



SPM NEWSLETTER

St. Petersburg Masters | North Shore Aquatic Complex

Bidding Farewell to 2023

Yes, the holidays were rapidly approaching, but first, there was swimming to be done. There were lots of meets to keep the team busy. The Rowdy Gaines Classic in October and Shark Tank in November are the long running SCM meets, but there was also lots of traveling both around the country and internationally.

In the virtual world, countless Top Tens and All-Americans were earned in the 3000/6000yd ePostal event. Records fell in the 2nd Annual Virtual Two-Mile Relay this year ... to SPM teams! And let's not forget the wave of open water events that took place in chilly waters. The Sassy Sharknadoes rose up to the Live Wildly Team Challenge Swim Event 2023 in Archibald Park. Ian and Andrew did an early morning (or late night, depending on your perspective) swim around St. Pete.

Triathlons, Synchro Swimming, foot races filled in time 'out of the lanes,' along with a visit to October's St. Petersburg City Council Meeting, where our team was recognized by Councilmember Copley Gerdes.

Not to worry – we weren't so busy that we missed out on the holiday festivities. Ananda Bergeron held the first SPM Friendsgiving at her home in November and Mike and Jane Zabel once again fired up the pizza oven and welcomed everyone to their home for the annual holiday party.

A belated congratulations to Marina and Scott who tied the knot back in May!

Very sadly, we lost another long-time teammate, Joe Baker in October. Colleen O'Reilly and Jim Fellows share a tribute to him.

And finally, many thanks to all who helped with this issue: Gary Bastie, Peter Betzer, Marina Falcone, Jim Fellows, Stephanie Gibson, Colleen O'Reilly, Gloria Smith, Chris Stickle, Sarah Swoch, Karen Westerman, and Mike Zabel. Please send ideas, articles and photos to me at livia.zien@gmail.com. The next issue will cover events from January-March. Happy swimming, everyone!

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Upcoming Pool Events

Jan. 28 SPM TEAM DAY and ANNUAL MEETING! Reserve a lane by sending an email to stpetemasters@gmail.com!

- 1st wave: 8:00am
- 2nd wave: 9:30am
- Annual Meeting at 11:15am

Feb. 10-11 / SCY: Valentine's Meet. Clearwater FL [Information & online entry](#). *Entry deadline: online entry closes Tuesday, February 6*

Feb. 17-18 / SCY: 28th Annual Masters Challenge. Ft. Lauderdale FL. [Information & online entry](#) (entry opens Tuesday, January 2). *Entry deadline: online entry closes Tuesday, February 13*

Mar. 9 / LCM: Goodlife Games. Clearwater FL. *Senior games for 50+. will be USMS-recognized*

Mar. 16-17 / SCY: Bob Beach SCY Championships. St. Petersburg FL

Apr. 21 / SCY: Show Your SWAG Meet. Gainesville FL. [Information & online entry](#). *Entry deadline: online entry closes Sunday, April 14*

May 9-12 / SCY: YMCA Masters Nationals. Ft. Lauderdale FL. [Information](#).

June 8-9 / LCM: Bumpy Jones Classic. Sarasota FL

June 20-24 / SCY: USMS Spring Championships. Indianapolis IN. [Information](#).

President's Corner

By Mike Zabel

Good morning. It's Christmas Eve. Just getting ready to go see my daughter Michaela lead a Korean drum team for Christmas Eve Services. Yeah Team! It's going to be a fantastic service.

I am so glad that many of you were able to attend the annual party at our house. It was a great time! Plan on doing so next year ☐

My term as President is now at an end, at least as of January 28th. It has been a pleasure and an honor. You are all amazing, and this team is the greatest.

Thank you so much to our board members. Mike Zabel, Lisa Flanagan, Brooke Bowman, Kathy Selles, Megan Howson, Chris Stickle, Val Valle, Ananda Bergeron, and Tabitha Brandt. They are the team that protects our finances, advocates for you, help make the decisions that make this program one of the best around.

Also going unseen is the work of volunteers who have made the team much better. The volunteers have done the work doing research and compiling relay teams, photographing us at events, publicizing our events.

You may have noticed that we are experiencing a great deal of Facebook postings, event notices, and most importantly heavy support and notices for the big three USMS events; the Hour, and LCM/SCY distance events. Sarah Swoch stepped up and manages those. Gloria Smith has been a stalwart in coming to our meets and providing amazing photography. Cheryl Kupan runs our registration and very importantly she is our LSMC President, providing us support from on high. She was also the focal point for arranging our sharing in the YMCA National Championship this past year.

