctuary, our safe place. In my Navy days with the Teams, we were taught from day one to find refuge in the water, and to see it as a safe place. If our boat or Platoon were under fire and being overwhelmed by a superior force, and there was a large body of water nearby, two things are probably true. First, we inserted from that body of water, after a prolonged swim or boat ride. Second, we were likely trying like hell to get back into that water and put distance between ourselves and the superior enemy force.

At our age, it's not all high school proms, college parties and youthful bodies that were bulletproof to late nights and late morning (afternoon) sleep-ins. Yeah, the old days were fun. Our lives today are much more complicated and like it or not, the joys are evened out by sorrow, by lost opportunities, by estranged family, divorces, death, physical injuries, or disease. As the saying goes, it's not easy getting old.

Myself, I struggle with depression and PTSD. The last year has been spent dealing with my mom's dementia and recent death due to pancreatic cancer. Were all in this boat, but it all goes back to belonging to a team, finding refuge in the water, is what brings us together, makes those long months of mental and physical pain, both in and out of the pool, a little more survivable by breaking them down like a long set, into smaller, more manageable pieces. And through all of us we have our teammates, always there to share a story, crack a joke, or simply to be there with us practically naked physically and mentally. Long meets, practices and travel have made us a team, in many ways closer than family, and for me that is what keeps me coming back to SPM and the pool.

Later, Zabel [captainzabel@gmail.com](mailto:captainzabel@gmail.com) (301) 943-3443



Officially official at the Good Life Games  
(photo: G. Smith)

## Coach's Corner

by Gary Bastie

In order to make certain that this isn't "Coach's Coroner", I have some thoughts regarding health issues. And, that's the topic of this article.

First, if you've been out of the water for a while, consider coming back slowly. Maybe do part of the workout, skip an interval so you can catch your breath, and stop if there's pain or that small voice inside you says something's up. Do that and you'll be less apt to injure yourself, bring too much negative stress upon yourself, or in some other fashion, cause the opposite of what you're in the pool for, fitness and health.

Second, work proper technique. It's the bad technique that usually injures us. Sometimes it's simple things like hanging on the wall or lane line with the same arm/shoulder that hurts otherwise. Keep your eyes on what you're doing and try to maintain good form, especially when tired. If you get too tired to do that, take a breather.

Third, blood tests, doctor checkups, watching your diet, sleep, and other aspects of your life help keep you running like a cared-for car. It's the cars that never get checked that usually break down first and so it is with us. Do your part and let the medical community do theirs.

Fourth, don't push when you know you're at your max. By that I mean, sometimes you know when it's time to stop. But rather than stop, you keep going and something's not right. Take a shoulder injury. Let's say you have a sore shoulder. You can put on fins to take some of the stress off the shoulder or, you can continue to push. Maybe what you need are fins, to kick the next set, or to do shorter workouts for a while until you heal. The same can be true for knees. If your knees hurt if you kick breaststroke, then don't kick breaststroke.

And, finally, if you have a shoulder injury, consider just kicking a workout. If it's your knees, consider pulling with fins. I've found that if you drag your legs with fins, your knees get an added break (no pun intended). But, if you must, consider less yardage, doing different strokes, or modifying a set so that it works for, and not against you. That's all folks!



## Pool Competitions

With USMS Summer LCM Nationals in sight, SPM was busy hustling to encourage members to sign up for the event while kicking off the LCM season with our annual SPM Long Course Championship. Our long-running LCM meet gave our team and local teams opportunities gear up for the end of summer Nationals. But wait, there's more! Even after Nationals, there was the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual SWAGfest in Gainesville and the Dog Days Meet up in Clearwater to round out our local LCM meets. And Mike Smith snuck in a National Senior Games (SCY) meet in Pittsburgh even before the USMS Summer Nationals!

### 2023 SPM Long Course Championship



Peter Betzer and Bob Beach (photo: V. Valle)

swam their first USMS meet. New members who also swam their

NSAC was host to the annual SPM Long Course Championship from July 8-9. 179 swimmers registered, 48 of them (22 women and 26 men) SPMers who racked up 1932 points by the end of the 2-day meet. Aside from the firsts won in the water, the meet was also a first for other reasons.

Daniel Diab,  
Ethan Hall,  
Joseph Novak,  
Claire Piazza,  
and Christopher Shapiro



(photo: S. Carpenter-vanDijk)



(photo: S. Carpenter-vanDijk)



first meet as part of SPM included Cameron Chambers, Jeff Gould, Dick Keiser, and Tom Pollock. Welcome!

Congratulations to SPM High Point winners!

- Women 25-29 Megan Howson (our 25-29 women were strong, with the top 4, point earners being from SPM— Kelly Deuser was second, Claire Piazza was third, and Claudia Gomez was fourth)
- Men 30-34 Christopher Stickle
- Men 35-39 Russell Hawkins
- Women 50-54 Paula Texel
- Women 70-74 Sheila Carpenter-vanDijk (and our very own Geraldine Jacobson was right behind Sheila—second place by one point)
- Men 75-79 Dick Keiser
- Men 90-94 Bob Beach

Many thanks to Heni's daughters (Haley and Ansley), James Ferinden, Scott Corry, Phyllis Scheidt (both days), Mike Zabel (both days), Anna Lopez (both days), Jonathan Porceli, Tom Crichton, Christine Gould, Tim DeBoy (both days), Tabitha Brandt, Noelle Ponce (both days), Patty Nardozi, Colleen O'Reilly, Todd Patterson, Laura Kaleel, Celeste Patton, Melissa Harasz, Philip Harasz, Matt Nixon, Beth Cullen. Sarah Swoch said it best, "Thank you, Brooke Bowman for being our meet director! It's a tremendous undertaking that takes months from publishing the meet to organizing volunteers and making sure everything goes smoothly the day of the event. Thank you to our officials! We appreciate you being on deck in the summer heat making sure our strokes are legal and our meet sticks to the timeline. Thank you to all our volunteer timers! We appreciate you coming out to cheer us on, give us our times, and give us a chance to compete!"

Results can be found [here](#).



(photo: V. Valle)



(photo: V. Valle)



(photo: V. Valle)

## National Senior Games

Mike Smith has been our SPM representative at the National Senior Games for several years. In 2019, he traveled to Albuquerque, NM and won his 50yd freestyle event, placing 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in his other events. 2021 was the COVID



Top spot on the podium for Lorcan (M. Smith)

year, but when the games resumed in 2022 in Ft. Lauderdale, Mike was there again this time with Mike Zabel, making SPM proud. Mike won all his individual events (50 free, 50-100-200 breaststroke, 50 fly, and 100 IM), placing 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 200yd breaststroke. This year, in Pittsburgh, PA, he finished in the top 3 in each of his individual events, winning his 50yd free and 50yd fly events. His times in the 50yd and 200yd breaststroke races were his best performance of his previous Games. And for the icing on the cake, Mike added another gold medal as he anchored a 200yd Medley relay in the 60-64 age group with Dale Charrette (butterfly), Samantha Martoni (breaststroke), and Heidi Henning (backstroke) to



National Champion 200yd medley relay (photo: D. Charrette)



represent Florida. They finished in 2:08.89, just touching out the second-place team by 0.08 of a second, becoming national champions! Congratulations on another successful meet and great performances, Mike!

He and his wife Gloria (whose action filled meet photos we all enjoy) often make the trip about more than just the meet. This year was no exception. NSG has plenty of social activities as Mike describes in his Facebook post below. And, to top it off, his cousin Vena, her husband Brian, and their son Lorcan all came out to cheer Mike on!