Right now, we have the annual Hour swim scheduled for Sunday January 28. The annual meeting will follow, after you have had time to warm down, shower and dress. No rush. Coming up is the annual short course meet and we must have timers. If you are not swimming, please contact our Meet Director Brooke Bowman at bowman@law.stetson.edu or see her on the pool deck to volunteer.

Thank you to all of you and to all the volunteers that make our team thrive. I would especially like to thank the Board for all their hard work. It takes a lot of work to plan and conduct meets, plan monthly activities, publicize meets and events, manage our finances and membership. Frankly we are a small company that deals with some very real concerns yet make it all look so easy.



Pizza master (photo: M. Zabel)

Coach's Corner

by Gary Bastie



I was talking with Jon Rosenbaum a few days ago, telling him how I used to coach several sports and he made a suggestion. Jon mentioned that it would be best if some of the old stuff wasn't lost but preserved for others to benefit from. And, while I'd never thought much about it, I had to agree because where else do we gain things that benefit us.

During my lifetime, I've coached and taught many things. In the sports world, they included track and field, volleyball, kayaking, canoeing, basketball, diving, and swimming. And, there were commonalities which I shared with Jon. In fact, it's those common things that help us in other areas of life. At the time, it was my intent to instill two things: One was a better athlete who worked as a team with others and the other was for them to become better people.

For example, I never let negativity into the workout area. It's too destructive. So, during workouts, in the locker room, during time outs, etc., I didn't allow it. One time I had to take some boys into the locker room and have them play a little game. The game was one where we went around the room and each had to point out one positive thing about each of the others. By the end of that session, we were a better and more cohesive team, and we remained that way.

At other times, say during a time out, my volleyball or basketball teams would want to bitch about what had just happened on the court. Rather than waste time doing that, I had them listen to what we were going to do next. If I'd have let them complain, that's what they'd have focused on for the remainder of the game. But, since we didn't look backward at what had happened, we put our energies into what we were going to make happen next. And, it worked every time.

Then, there are times when we focus too much on ourselves. We get petty and disjointed as a team. So, I had my teams give low 5's to one another after either a good or bad play. That kept everyone in contact with others in more ways than one. It said "you're still OK" when someone messed up and it kept us together during difficult times. And, I say that because I observed athletes who did give low (or high) 5's v. those who didn't. Those who didn't became more introverted and self-centered. Those who thought enough of a teammate to give support were the ones I was after. So, here's what I did.

While coaching a boys' volleyball team in Texas, I had one of the captains be in charge of high 5's. I did that in Florida as well and, in both instances, those teams, while physically smaller and weaker than others, held together and won at their highest level. And it worked every time. The girls got it much quicker than the boys did however, and I also noticed that when I coached each group in basketball. The girls listened and perfected whatever it was while the boys usually thought they already knew all about it. Sometimes life mirrors sports because it's much more common for a guy to throw away instructions but later have his wife or girlfriend fish them out of the trash and read to him what to do next.

During my coaching career, I had opportunities to recruit college athletes. One of the things many had to overcome was how to train together. I always wanted them to forget going head-to-head and learn instead to train shoulder-to-shoulder. The approach involves a far different mindset. By using it, many teammates became better life-long friends. IN one case, two of the guys took a year off, worked together on a fishing trawler in Alaska, came back, paid cash for their schooling, and finished their degrees together. And they weren't the exceptions.

Another method was to teach athletes to make others around them better. By being positive, not being afraid to compliment others, giving it their best, and helping the younger ones, it made for a very positive atmosphere in the pool or gym. And it's a matter of "challenge yourself" but also "challenge others" to become their best.

At times, things don't go your way. To help my basketball and volleyball players snap out of it, I employed a helpful tool, that of cheering for the other guy. For instance, to end a time out, and especially if the team had gotten too self-centered and fractured, I'd have them cheer for the other team as we ended the time out. For instance, I might have them do a "one, two, three, goooo Tampa" or something similar. Then, I did something else.

If we were blowing a team off the court, rather than cheat and let up, we'd have our weaker players play. If we kept pulling away, so be it. I told my players that it was our job to try and score and it was their job to try and stop us (and vice versa). Just because the other team didn't do their job was no excuse for us not to do ours. And, it reminded me of something football great Jonny Unitas once said. It was something to the effect that "If I didn't try my hardest, I'd be cheating."

While I could go on, there's one more thing that I used to do. When we were preparing for a swim meet for instance, we'd take some time and I'd walk everyone through mental visualization. They'd all sit or lie comfortably, and we'd go through their race, from getting up on the blocks, to diving in, to breaking out, swimming, turning, etc. so that they could do it in their sleep. When that happened, they were ready, and we had multiple huge drops in time and great technique as a result.

Well, those are a few of the tools I used. I hope you can put some to good use. If not, blame Jon.

Pool Competitions

The Annual Rowdy Gaines Masters Classic in Orlando and the Shark Tank meet in Sarasota are usually the two large SCM meets of the quarter. This year was no exception, but there were also lots of additional meets including some on the international scene (Guadalajara, Mexico and Santiago, Chile), the

Florida Senior Games, and the Rainbow Trout St. Nick's meet in Atlanta. Read on to see what your teammates are up to!



2nd Place Local Team Winners! (photo: S. Swoch)

Rowdy Gaines Masters Classic 15

Sixteen swimmers participated in the 3-day Rowdy Gaines Masters Classic 15 in Orlando to start off the SCM season and came back as 2nd Place Local Team winners! The team pulled together a total of 15 relays, 8 of which won their event. That's a lot of points! Allison Retotar earned high point honors in her 35-39 age group.

Allison and Sarah continued their 1-2 finishes sweeping in the 400m free and 50m breast. Sarah and Celeste did a few of their own sweeps in the 100m and 200m back. The women's 35-39 age group was crowded, but the women's 55-59 field included 4 SPM women (Cheryl, Dawn, Karen, and Sherri) often swimming in the same events!

For the men, Noah Manera won all 6 of his events in the 25-29 age group. Mike Smith and Steve Freeman seemed to keep each other company swimming many of the same events in the men's 65-69 age group 25m and 50m free, breast, and fly, and 100m IM. Steve won his 25m back event and Mike his 25m free.

Jeff Nelson swam his first meet as a St. Pete Master, winning his 25m backstroke event, placing 2nd in the 100m free and back, and 3rd in the 25m free and 50m back. What a great start as an SPMer!



Mike, Chris, Noah, Jeff (photo: G. Smith)



The annual Rowdy pic Dawn, Sherri, Karen, Gerry, Sarah, Allison, and Dana (photo: S. Swoch)



400 free relays with Olivia, Gary, Chris, Noah, Jeff, Sarah, and Allison (photo: S. Swoch)



Allison Retotar (photo: G. Smith)



#1 Medley Relay (photo: G. Smith)



Noah Manera (photo: G. Smith)



High Point winner, Allison (photo: G. Smith)



How does SPM fly? Let us count the ways! Batman



Cheryl Kupan (photo: G. Smith)



Sarah (photo: G. Smith)



Jeff Nelson (photo: G. Smith)



Sherri Bogue (photo: G. Smith)



Phyllis Scheidt (photo: G. Smith)

Congratulations to Sherri Bogue, Dawn Clark, Jim Esposito, Steve Freeman, Geraldine Jacobson, Cheryl Kupan, Noah Manera, Jeffrey Nelson, Joseph Novak, Celeste Patton, Allison Retotar, Phyllis Scheidt, Michael Smith, Christopher Stickle, Sarah Swoch, and Karen Westerman.



200-239 200 Meter Medley Relay, Karen, Celeste, Joe (photo: G. Smith)



Allison Retotar (photo: Rowdy Gaines)

As always, Gloria Smith was able to capture the spirit of the team with so many facial expressions ... enjoy the intense, focused, joyful, and victorious images!

Results can be found [here](#).

Shark Tank (Nov 11-12)

By Sarah Swoch

A small crew took the trip to Sarasota for the Shark Tank SCM meet in November. Olivia Barkley, Noah Manera, Tabitha Brandt, Cheryl Kupan, Allison Retotar, Sarah Swoch, Russell Hawkins, and Peter Betzer represented SPM well. Olivia



Sarah, Allison, Tabitha, Cheryl, Olivia, Noah, and Russell (photo: S. Swoch)



Olivia, Allison, Noah, and Russell (photo: S. Swoch)

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won all her events and dropped a massive 9 seconds in the 50 fly. Cheryl swam an incredible list of events on the road to completing the Leather Lung for Short Course Meters season. Tabitha was back in the water and swimming strong after shoulder surgery. Our team even managed to organize a few relays.