Additionally (and I hope I don't get in trouble for this), unbeknownst to him, Mike was also featured in the Huntsman World Senior Games flyer in St. George, UT. What a way to represent SPM, Mike!

In his Facebook post, he writes:

*"There were nearly 1,100 swimmers at the National Senior Games (NSG), aged 50+, with nearly 12,000 total competitors across 20 sports, July 7-18th, in Pittsburgh, PA. All NSG competitors received lower tier, free game tickets for the Pirates/Giants game and all competitors were able to walk in the "Celebration of Athletes" with their respective states around the inside perimeter of PNC Park just prior to the start of the game. The cast of The Sand Lot were there, "You're killin' me Smalls!" Digital signs were all about the convention center and would pick up a chip in our athlete badge and display personal messages of encouragement. We took in some of the other NSG events, basketball, pickleball, volleyball, and table tennis, walked and observed the architecture of downtown, had some very good*



The cheering squad (M. Smith)



Sightseeing over the river (M. Smith)

*cuisine, watched fireworks over the river, and drove over a couple of the 446 bridges in Pittsburgh! All in all, it was an eventful, fun week. Swimmers also received an NSG cap and TYR goggles. I was happy to win three gold; 50 free, 50 fly and an exciting finish in the mixed medley relay, one silver and four bronze. The next NSG will be in Des Moines, IA in 2025, with the qualifying events taking place in 2024."*



## USMS Summer LCM Nationals

The buildup to Summer LCM Nationals in Sarasota began over a year ago when the venue was first announced in June 2022. And goals of getting out a great SPM turnout and bringing home a banner were both achieved! Coach Gary's observations highlight what SPM is about, the accomplishments, the teamwork, the camaraderie.

This USMS Nationals meet also appears to be a first for several of our members:

Stephanie Gibson, Jeff Gould, Alyssa Harmon, Russell Hawkins, Scott Hensley, Mitchel Hoffman, Nancy Kiernan, Anna Lopez, Christopher Nelson, Matt Nixon, Joseph Novak, Claire Piazza, Noelle Ponce, Mike Smith, and Mike Zabel. Many have been regularly participating in local meets over the years, some just recently joined.

There was a lot of energy over social media, pool pictures, congratulatory remarks, fun photos ... Peter Betzer's exuberance



Official to Judge (photo: M. Zabel)



Mike and Steve catch some shade (photo: C. Kupan)



(photo: P. Betzer)



overflowed off the deck into an email to me Sunday afternoon. "The backstroke SLAM that Sarah & Allison recorded might be a first for SPM. My memory is foggy, but I cannot think of anything like this at a national or international swim meet," he said. Allison Retotar and Sarah Swoch placed 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 200m backstroke. He suggested that dynamic duo be highlighted in the next newsletter, and he went a step further to have our team recognized by St. Petersburg City Council for our legacy and presence in the City. (More to come in the next newsletter!)

Meets cannot take place without the extraordinary effort of organizers and volunteers. Ask any meet director. Aside from swimming their own races, Steve Freeman and Mike Zabel both did double duty at the meet, volunteering as officials. SPM did not just step up their game in swimming. Thank you, Mike and Steve, for representing SPM as officials as well!

And for a few more statistics ... Paula Texel and Allison Retotar each contributed 47 points to the total, Bob Beach 46, Chris Stickle and Valerie Valle each with 45 points. Four double national champions – four women won two of their events, Chelsea Nauta (200m and 400m free), Allison Retotar (100m breast and 200m back), Paula Texel (800m free and 100m back), and Valerie Valle (1500m and 400m free). Judge Beach won his 100m freestyle event. Congratulations on your stellar races!

But our team runs deep. SPM was represented in **every single event**. That's right. In all 46 events a representative from our team competed and scored points. Congratulations to you all!

Full results can be found [here](#). USMS has also coordinated videos of each event with the swimmer's name. Click on the name and a series of videos will appear for each event swim. Access the list of swimmers [here](#).



(photo: S. Swoch)



(photo: G. Smith)

## Observations From the Deck During Masters Nationals in Sarasota

by Gary Bastie

What Bob Beach began in 1970 continues to improve over time. For instance, while we won nationals in 1997, I can't say that was somehow the golden age of SPM. That's because the program continues to improve, and I thought you might enjoy seeing a few reasons why that's true because it became obvious in Sarasota.

With each year, more swimmers have joined SPM, been on the Board of Directors, and the program keeps getting more sophisticated and of higher quality. And, the Nationals in Sarasota showed why.

SPM brought a total of 48 swimmers to Sarasota. In the end, SPM placed 5th out of 211 teams. Keep in mind that the larger teams had up to three times our number but didn't beat us by much. It was close at the top and that's because SPM had people step up, win or medal in events, and score points in large numbers. When I say large numbers, we were always in the top of each age group and our relays were always vying for the top spots.

Take continuity. Bob Beach continues to swim and score points. At the age of 93, that's quite an accomplishment. Peter Betzer, and new swimmers like Dick Keiser also contributed to the continuity of



(photo: S. Gibson)



Group Tub (photo: S. Swoch)

swimmers like Dick Keiser also contributed to the continuity of

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SPM's being one of the best teams in the world because, at ages 81 and 79, they're still at it, scoring points, and placing high in each of their events. In addition, all our 48 swimmers contributed to our point total so that in the end, we truly earned a high place. We had some surprises, a few disappointments, but mostly great swims due to the hard work everyone put in.

What made the national meet special is that's how SPM rolls. We've always had a quality team with a quality effort. And, we had hats, shirts, bags, and other paraphernalia that advertised St. Pete. We



(photo: E. Menges)



Brought home the banner (photo: G. Smith)



(photo: S. Swoch)

were a credit to the City we represent, and that goes a long, long way. Our reputation precedes us. Each year, we have visitors who want to join us for a practice or two. In fact, a number have moved here to become a part of SPM.

In writing up some of our unique team statistics, I was reminded how we have members who are in their 20's to their mid- 90's. Some of our members have used swimming to recover from heart attacks, dread diseases, serious injuries, and even life's difficulties. We have an ex-Special Olympic swimmer, who loves the program so much that he medaled at nationals, and we have long-timers and ex-Olympic swimmers who continue to swim, even when injuries would have sidelined others. In short, SPM is filled with high achievers who are a credit to both the team and community.

Personally, I don't want to single out any one person's efforts during the meet because I'd miss someone. Instead, I'll make some general comments because we had those who weren't supposed to win or place but did; those who made relays place higher

than expected; those who gave all they had and elevated those around them; and far too many great swims to comment on. I will say however, that on the deck, our team supported one another, cheered, commiserated with, and congratulated as a team. Again, that's how SPM rolls.

In the future, we have swim meets that I hope others will be able to join. While some can't travel, there are meets like the Rowdy Gaines Meet in Orlando, Sarasota's Short Course Meters Meet, the Valentines Meet in Clearwater, and so on. If you want to swim in one, feel free to ask me or someone who's been competing for details. Then, since Spring will soon be upon us, consider swimming in our meet in March. If you've never swim in a meet, everything you



Kern, Mike, and Steve (photo: G. Smith)



Steve Freeman – 1500m (photo: S. Swoch)



Dawn Clark – 1500m (photo: S. Swoch)



(photo: C. Stickle)



Sarah and Alison (photo: S. Swoch)



swim will be a best time. And that's the approach we all need to have. Well done SPM. It was an honor to help out in Sarasota.

Thank you, Gloria Smith for the wonderful photos below!