While some of our relays were standard combinations swimming all the normal strokes. When we got to the end of the meet, we had only one option to swim the final mixed 200 free relay. Russell is always ready to swim a relay and he wanted to get in the water. But we needed another man to swim the mixed relay with Allison and I filling the women's spots. We asked Peter Betzer if he would be willing to swim and without hesitation, he said sure! The dream team, self-named the river rats, was the showstopper of the meet. We were the only non-home team relay of the day and the only 200 free relay featuring backstroke! There were gasps as spectators noticed the goggle-less backstroke. "Do you know he's swimming backstroke!?" Why yes, we do. That's Masters' strategy! Pay attention kids, one day you too could have this much fun. Results can be found here: https://www.swimphone.com/meets/meet_menu.cfm?smid=16320



Tabitha, Cheryl, Sarah, Allison (photo: S. Swoch)



Russell, Sarah, Allison, and Peter (photo: S. Swoch)



Sarah, Peter, Russell, Tabitha, Allison, and Olivia (photo: S. Swoch)

Meet Round-Up

On October 22, Noah Manera swam in the 2nd Annual SWAGtoberfest at the Dwight H Hunter "Northeast" pool in Gainesville. He finished in the top three in all his events and won his 100yd back event. A stellar solo representation!

In addition to the Shark Tank Meet in Sarasota, November included some international travel for Chris Stickle and David Gelfand.



Rob Curry and Chris Stickle (photo: FL-LMSC)

gggdl2023.org/content/files/Swimming.pdf

Congratulations to Chris Stickle who traveled to Guadalajara, Mexico to participate in the Gay Games XI from Nov 3-11. In true superhero form, he brought home 5 gold medals. Three golds in the 400m, 800m, and 1500m freestyle, one each for the 200m butterfly and 400m IM, because the distance free events were not grueling enough, and because superheroes really can fly ... and swim back and breast too! Together with Rob Curry of Orlando Masters, he did the FL-LMSC proud! Results can be found here: <https://results->



(photo: D. Gelfand)

David Gelfand traveled to Santiago, Chile to participate in the Parapan American Games, held from November 17-26. Representatives from forty-one countries compete in this 10-event event, in 18 disciplines. The United States finished 2nd in the medal count with David placing 2nd in the 200m IM, 3rd in the 100m butterfly, and 4th in the 100m breaststroke. What a way to represent the United States and SPM! Congratulations, David! Full results can be found [here](#).



Cheryl, Jim, Dana, and Chris
(photo: C. Stickle)

In the first weekend of December, Mike Smith and Geraldine Jacobson swam in the Florida Senior Games, at the Temple Terrace Family Recreation Center. Both had great meets, with Geraldine winning her 50-yd breaststroke, and placing 2nd and 3rd in the 100-yd breast and 100-yd free respectively. Second to no one, Mike Smith won his 50-yd freestyle, 50 and 100-yd breaststroke, 50-yd butterfly, and 100-yd Individual Medley. Results can be found [here](#).

And finally, rounding out the year, Jim Esposito, Chris Stickle, and Cheryl Kupan trekked up to Atlanta, GA for the short course meter Rainbow Trout St. Nick's Swim Meet.

Cheryl won her 200 Meter Freestyle Finals, Women 55-59 100 Meter Backstroke Finals, and placed 2nd in the 50m butterfly and 200m IM events. Did Chris ever lose an event this year? He won his 50m, 100m, and 400m free, and the 50m and 100m fly. And Jim, making the most of the distance, won his 50m and 100m backstroke, and 100m IM events, and 3rd in the 800m free and 50m breast. Results from the meet can be found [here](#).



Bling collection grows! (photo: G. Smith)



Going Virtual!

See how far you can swim in an hour! Swim the event any time between Jan 1 and Jan 31. Don't forget that the 1-Hour Virtual Championship team day is on Sunday, January 28. There will be two waves. Reserve a lane by sending an email to stpetemasters@gmail.com and register [here](#)!

- 1st wave: 8:00am
- 2nd wave: 9:30am
- Annual Meeting at 11:15am

ePostals – 3000yd/6000yd

A mighty group of 6 men and 6 women finished 5th as a combined team in the 3000yd e-Postal, with the women's team placing 6th and men's 5th. 3000 combined 5th (men 5th, women 6th). Alison Hayden won individual national champion honors in the 50-54 age group. Also earning top honors were Allison Retotar, Stephanie Gibson, and Alison Hayden in the 35+ Women's relay; and Russell Hawkins, Steve Freman, and Pat Marzulli in the 35+ Men's relay. Congratulations to the group including Sarah Swoch, Dawn Clark, Sharon Steinmann, Chris Stickle, Jeff Gould, and Jim Esposito!



Team 3000/6000 (photo: S. Swoch)



Dawn, Pat, Sarah (photo: S. Swoch)



Allison counting and Pat swimming (photo: S. Swoch)



Sarah, Stephanie, Dawn, Chris, Jeff, Steve, and Pat did double duty and swam the 6000yd postal as well, winning 2nd place combined (men 2nd, and women 3rd). Sarah Swoch

won her 35-39 age group. All three relays earned national champion status! Congratulations to Sarah, Stephanie, and Dawn in the Women's 35+ relay; Chris, Jeff, and Steve in the Men's 25+ relay; and Chris, Sarah, Stephanie, and Jeff in the Mixed 25+ Mixed relay. Well done team! Full results can be found [here](#).

2-mile Virtual Relay

By Kathy Selles

This is an annual competition where relay teams consisting of two, three, or four swimmers each swim 100 yards (or time-adjusted meters) in the same rotation until 3600 yards is completed. The had to be completed between October 29 and December 10, 2023. Each team is required to have a timer to count laps and record the final time. Each swimmer can only swim in one age group. There are separate categories for Men, Women, and Mixed; mixed relays must have 2 or 4 relay team members with an equal number of men and women. The age of the youngest swimmer (as of Dec. 31, 2023) determines the age group of the team.

My lane buddy, Nancy Kiernan, rounded up four of us to participate in this Two-Mile relay: Nancy, Pam Geiger, Gerry Jacobson, and me - Kathy Selles. Nancy had done her research and felt we had a good chance to break the 65+current record, which we did!

We did our relay on Dec 7th – a cold, sunny day with a 10-mph north wind. We used two lanes – one for the competition and one for staying warm between swims. Everybody had a great day, and the relay really gives a chance to swim all out.

Records were broken in these groups:

- **Women's 35+ 2-person 2-mile relay:** 41:18.03 Stephanie Gibson, Sarah Rachel, previous record 56:40.00
- **Women's 35+ 4-person 2-mile relay:** 38:22.27 Paula Texel, Marina Falcone, Allison Retotar, Celeste Brandon Patton, previous record: 41:37:90
- **Women 65+ 4-person 2-mile relay:** 1:03:06.0 Nancy Kiernan, Pam Gieger, Gerry Jacobson, Kathy Selles, previous record 1:18:34.70
- **Men's 25+ 2-person 2-mile relay:** 35:52.70 Chris Stickle and Ken Wazyniak, previous record 43:55.80
- **Men's 25+ 3 person 2-mile relay:** 35:20.20 Ken Wazyniak, Bill Fallon, Chris Stickle, previous record 37:02.50
- **Men's 25+ 4-person 2-mile relay:** 34:07.32 Chris Stickle, Cameron Chambers, Scott Hensley & Noah Manera, previous record 35:08.40

Complete results will be available from the Tualatin Hills Barracudas website. Preliminary individual results are posted at <https://twomilerelay.azurewebsites.net/>. All corrections must be sent to the event director during those two weeks. Final results will be posted approximately one week later.

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Ken and Chris (photo: A. Hayden)



Celeste, Allison, Paula, Marina, Eric (photo: S. Gibson)



Sarah and Stephanie (photo: P. Texel)



Stephanie, Bill, Sarah (photo: A. Retotar)



Pam, Gerry, Nancy, Kathy (photo: N. Kiernan)

Open Water Swimming

Live Wildly

by Stephanie Gibson

On October 21, 2023, Chelsea Nauta, Courtney Monsees, Macarena Martin Mayor, Marina Falcone-Hensley, Sarah Swoch and Stephanie Gibson teamed up for the Live Wildly Team Challenge event. This was the second year of the event, and the second year of the "Sassy Sharknadoes". After last year's 2nd place finish, we were in it to win it this year.