Mike Zabel



Lisa Flanagan



Mike Smith



Karen Westerman



Stephanie Gibson



Steve Freeman



Cheryl Kupan



Anna Lopez



Eric Herman



Ken Wazyaniak



Eric Herman



Sherri Bogue



Chelsea Nauta

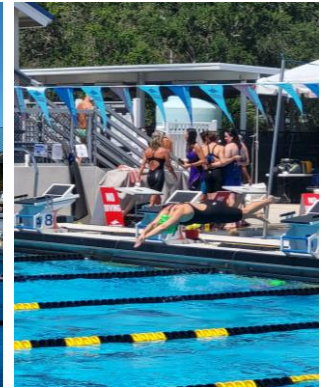




Russell Hawkins



Kern Davis



Alyssa Harmon

## 1<sup>st</sup> Annual SWAGfest and Dog Days LCM Masters Swim Meet

On Sunday, August 20 at SWAGfest in Gainesville, Chery Kupan completed her Leather Lung Award pursuit, rounding out her season with the 200m and 400m freestyle, the 50m and 200m butterfly, and the 200m IM. Representing SPM by herself, she won all her events, and placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 50m fly. Congratulations on another bobblehead to be added to your growing collection!

Nine swimmers participated in the Dog Days of Summer Meet at the Long Center on 9/9. This small but fast group collected too many 1<sup>st</sup> place finishes to count. Sherri Bogue and Tom Pollock logged the longest distance at 2300m, swimming all of the freestyle events. Congratulations also to Daniel Diab, Russell Hawkins, Geraldine Jacobson, Allison Retotar, Greg Salomon, Phyllis Scheidt, and Chris Stickle!

Results can be found [here](#).



## ePostals – 5K/10K

What a turnout for the 5K/10K Virtual Championships! June 25, August 20, and September 10 were designated team days. SPM showed up with 17 swimmers for the 5K event, the most of any team. The outcome? The 8 women and 9 men won the combined team category, with women placing 1<sup>st</sup> and the men placing 2<sup>nd</sup> overall.

Although fewer swimmers participated in the 10K, the 6 women placed 2<sup>nd</sup> overall, and the solo male (thank you, Chris Stickle!)

placed 5<sup>th</sup>, placing them 2<sup>nd</sup> in the combined team category.

There were lots and lots of Top Tens and lots and lots of National Champions. Looks like the next awards banquet will be bustling with Top Ten and All-American awards. Jim Esposito, in his 5K swim debut, placed 8<sup>th</sup> in his age group and found himself to be an All-American on the 35+ Men's 5K relay with Andrew Leone and Russell Hawkins. Allison Retotar and Sarah Swoch delivered another one-two sweep in the 35-39 Women's 5K. Kelly Deuser, Sarah Swoch, Stephanie Gibson, Dawn Clark, and Chris Stickle swam both the 5K and 10K races!

Congratulations to all who participated: Megan Howson, Allison Retotar, Sarah Swoch, Stephanie Gibson, Paula Texel, Dawn Clark, Sherri Bogue, Macarena Martin Mayor, Chris Stickle, Cameron Chambers, Andrew Leone, Russell Hawkins, Jeff Gould, Jim Esposito, Steve Freeman, Carl Selles, and Pat Marzulli.

A shoutout also goes to all those who stayed on the dry side of the pool. Counting in is itself quite a marathon event.

Full results can be found [here](#).

Remember, the 3000/6000 ePostal takes place from Oct 15 through Dec 15. SPM Team day is on October 22 at 8am and November 12.

## Open Water Swimming

Even with all the pool meets during the summer, we had more than our share of adventurous open water swimmers. Andrew Leone traveled up to the cold waters of New England. Sarah Swoch dove



(photo: S. Gibson)



headfirst into marathon swimming, completing three open water swims, two of them marathon events (> 10K). And Dawn Clark, Alison Hayden, and Noelle Ponce headed South to the Keys for the Swim for Alligator Lighthouse event. Enjoy the thoughtful narratives of each of their races.

## Swim Around Nahant

by Andrew Leone

On July 25, I completed a sanctioned solo 8.5-mile boat-supported swim around Nahant, a double island on the North Shore of Boston Massachusetts. Last year, I completed the Boston Lighthouse Swim and was looking for another cold-water adventure (<https://www.massowsa.org/around-nahant>). The Massachusetts Open Water Swimming Association (MOWSA) has a list of solo swims that can be attempted and are sanctioned by them. One of the many challenges of this swim was trying to find a boat captain who was free in the summer in New England (peak season) and willing to pilot me around Nahant. After reaching out to many boat captains, I was able to find one.

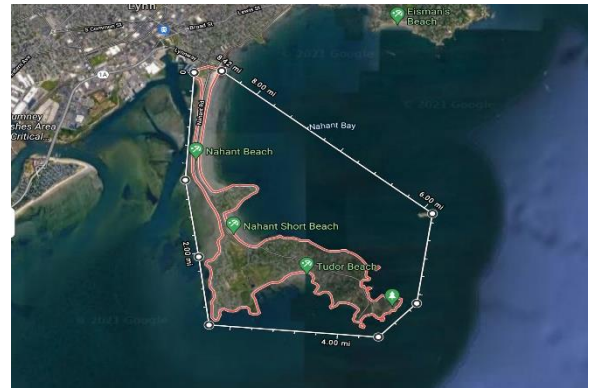
Another challenge was the day before the swim I received a call from my boat captain that local fishermen were detecting significant great white shark activity on the south end of Nahant.

MOWSA has a shark protocol and shark shields which they hang off the boat. After speaking with the President of MOWSA, Elaine, who would also be my official observer, I decided to proceed with swimming. One of the best parts of the swim was that my support crew consisted of my dad, my nine-year old daughter Hayley and Paul Vallituto, a local swimmer from Tampa.

Six previous outings had tackled this swim, and they all started right about at high tide. We aimed to start at high tide which was around 5:30am with the sun rising. We had amazing weather, about 75 degrees and sunny with winds <5 mph most of the swim. The water temperature ranged from 70 at the start to a low of 65 at the deepest point on the south side of the double island. The start was very exciting as a temporary massive ferry boat decided it needed to pass us right as we started the swim! I was able to hug the shore for a while and allow this 200-passenger ferry to pass.

I love cold water swimming and the water was surprisingly very clear and debris free. I did not encounter any marine life, not sure if it was the shark shield but that definitely gave me some peace of mind. The highlight was finishing and seeing the smile on my dad and daughter's faces at the end!

I highly recommend this swim to anyone interested. Let me know if you have questions. I hope to do another solo swim next summer in Massachusetts!



(photo: A. Leone)



(photo: A. Leone)

## Portland Bridges – Big Shoulders – Swim Around Charleston

by Sarah Swoch

This open water season has been one adventure swim after another. It started in July with the Portland Bridge swim and just ended with the Swim Around Charleston with a visit to Chicago to swim Big Shoulders too. It's been an incredible journey, which started with my introduction to marathon swimming in 2008 as Penny Palfrey's Tampa Bay Marathon Swim kayaker. She was going to swim 24 miles and break a record while doing it. She briefed me on what she needed from me as her guide up the Bay and I stuck by her side, maybe to closely sometimes, holding the heading and watching out for her safety. She gave me lots of tips, knowing before I did, that my interest wouldn't end at kayaking for races.