(photo: S. Swoch)



Sarah Swoch (photo: C. Nauta)

The course is 5 miles, comprised of ¼ mile loops. Teams could be 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 or 10 members! The only rule was that a single swimmer cannot swim 2 loops in a row. It was a lovely morning for a swim, albeit a little windy. The water was a comfortable 75, so no wetsuits were allowed. The wind made for some chop, but when swimming south, we had a nice little push behind us. The biggest challenge was finding the best route to come in after the 2nd turn. If you cut it too hard, then you'd swim parallel to the beach for too long, and you lose some time to the next team. But, if you swam more directly into the beach, you'd have a much longer run on the sand, and well, we're swimmers not runners! Thanks

to coach Rob, he helped us find the best course, and for capturing our splits. When it was all said and done, the Sassy Sharknadoes took the W, and along with it, a \$700 check! I guess that makes us all professional athletes now. We had a great time at this event and can't wait to do it again next year!



The handoff (photo: S. Swoch)



Sassy Sharknadoes (photo: S. Swoch)



With Coach Rob (photo: S. Swoch)

For this year, the event also included a 5-mile solo swim challenge, which Andrew Leone participated in! Great job Andrew!

More Open Water Swimming

by Sarah Swoch

On November 5 at 7:30am, Ted Westerheide hosted an Unofficial, Unsupported, Unsanctioned, Free Best of the Bay & Fun Swim. Two swims, 2.7 miles around the island and a "pick your own" out and back race were offered. Stephanie Gibson brought her armada of kayakers, Bill Berry, Noah Royak, and Bill Reid, to ward off the big boats and keep us all on track. Sarah Simons and Paul Valitutto also came out to paddle for the race, maybe it was well supported after all. We were treated to temperatures in the low 70s and calm water on the way



The Dean Family (photo: S. Swoch)



Stephanie wins! (photo: S. Swoch)

Upcoming Open Water Events

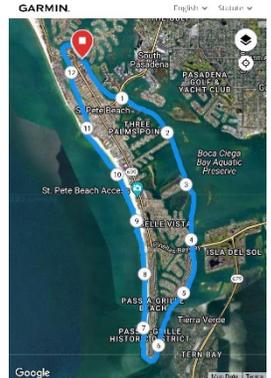
Jan. 14: Tampa Bay Frogman Swim (3.4-miles). Tampa FL. [Information](#). General registration sold out. Wait list & charity swim slots open. USMS sanctioned: NO

Apr. 14: Swim Miami (800m, 1-mile, 5K, 10K). Miami FL. [Information & registration](#). USMS sanctioned: NO

Sept. 7: Swim for Alligator Lighthouse (8-miles). Islamorada FL. [Information & entry](#). USMS sanctioned: NO

real test. Turning the corner into the final channel the water smoothed out again and the race to the finish was on. Liam Dean swam in with no one in sight. Mike Mulberger and John Fischbach raced in for 2nd and 3rd, just hundredths of seconds apart. All the swimmers toughed it out and The Best of the Bay Sea Cow Beer Mug went to the fastest non-wetsuit swimmers in each gender. SPM and SPA took top honors! Congratulations to Stephanie Gibson, and SPA's Liam Dean!!

Ian Tarrant and Andrew Leone set out to complete one of their own challenges. On November 17, at 4:30am, the pair completed a 12.5-mile Tandem Circumnavigation of St. Pete Beach. They started in the foggy darkness at 4:40 am with their suit, cap, goggles, and glow sticks, following channel rules. On the northwest side of the island, they entered the 73-degree water at a boat ramp and swam into the light with their kayaker Paul Valitutto. They were slung around the south end of the island but had to work a bit against the tide on their approach to the north pass. Thankfully they had a great kayaker to keep them safe as boat traffic picked up during the day. This was the first known clockwise circumnavigation of St. Pete. Their official time was 7:08.50.



Clockwise circumnavigation (P. Valitutto)

Triathlon News

The Westermans were on the move again. This time, on December 3, they headed to Daytona for the Clash Daytona Triathlon on the Daytona 500 Speedway! Karen competed in the Half Aquabike (swim and bike) and Russ in the Half Duathlon (run, bike, run) events,

One week later, they were in Haines City, competing as Team Sole Sisters relay with Karen's sister Kathy in the Ironman Florida 70.3!



Clash Daytona (photo: K. Westerman)



Ironman Florida 70.3 (photo: K. Westerman)

Outside the Lanes

USA Artistic Swimming Masters Nationals

By Karen Westerman

In October 2023, I participated in my first artistic swimming national championships in Oro Valley, Arizona. The Synchro team that I train with competed in the free category and the tech category, and the scores from those 2 routines are added together to determine what place you get. We already had a tech routine that we have been perfecting for the last year and for that routine there is a list of requirements that each team needs to do in their routine and if you miss any of those requirements, then deductions are taken by the judges. They are score



(photo: K. Westerman)



(photo: K. Westerman)



you for artistic impression. We finished 7th Place overall and since it's the first time most of us had competed in a national event, we were happy.

On one of the preliminary days I competed in the figures competition, which is where you learn three different technical moves that you perform in front of judges by yourself, and the scores from those three figures are added together to determine your place. I ended up 2nd place overall

and made it onto the podium and received a medal, so I was quite thrilled.

The most exciting part was competing with my teammates in a sport that I'm still relatively new to.

We also did some sightseeing and saw many saguaro cacti. My team is now in the process of learning a whole new tech routine to an 80s music compilation.

Treasure Chest 5k



Congratulations to Cheryl Kupan with a winning time of 25:55, tied with Mandy Zipf of TBAY. Mandy is often seen helping with timing at our meets!

Socials!

Friendsgiving

By Sarah Swoch

SPM had its first Friendsgiving hosted by Ananda Bergeron at her resort like home in South St. Pete. It was a beautiful event where we ate next to the pool lit by torches and lush tropical plants. The



Delicious Friendsgiving spread (photos: S. Gibson)



turkey was perfectly cooked by our host and the swimmers always show up with fantastic food for a potluck event. Stephanie's cauliflower salad came straight from her micro farm. Jeff called up his mother for her chocolate pecan pie recipe. I made my grandma's cranberry relish recipe. Chelsea brought the tastiest vegan black bean cakes. It was a fabulous feast for all of us to catch up. We ended the evening playing board games, laughing, and thoroughly enjoying our time to reflect on how thankful we are for our teammates.

Holiday Party

By Kathy Selles

A big thank you is due to Mike and Jane Zabel for inviting the St Pete Masters swim team to their home for our holiday party. Mike has created an awesome backyard with a putting green, fountains, pool, and of course – the pizza oven. Mike turned



Pizza Master, Mike hard at work, Susan and Sharon, Santa Eric (photos: K. Selles)

out a lot of pizza and nobody went home hungry. Potluck included many side dishes and desserts. Everything was fabulous.

The white elephant gift exchange is always fun, and Eric managed to keep us going until everything was either selected or stolen in the exchange. What a fun evening!



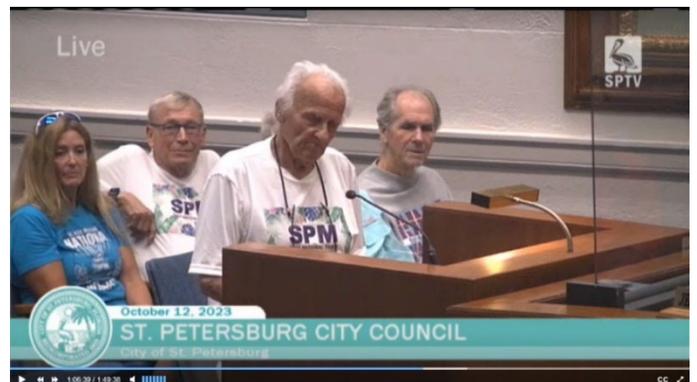
Jane, Sarah, Paula, Kelly and Alison, Ananda, Nancy (Carl in the back), and Steve (photos: K. Selles)

City Council Recognition – October 12

Upon completion of the 2023 Summer National Championships in Sarasota, Peter Betzer was particularly inspired by Allison Retotar and Sarah Swoch's 1st and 2nd place finishes in the Women's 35-39 200m backstroke, noting that this was perhaps the first time our team had such a performance at the national level. With SPM's strong presence in the community and with a world class facility at NSAC, he thought it a worthwhile endeavor to bring the team's accomplishments to the City Council's attention.



On October 12, our team was recognized by Councilmember Copley Gerdes and the St. Petersburg City Council. Judge Beach, Peter Betzer, and Gary Bastie spoke on our behalf sharing our rich history and accomplishments over the years, and expressing our appreciation to the NSAC staff and St. Petersburg Recreation department. Judge Beach gave each councilmember a medal from his vast collection of championship events. The token was duly noted by Councilmember Gabbard who admitted that as swimming was not her strong suit, she may never have received a medal otherwise. Several team members, sporting recent SPM garb and gear, attended the meeting. The recording can be found at [this link](#) and should begin at approximately 1:03:55 in the video, starting with Judge Beach's introduction. Thank you for advocating for our team, Peter and Gary!