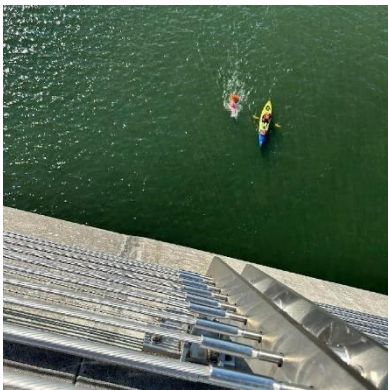
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It took me several years to overcome my fear of open water before I could relax and enjoy it. This year was the year. All Stephanie Gibson had to do was mention the Portland Bridge Swim. I immediately looked it up and decided it was the perfect birthday present to myself: a current-assisted 11-mile swim down the Willamette River under 12 bridges and the USMS Ultra Marathon Distance National Championship. I started my 500-mile journey of training and hoped the open water gods would allow everything to align for an epic swim.

SPM has a wealth of marathon swimming knowledge and is a great group of swimmers where someone is always ready to swim something goofy with you. Charlotte always adds a little extra credit to the end of practice; Chelsea reminds me it's all for fun; Megan is willing to stay a few more minutes to swim it up to an even number; Chris will stay on a Sunday and swim a marathon of a practice; and Kern swims a little more than usual at his afternoon butterfly practice. The Swim-To-Stay-Fit folks even made a little room for me when I did a second practice after our Masters practice. Stephanie, Maki, Andrew, Megan, Ian, and the open water crew were up for weekend adventures around islands and down the beaches. Everyone on the team contributed silly jokes, positive ways to think about sets, and the energy to swim when I didn't always have it. I was sore, tired, sometimes overtrained, occasionally cranky, and often wondered if I was doing it right. But I had a training plan and lots of advice from Chris Burke, Tim Kennedy, Ron Collins, Ann Heller von Spiegelfeld, and of course Penny Palfrey. I did my best to make sure I had a rest day, while also keeping my shoulders healthy, building up my time and distance in the water, having fun, and eating well.

### *Portland Bridge Swim*



As my trip to Portland approached, I put my team together, and my family was ready to cheer me on. My dad volunteered to kayak for me and did an excellent job of leading me down the river and feeding me exactly every 30 minutes. I was so thankful to have my dad there with me down the river and under all the bridges. It was comforting to trust he would be keeping track of everything, and my only job was to swim. My cousin came down from Seattle with her kids. Together with my mom, they made the best cheering squad from Tilikum Crossing. Their much-needed smiles and cheers lasted for miles as I found out that only a portion of the race would be current-assisted.

During the first mile, I focused on long and strong strokes, just cruising and warming up into the first feed. It worked, but as I moved through to the second feed, I could feel my progress slowing. The tide had changed, I don't think any of us were ready for how significant it was. Many of the relay teams put their slowest swimmer first and ended up being pulled at the first

checkpoint for not making fast enough progress. In training, swimming around Egmont Key was much harder, 22-minute 500s at one end, so I knew I could handle this. Slow progress isn't my favorite, but I swam with swimmers in Croatia who powered up during adverse conditions, and I tried to do the same.

Just behind Tilikum Crossing, the submarine was in the water at the science museum. It was the first relay exchange point. The sub was submerged, but I could see the orange buoy for the exchange and was excited to be 1/3 of the way into the swim and feeling good. The Marquam Bridge was up next, just far enough to be a good target to hit before another feed. The bridges hit fast after that. The Hawthorne Bridge is the oldest operational vertical lift bridge, and it did its thing as I approached. The Morrison Bridge followed by the Burnside Bridge rounded out the first 4 miles and reminded me of the bridges in Chicago. The Steel Bridge was another vertical lift bridge, and some spectators were standing along the railing to cheer for the swimmers.

The main group of bridges ends with the Freemont Bridge at about the 6-mile mark. The tide was starting to change, the miles going a bit faster. I was a little nervous about leaving behind the excitement of the bridges for a solid 4 miles of swimming down the river, but I started thinking about swimming around Honeymoon Island with Steph, Megan, and Maki. We swam in a row, in sync but keeping each other motivated to keep the pace up. I thought about that and focused on keeping my legs up and kicking. I was relieved to eventually pass the second relay exchange point with plenty of time to spare to avoid being pulled from the race. I kept a strong pull and admired the boats, cranes, and houses along the riverbank. Beautiful scenery and bridges aside, the course was a difficult one, and I was feeling some cramps at this point, in my shoulders, my side, my hip flexors. I had trained hard and through several different situations, so I kept on and sang *This Too Shall Pass*. The cramps passed and moved around to different parts of my body.







As I pulled into the last three miles of the race, I passed a few swimmers, a good sign for me. I knew better than to look ahead to the bridge that was still miles away. So, I kept swimming strong and enjoyed all the riverbank sights. The Burlington Northern Railroad Bridge marks 1-mile to go, and I began to think about the finish line. I also managed to peek to my left a little ahead of the kayak to see an enormous barge headed towards the bridge with a tugboat attached.

The last half hour really hurt. I could feel the hours of racing and was looking forward to being able to stop swimming soon. After a quick reminder to my dad not to try to stand up at the finish - kayaking for over 5 hours isn't easy either, I put what I had left into my fastest mile of the race. I even dared to look up at the gorgeous St. Johns Bridge which is attached to Cathedral Park. Eventually, I came up to the final buoy indicating the turn into the shore. I stood up slowly when I hit ankle deep water and walked up

to the finish line where race volunteers handed me my popsicle stick finisher number, unhooked me from my swim buoy, noted my race number, and congratulated me on my finish. Best of all Clara, my cousin's daughter, ran over to give me a high five! My mom, cousin, and the kids were able to track my progress and time their arrival at the finish just right. My dad managed to get to shore and unload the kayak, and we all had a picnic on the shore of the river.



## *Big Shoulders*

Wouldn't it be sad if there wasn't a next thing after the Portland Bridge Swim? I'd wanted to swim the Big Shoulders 5K in Chicago since they started it when I was a kid. At that time 5K was a huge distance to race, and I was too young to enter. Then, living in Florida, the warmest lake temperatures seemed colder and colder to me. After all the training though, I figured 5K would be no problem and quite a fun thing to do along the Chicago skyline.

My parents again became my support crew and shuttled me to packet pick-up and to the race. My dad grew up in Chicago, so visiting Ohio Street Beach brought back memories for him as did packet pick-up at University of Illinois at Chicago, his alma mater. The UIC pool held memories of my Junior Olympics there many years ago as well.



I had been monitoring the water temperature, worried I might have to switch to the wetsuit division if it ended up being too cold. Lake Michigan is nothing to underestimate. It can have upwelling events bringing very cold water to the surface even in the middle of summer. In past years, the race had to be cancelled due to extreme winds bringing 10-foot waves and storms on more than one occasion. The waves were high the day before the race. I didn't bother to attempt a pre-race swim. The weather report said they would calm down overnight, and when we arrived on the beach at sunrise the water looked reasonably calm and was 68 degrees. Conditions were close to the best-case scenario for Lake Michigan.

As one of the top 100 open water races in the world, the Big Shoulders swim is well attended by accomplished swimmers. It was a fun race with a great view of the skyline. UIC swimmers



volunteer and bring a ton of energy. The triangular course meant there were different conditions to swim in, but two loops meant I'd know exactly how to handle it on the second loop. Going out, the water was choppy and rolling, especially as I approached the turn since it was close to the opening in the breakwaters. The next stretch was a little

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calmer and I could easily sight off the black and white building. The next turn led to a spectacular skyline view to my right, but also some chop as the waves bounced off the seawall. It was cooler on this side as well. The second loop flew by, and the race was over with me wishing it was a 10K. I managed to score 3<sup>rd</sup> place in my age group, a sweet beer opener finisher medal, and having swum the race I'd dreamed about since I was a kid.

### *Swim Around Charleston*

This was my add-on race of the season. Some people were going, so I said why not!? Let's do it. I called up my cousin who lives in North Carolina, and he said yes to coming down to kayak the race with me. I knew from that moment on it would be a fun adventure. I didn't know anything about South Carolina, other than the BMW factory is there. My Lyft driver gave me a tour as he drove me over the suspension bridge I would swim under at the start of the race. Cruise ships, the yacht club, an aircraft carrier museum – The Yorktown were all on the list of sights to see.

As I jumped off the end of the dock for the start of the race, I could see the current assist was real. I paired up with Austin, my kayaking cousin, and we got into a nice rhythm as soon as the race started to space out. I worried about the salty water, having done so many freshwater swims, but the water was pleasantly brackish. The morning was calm and the water smooth, but that was short-lived. In open water swimming things change, often for the better, sometimes for the worse. Just under the Ravenel Bridge, the water turned into a disorganized chop with winds higher than predicted. The safety kayakers kept telling us to move over to the right, where I got a super up-close view of a docked cruise ship. To my left I could see the aircraft carrier on the other side of the harbor.



The winds and chop probably made this a tough kayak, but Austin toughed it out without complaint. We were approaching the Battery, a park that marks the point of Charleston, so we would be making a turn soon, I hoped it would lead to calmer water. Lots of people were cheering and a quick feed led me to discover it was incredibly shallow, though visibility didn't let me see any of the rocks I was kicking. Thankfully the water was smooth here giving me a break. The park is followed by huge southern houses then a yacht club where I got to wave at some yachters and their dogs. On to pass the Coast Guard Station where I swam past USCGC Yellowfin. I lost track of the hours but was feeling great and making strong progress through slack tide.

Faster than I expected, I saw the Scarborough Bridge and swam under to see the Ashley River Memorial bridges coming up quickly. Three bridges down, one to swim under and one to end just before. The Ashley River turned fresher, but I could still hear the clicking of crustaceans on the bridge pilings. The river became more natural with grass on both sides. By now the tide was incoming and even though it was only a quarter moon, I was making 18–19-minute miles. Some might say the grass shoreline is boring, but I really enjoy the focus that sameness can bring. I had passed the halfway point. I thought Austin told me I was in 13<sup>th</sup>, but I later found out he had said I was the 3<sup>rd</sup> woman. Swimmers are idiots was the race director's instruction to kayakers, it's so true. I ran straight into a kayak, a buoy (despite Austin's attempts to guide me away from it), tried to swim off course, and couldn't hear anything. My goal was to enjoy the 12.5 miles of scenery and swimming with my cousin. I think we accomplished that, while also wondering what that castle was in the distance. I later found out it's The Citadel.

The water remained calm, and I quickly found deep fast water. The Coast Guard was my escort down the river until I reached the Cosgrove Bridge, no more clicking of crustaceans. The water probably qualified as fresh now but became choppy again and I felt like I was going nowhere. Austin assured me we were making good progress. I could see a relay boat coming up on my left and a kayaker with a swimmer to my right. We swam like this for quite some time until we rounded the last turn into the finish. The relay was cheering for each other, and everyone was close together, so I figured we were nearing the finish. The boat fumes were unpleasant, so I had two choices: speed up to get ahead of it or let them pass. Feeling like we were close to the finish I opted to turn on the kick and see how far I could get before something cramped up. It turned out I could get all the way to the finish, passing the relay (even though they were technically 10 minutes ahead of me since they started 10 minutes after the solo swimmers), and the swimmer on my right. When I finally dared to look up, I could see the finish buoy on the dock. I went for it, and I'm so glad I did. Turns out I was the first female finisher; I didn't know it until about an hour later. The second female finisher was only about 20 seconds behind me. The relay next to me turned out to be Michelle Davidson and Nancy Steadman Martin, two triple



crowners and pioneering open water swimmers. I swam a relay with Michelle at Y Nationals in the spring and couldn't have been more excited to see her again.

Afterwards, Austin and I sat on the dock, ate sandwiches, and cheered on the rest of the finishers as we waited for his girlfriend to bring in the swimmer she was kayaking for. If I were to go back in time and tell my 20-year-old self that I would be swimming 20K races I would have never believed it. It has me dreaming that maybe someday I might be tough enough to swim a 24-mile race.

## Alligator Lighthouse

*Dawn Clark, Alison Hayden, and Noelle Ponce headed South to the Keys to participate in the Swim for Alligator Lighthouse event on September 9. Dawn and Alison share their experiences in the beautiful but challenging race.*



(photo: D. Eidsmoe)

by Dawn Clark

You would think after swimming the famous Alligator Lighthouse 3 times, I would be a pro. Not the case. The first time I did the Lighthouse, 2018, I was with a novice kayaker. He was amazing. It was my first attempt at 8 miles. The water was warm, but not too bad. There were jellies, but not too bad. The water was not so choppy, until the turn-around. It got choppy due to all the boats and that's where things got interesting for me. I started to feel nauseous at around 4 ½ miles. By mile 5, I was getting sick, really sick. My kayaker encouraged me to keep going, but to go slow and try backstroke. I finally finished, 40 minutes longer to get back than it took me to get out. UGH! My goal was under 5, finished at 4:47.43. My second attempt, 2019, due to a storm coming, the course was shortened to 4 miles. This swim went smoothly for me and my kayaker, the best ever, Heni Szeredi. The water was rough, but not too warm. I didn't get sick and there were no jellies on my course. I finished at 2:03.40.

My third attempt, 2021, was a rough year. While the water wasn't too warm, the surf was rough, and the jellies were out! Heni and I both had a rough time with the wind. I did not get sick, but it was brutal for the both of us. I finished at 4:57.56.

Here we are, 2023. The weekend started on Thursday with Heni, Alison, and me driving down to Islamorada for a girls' weekend! We arrived in time to check in to our Airbnb and then to Amara Cay for early packet pickup. Joining us later in the day for the race weekend was Noelle Ponce and her kayaker, Angelo. Friday, we went for a warmup swim at the famous Founders Park, Ron Levy Aquatic Center. From there, we went on a 4-hour snorkeling trip to the Lighthouse. It was a beautiful day! We got to see lots of fish and jellies!! Back to the house for dinner and to prepare for our swim the next morning. Our personal chef, Heni, made the best spaghetti Bolognese ever!!! RACE DAY... and my 4th attempt. I'm ready. Heni is ready, and we both feel like it's going to be a good day. I was hoping to best my time from the first year. Things did not go as planned. While we thought the water was going to be extremely hot, we were surprised when they announced the water to be 84.6. However, I do believe it was hotter than that as the day went on. The first two miles were smooth sailing, no jellies in sight. That suddenly changed at mile 2, when the gates opened. Nothing but jellies. There was no way to get around them. This lasted for about a mile, and then we had a break from them. Rounding the lighthouse, I started to feel the motion of the waves, and again at around mile 5, I was sick again. This time, worse than the first year. This is also where all the jellies were. So, I was dealing with jellies and sickness at the same time. UGH! Heni asked me if I wanted to call the medic and call it a day. I declined and finally made my way to the finish. My slowest swim of the 4 at 5:15.01. While I was disappointed, I was happy just to finish.

Noelle was right behind me with a time of 5:29.30.



(photo: D. Eidsmoe)

While this year was a disappointment for me, it was a great day for Alison Hayden. She was definitely motivated and race day ready. She started off in the first wave. Clear water and at the "go", she was off! She too, had the jellies to fight through, but she made it look easy. Her kayaker, Dan Eidsmoe, is a local of the Keys, and somewhat of a pro. He is also an amazing photographer and took many great photos of Alison on her way to a 3rd place female finish with a time of 3:57.18. Huge Congrats to Alison!!!

by Alison Hayden

This year's Alligator Lighthouse swim was my 7th time participating in the event. I've watched this event grow from a handful of folks starting out in the solo division to incredible masses of people. The first year, 2013, had 25 finishers. I believe this year 150 solo swimmers started out and several relays including 2, 3 and 4 person relays. A great event and folks really seem to enjoy it, I am partial to the old location at the Moorings beach where kayaks are slid into the sea from the beach rather



(photo: D. Clark)

than masses of kayaks being lifted over a sea wall. Who wouldn't like to start at the most beautiful spot of beach in the Keys as there are hardly any beaches?

One of my main reasons for returning to the event is because of Larry Herlth aka "Lighthouse Larry". He was the first person ever to swim to the Lighthouse - I believe that was 2012 as the race began 2013. Herlth attempted the swim as a crusade to raise awareness about Alligator lighthouse. The fundraiser is called "friends of the pool" as well as supporting lighthouse restoration. The proceeds also provide scholarship opportunities to those in need. Larry and I have remained close friends throughout the years, and he even moved and built a home in St. Augustine, my previous residence when I moved to Florida. My main reason for returning is to catch up with Larry.

To do the race as a solo participant you need a kayaker as a guide. I have had many kayakers throughout the years. In the early years I had friends from the triathlon community help out, I then just randomly found them after that. This year I hit the kayaker lottery - Dan Eidsmoe. Dan is a local and quite the kayaker, bordering on the professional level. Previous to the race, he had kayaked out to the lighthouse a handful of times in a record time of 2.5 hours. After hearing this I knew I was in excellent hands. He did an excellent job of leading the way and snapping some wonderful pictures; however, he was unable to push the jellyfish away.

This year's race was better than most despite the many stinging sea creatures. It was a warm sunny day with calm seas and a slight current on the return trip home from the lighthouse. I finished amongst the top, hard to win when Brook Bennett shows up, but she always gives one a challenge.

I had a great time with my group of gal friends. It seems to have become a tradition over the years to meet up and enjoy the Keys while participating in the event.

I have other swims in mind in the future, however I will probably head back to the Lighthouse next year to keep up the tradition.



(photo: D. Eidsmoe)

## Triathlon News



**IRONMAN**  
MARYLAND

## Ironman Maryland 2023

Karen Westerman is a woman of many talents. Not only is she an amazing swimmer, wonder-butterflyer, synchronized swimming diva, mother of twin college students, she is also now a two-time Ironman finisher ... sharing fun with all her endeavors, earning her the nickname, Fun Karen!

On September 16, she competed in Ironman Maryland (13:59.34) and dropped a significant amount of time from her first race in 2017 Florida Ironman (16:21). She achieved a new PR, and finished 1<sup>st</sup> in the swim, and 7<sup>th</sup> in her age group. She and her husband Russ are quite the Iron Couple. Among the many she thanks, she adds, "Huge thanks to my entire swim family at SPM who cheered me on and gave me so much advice." Read her summary adapted from her Facebook page race report below:

*What a journey! It all started a year ago when Russ and I decided to tackle the Gerry Boyle Crabby Challenge which is to complete the Ironman Eagleman and the Ironman Maryland in the same year. We started hardcore training and completed Ironman Eagleman in June and then on Saturday, we both completed Ironman Maryland, so we received a 3rd medal for the Crabby Challenge. We put in all the work during our training, but it was difficult to manage at times in the Florida heat.*





On race morning, we were up early to eat breakfast and headed to Ironman Village. Once we arrived, we went into the transition area to prepare our bikes. That's when we heard over the loudspeaker that they were shortening the swim due to a stacked tide that caused the Choptank River to be very choppy. There was a small craft advisory, and they felt the currents would be too much for the safety vessels to maneuver.

At the swim start, you self-seed according to your anticipated pace. After putting on my wetsuit, I headed to my chute and looked around, and it was mostly men towards the front. After the cannon is fired, they send us into the water one by one every 5 seconds. The swim was pretty choppy, but I didn't have trouble sighting the buoys until after the first turn when the sun was in my eyes. I alternated between backstroke and freestyle. For my OWS friends, this was a first for me, but backstroke was actually faster for me because the wetsuit constricted my arm strokes in freestyle. I sighted on buoys I had already passed and stayed on course beautifully. At the finish, we had to make our way up the slimy boat ramp, but there were plenty of volunteers to assist us, so we didn't fall. Then we ran up to a carpeted area where there are 'strippers,' the volunteers who strip off your wetsuit for you in about 3 seconds)! Next, I ran over to the bike gear bags where Rob was volunteering and yelled my race number. He ran my bag over to me and then I ran to the changing tent. I stripped down and dried off as much as possible and started donning all my bike clothing and gear. There are volunteers in the changing tent who help you. From there I ran to the transition area to get my bike and ran all the way out to the mount line, hopped on my bike and headed out onto the 112-mile bike course through the Blackwater Wildlife Refuge.

Beautiful scenery the entire way! There were a lot of portions of headwind, but with the many turns, I was able to get relief until the next turn into wind. At one point I heard lots of gunfire only to later see a sign for a rifle club. Phew! Tons of cornfields and marsh areas everywhere. Once I completed the bike, I came back to the dismount line and had to get my 'land legs' back. Then I ran my bike back into transition and then over to a different area to retrieve my running gear bag. Back into the changing tent, I stripped down again to get all my run clothes and gear on.

I headed out to start my marathon, 26.2 miles! I felt pretty decent at the beginning and maintained the same run/walk pace I have practiced for years. About 10 miles into the run, my legs were starting to lock up, my feet were on fire, and my lower back was super sore from the long bike ride. But no chance I was stopping. I just had to keep pushing forward. The run course winds down the waterfront, so the views are amazing. Then you wind down through a neighborhood and school, back by the waterfront again, and past Gerry Boyle Park and into downtown Cambridge for the next part of the run. There were so many spectators who really made it special, yelling out your number, clanging cowbells, blaring dance music, holding huge signs that make you laugh 'Tony Stark is not an Ironman.' There were 3 loops of the run course to complete and every time you completed a loop, they gave you a colored wristband so that they knew you completed the entire run. When I received my final wristband, I knew I only had about 8.4 miles left, which were the hardest!! The very last part of the run was the part through downtown where there's a bar. Those spectators were a bit lit by that time and really amped you up when you passed by. Finally, as you head out of downtown, there's a special gated chute you enter that leads you to the finish chute and finish line. I can't tell you the feeling I had when I entered that finish chute. It was lined with spectators going crazy who don't even know you. I crossed the finish line and joy and relief washed over me. I quickly stopped my Garmin watch but still didn't know my finish time. I received my medal and the 2nd medal for the Crabby Challenge along with a shirt and hat. Russ started quite a bit after me, so I was able to see him cross the finish line. To be able to train with Russ and race with him is a special thing! I am now a two-time Ironman and Russ is a three-time Ironman. Phew!



SPM Nationals Swag!

## Socials!

by Megan Howson

SPM has had a busy summer with lots of fast swim meets, and some fun team socials! We kicked off summer rock climbing at Vertical Ventures. Sarah showed us all how it's done as she climbed circles around everyone, including a special trip to the 'pit'. This was a great escape from the heat, as well as an opportunity to use some of that swim upper body strength. Even more importantly, everyone managed to stay hooked in their harnesses and no one fell off the wall (I was not entirely convinced I would not become a cautionary tale about how swimmers should stick to water sports). After several turns climbing, and lots of cheering teammates to the top, there were definitely some sore muscles at practice on Sunday!



Nationals team sendoff at The Deck (photo: M. Zabel)



Nationals team, which was revealed at the send-off. Everyone was definitely decked out at the meet thanks to her, and SPM certainly won best-dressed team.

In August SPM ventured to the new Top Golf that just opened in St. Pete. We had a turnout for the books, as everyone was very excited to check out the new facility. Paula brought her A game, and showed us how a true golfer handles things, though Eric and Lisa provided some stiff competition. Not only was this a great opportunity to catch up with teammates, and hear about Ananda's amazing trip to the UK, but we also had some old teammates from out of town join us as well! If you haven't had a chance to check out the new Top Golf, we highly recommend it, and if anyone figures out how the Angry Birds game works please let us know! (After much confusion, the consensus was to just hit the ball as hard as you could and hope for the best?).

Unfortunately, our September social to Rainbow River was canceled due to Hurricane Idalia. We have not had much luck with hurricanes starting with "I". While this disrupted our plan to host it as a joint birthday celebration for Sheila, we were able to reschedule for October. Some made the drive up in the morning. A few adventurous swimmers decided to travel the night before and camp along the river. Swimming a few yards downstream to the starting point sounds like a pretty perfect commute to me! For those of you who have not swum at Rainbow River before, it is a beautiful swim with crystal clear water – perfect for spotting turtles and fish! Jim and Tim had an equally short commute home, as they have a new property right along the river. After swimming in the morning, we headed to the Rowdies game that evening for the official October social. While they couldn't come out with a win, there were lots of close moments, perfect for cheering. The night was capped off with an excellent fireworks display!

We hope to see you at the next social, and let us know if you have any ideas that you would like to see in the future.

## Tributes

### Andy Rogers (1959-2023)

by Brittany Tarwater

Fearless, driven, leader, mother, sister, friend. Andrea May Deufel Rogers was a fierce advocate for the people she loved and the things in which she believed.

A soul fueled by creativity with a witty sense of humor, Andrea, known to many as 'Andy,' and to her favorites as 'grandmom,' was a pioneer of female athletics. Andy was a lifelong athlete Lycoming college's first female swimmer in 1977. She enlisted other women to participate on the swim team, creating bonds and friendships that would last a lifetime.

Andy was always perfectly dressed in a sundress, sandals and carefully selected earrings to match. She and her husband, Rich, devotedly raised three children. most days she proudly spent driving her two daughters,

Our July social was organized by our illustrious president Mike. We gathered at The Deck to send off our Nationals Team. Not only was the food fantastic, always important after practice, but this was a great opportunity to support all our swimmers who were traveling to Sarasota. Val organized some fun raffle items, the Goodr sunglasses were especially a hit, and perfect for hours on pool deck. Cheryl lived up to her reputation designing some incredible swag for the

Greg Stanek writes, "In honor of Russell's 37th birthday, part of the afternoon workout was swimming 37 x 100's on quite a lively pace. Celebrated with pizza and cold drinks at Oak & Stone afterwards."



Steve, Jeff, and Russell (photo: G. Stanek)



Barbados OW Festival (photo: C. Nauta)



Chelsea and Brittany, to early morning swim practices and her son, John, to late night hockey games while showing homes in between to clients (who most often became friends) as a successful real estate agent.

Andy joined St. Pete Masters in 2000 and quickly developed lifelong friendships with fellow swimmers. She loved open water swimming, as a frequent participant in Hurricane Man, swim around Key West, Barbados open water swim fest and more.

Andy remained connected to SPM for the remainder of her life, especially when Chelsea joined SPM in 2017. Friends describe Andy as a person with a strong discipline and constitution. She had a fearless approach to life and that which she endeavored to accomplish.

It was the same brave approach she brought to her fight against cancer.

Always the big sister, always with a smile and a joke on hand, Andy will be remembered for her unconditional love and fight.

Andrea May Deufel Rogers lived fiercely and died peacefully. Her passion is carried on in her family and friends who knew her best. Her legacy lives on with her family who proudly embody her spirit.

## Vance Eaddy (1948 – 2023)

by Bruce Day



(photo: N. Eaddy)

My wife Cheryl and I first met Nancy and Vance Eaddy, as so many other young parents often meet their friends, through their children's shared activities. In our instance it was through youth swimming... with St. Pete Aquatics and Coach Fred Lewis at North Shore Pool. Cheryl volunteered to help with SPA's many swim meets, then later Nancy "suckered" her into the "easy no work" job of being the SPA Vice-President, while Nancy was the President. Vance and I in the meantime became certified Stroke and Turn swimming judges to help out the teams and to earn close-up views of the swimming competitions. Later Vance and I worked as swim judges at St. Petersburg High School swim meets as well where Vance's son Jason was a junior and my daughter Rebecca was a freshman. As a senior Jason went on to win the State of Florida HS Championships in the 500-yard freestyle and post the fastest 50-yard freestyle time that year as the lead swimmer of his 200-freestyle relay. He went on to graduate from Princeton after a highly successful college swimming career. Vance was very proud of his son's swimming and college successes.

To me now, it seems like in no time flat Vance and I were also swimming at NSP with St. Pete Masters Swim Team several mornings a week under the watchful eye of our coach George Boles. We both were using those workouts to improve our freestyle swimming times. We also continued to volunteer at SPM's meets as S+T judges. Soon we were competing in triathlons throughout Florida since we both were long time runners, and we had joined the St. Petersburg Bicycle Club for their weekend rides downtown. Vance continued to be a triathlete for the next twenty plus years, and a lifetime swimmer, runner, and biker.

Over the years the four of us enjoyed several trips with SPM including to Orlando to compete in the United States National Masters Swimming Championships, then on to Munich Germany where Vance competed in the World Masters Swimming Championships in the Olympic pool that Mark Spitz made famous. Vance and I also enjoyed hiking on the Appalachian Trail, the Blue Ridge Parkway trails, on up-state New York mountains and on a mountain overlooking Innsbruck Austria.

Over this time, I got to know Vance very well. He was a reserved and surprisingly humble man. Surprising because being humble seems to have largely gone out of style nowadays... and he had done some truly amazing things in his life that most men might have talked more openly about.

He grew up on the Atlantic coast of Florida and was a lifeguard along those beaches during school summer vacation. One day the ocean waves were high and a rip current sucked two terrified young women out to sea. He sounded the alarm, saw he was the only guard in position to help, grabbed the buoy and dove into the waves... careful to keep them both in sight. With powerful strokes he got to the nearest woman and told her how to get back to shore with the buoy, then proceeded out to her friend who was in trouble of going under. He found her and brought her to shore using the usual single lifesaver sidestroke technique. On shore he monitored the stability of the swimmers until other guards and an ambulance crew arrived, then he went about his usual duties. Later at home his father asked Vance about something he had heard in the news about the rescue. Vance smiled and said he had heard that the rescue was successful. His father never did find out that Vance was the hero that day.

After graduating from FSU and marrying Nancy, Vance worked for the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms out of Mississippi and Alabama. Over many bike rides, I heard amazing stories about busting moonshine bootleggers and their stills. One of his bosses wrote a short book with interesting stories about his ATF experiences, and Vance was mentioned in several stories. That was not an easy way to make a living! In one case, Vance had to actually tackle a running bootlegger and tie him up. I guess HS football taught him some needed skills.

Later Vance worked for the US Fish and Wildlife Service rising to Senior Agent in Charge of most of Florida and South Georgia. During the Atlanta Olympics, he literally lived in the Atlanta Airport for weeks on end due to his federal police job working to

block illegal importation of animals and animal products. We all thought of the famous movie, “The Terminal”, where Tom Hanks’ character was forced to live at the airport for months ... just like Vance. After walking through countless miles of the Florida outback Vance had become a true expert on Florida birds, reptiles, mammals and fish and swamps. Since that job had to be a very physical law enforcement occupation where he had arrest authority and carried a gun, Vance had a relatively early mandatory Federal retirement. But soon Nancy and Vance were busy working helping her brother with his dock building business for several years, so he did not “suffer through” a premature retirement.

After he and Nancy retired from the dock building business, he was able to become a full-time athlete and enjoy remarkably long bike rides with friends, in Florida and the Georgia Mountains and other states. Some of the longer rides took over 24 straight hours to complete and covered hundreds of kilometers. Vance never stopped being an amazing athlete. Later he started playing golf around Pinellas with a number of his friends and was becoming a decent golfer. I recall the two of us finishing St. Anthony’s Triathlon downtown on a pleasant late April morning when Vance was about 53 years old. We both had a good race that day. Then I mentioned that Mangrove Bay Golf Course was open, and the weather was still perfect. We grinned at each other then quickly drove home, unloaded the bikes, loaded up the golf bags and drove back to the golf course where we finished all 18 holes of golf. We both agreed that it had been a most excellent day.

During most of our local rides together much of our conversations were about his son Jason, daughter-in-law Jenny, and grandsons Jack and Joey. My typical conversation starter to Vance was... “Vance, what are the boys up to now days?” He would then provide me with remarkably detailed accounts of their most recent swim meets and event times and victories. Both grandsons were amazingly fast swimmers... no surprise given that their parents were accomplished college swimmers. He was a proud swimming father and grandfather.

Our last bike ride together had to start early... 5:15 AM, so that Vance could finish our short ride to Clearwater and back and still get to his church on time. Pasadena Community Church and its members were very important to Vance and Nancy. That was where they were married and where they enjoyed the fellowship and church services and the chance to help church members and their community ever since. For a man of his 75 years, he was remarkably strong and hardworking... the perfect gentleman to assist his fellow church members in any number of beneficial community tasks. And Vance was a perfect gentleman, with all the best attributes that that phrase implies. We are all better people for having known him. I know that his memory will continue to live on within his friends during the years to come.

## Jodi Schwartz (1968-2023)

by Sherry Coval

*Swimming is the teacher, I am the student, and these are the lessons - Jodi Schwartz*

Jodi had the honor of being coached by a few of the premier coaches on a few of the most prestigious teams in the country. Her life was molded by the lessons learned in the pool and on the pool deck. She once wrote in [Swim Swam](#), “Swimming is one of those sports with its own culture, language, and rules. We are not people who swam, or a swim player, we identify as



*SWIMMERS. From whatever age a swimmer begins club swimming, his/her character changes, and he/she transforms into a swimmer. A swimmer that makes it through club and then college swimming knows that he/she is part of a unique society and even years after retirement, the brotherhood/sisterhood still exists. If a person says to you, ‘I was a swimmer’, it’s a different language, and a knowing nod is all the communication needed. As someone who now swims Masters, it is amusing to find fellow old swimmers; those with whom we can share the “remember when” tales. I will always identify as a swimmer, and am thankful for the opportunities that were provided, the friendships made, the competitiveness and the drive given to me because I was a swimmer.”*

Being a swimmer afforded Jodi lifelong friendships. Her mantra was that you should make your teammates your friends, and your friends your family. Jodi embodied this philosophy, she never met a stranger, if she met you, you were in her circle and just try to leave that circle ... it was not pretty if you did! When she joined her teammates at St. Pete Masters I saw a rebirth in Jodi, something that I had not seen in many years. She was at home in the pool with those who identified as swimmers... her people. For so many years her swimming had focused on producing the best times and winning, there came a shift in Jodi as a Masters swimmer. Her focus became not only the fun and relationships being a swimmer brought her, but also I saw her confidence return, her drive come back, her wit and humor flourish ... her love of life was back.

An article she wrote in [Swim Swam](#) in 2016 summarizes those life lessons perfectly. “I started swimming when I was 8, for a summer league team, Richboro Swim Club. While I may have been a “natural” I had no idea that there were racing suits and



other suits. So off I go to my 2nd practice ever, in my favorite bikini! The first minutes of practice were ok; a little stretching, a few calisthenics, and it was time to swim. Not sure what we had to do, except Coach said start with a dive so I can see you do a start. Swimmers – you know what happened... In I dove, bottoms fell off, out I ran to the bathroom crying the entire way, with my Coach running after me, bikini bottoms in hand, yelling “Its ok, Jodi.” It was not ok; I did not return to practice that day. The next day my team pretended nothing had happened and we went back to being best friends and pals! But I learned a lesson, in fact, I learned many lessons throughout my swimming career. Summer league turned into winter league, which turned into full time club swim team and then to High School at a perennial powerhouse team and club team to Junior Nationals (back then) to Senior Nationals to college swimming turned to some coaching and full circle back to Masters swimming. The lessons learned are valuable, useful in all aspects of life, and lifelong.

1. Know the sport – including “uniforms and practice gear.”
2. Make your teammates your friends, your family. If you swim seriously, you will spend more time with them than you do in your own house.
3. Accept faults and short comings of others, because even though they may be wearing the bikini today, it could be you.
4. Sportsmanship – your competitor is your friend, and your friend is your competitor.
5. Shake hands with your competitor – always – RESPECT.
6. Be yourself, even if you try to hide it, your friends will know, especially those you spend up to 6 hours a day
7. Try not to be the jealous type. It is hard when someone does well, and you do not... your time will come.
8. Be the best teammate at every practice and every meet – happiness and support breeds happiness and support.
9. Complaining will not change the workout or the coach’s mind – it just makes you look like a whiner and not someone people want to hang out with.
10. Have some other extracurricular activities at some points... maybe go to 1 slumber party, or a dance or just hanging out with non-swimmer friends (do those exist?)
11. Do not be afraid to succeed – success takes hard work and harder work to stay there... that’s what you train for.
12. If you do not like it anymore if you truly do not want to swim anymore. STOP... you are not a quitter, you are changing your goals, pursuing another road. It is ok to stop.
13. Stand up for yourself, when needed, no one knows you or your body better than you do.
14. Especially as a Masters swimmer, live in the moment. You will not always have best times, but you can always be the best you at that time.
15. Enjoy and have fun.”

I was blessed to have Jodi in my life for 24 years, 1 month, 29 days, 15 hours, and 21 minutes. She taught me to not take everything so seriously, to be spontaneous, to love unconditionally, be confident, to laugh as much as possible, and most importantly she reminded me to be a good friend and teammate. Jodi met her unexpected diagnosis of Stage 3 Adenocarcinoma of the lung in early 2022 in exactly the way she tackled everything in life including being a swimmer... with strength, determination, respect, confidence, and of course, humor and laughter. She did not skip a beat... she was not going sit idly by and not compete to live. There was, however, some alternative plan for Jodi. I can only imagine she is on a pool deck somewhere cheering on a teammate or offering words of advice or guidance to a child with a huge “Joker” smile on her face with her laugh permeating the air.

Thank you to her St. Pete Masters teammates for the support and friendship you shared with Jodi over the years. You have no idea this side of eternity, the difference each of you made in her life! Swim On!

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