Gary Bastie, Peter Betzer, and Livia Zien wrote the following summary of SPM's impact and submitted it to Councilmember Gerdes:

St. Pete Masters (SPM) was established in 1970 by Judge Bob Beach, one of the original founders of Masters Swimming in the United States. He continues to compete at age 93 and is the oldest athlete to swim under and across The Golden Gate Bridge and from Alcatraz to the mainland (both without a wetsuit). At the 2018 Masters Pan Am Games, Judge Beach smashed a number of world records and this summer (2023) he placed at the top of his age group at the national championships.

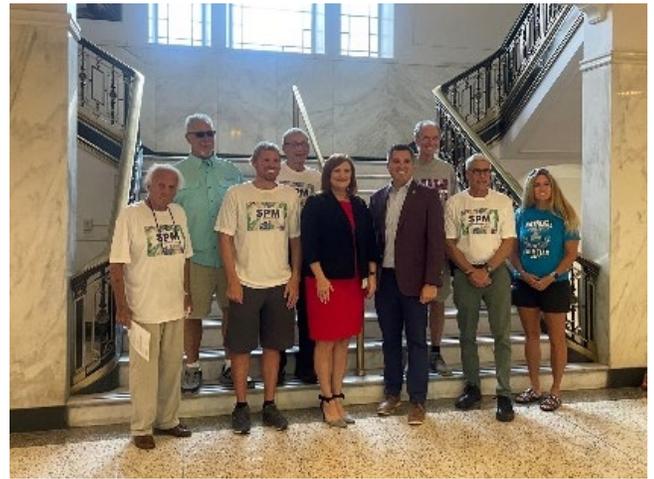
Of interest is why he swims. After quitting smoking, Judge Beach tried running. But, as many have found, his body type wasn't built for it. Once he tried swimming at the North Shore Aquatic Complex the judge was hooked for life.

Fast forward from 1970 and St. Pete Masters has annually hosted what was the first Masters' swim meet ever held in Florida at St. Petersburg's North Shore Pool. Remarkably, ours is the longest running Masters' meet in the world!

With St. Pete Masters, the community has much to celebrate. In particular, this August, 48 members of our team (of 150-200), traveled to Sarasota to participate in the Long Course National Championships. Out of 211 teams, our small team placed 5th. The top 4 teams had up to 150 swimmers yet, even with fewer participants, we won several events and our swimmers routinely placed in the top ten.

In addition to our many athletic accomplishments, here's what is particularly distinctive about SPM's program:

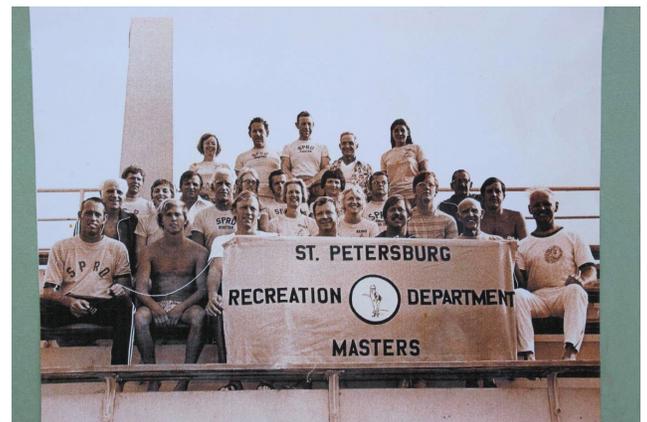
1. *Legacy and inclusivity:*
 - *SPM is one of the oldest Masters teams in the world. Our swimmers range from 20-93 years old and many of them continue to achieve lifetime bests into their 30's, 40's, 50's and beyond. Several new swimmers who had never competed in their lives have qualified for national meets and are now lifetime swimmers.*



Back: Gary, Peter, Jon; Front: Bob, Chris, Councilmember Gabbard, Councilmember Gerdes, Steve, Tabitha (photo: P. Betzer)



Karen, Chris, Sarah, Tabitha outside City Hall (photo: K. Westerman)



SPM 1970s



Judge Bob Beach at the 2018 Bob Beach SCY Spring Championship

- *Our club includes ex-high school, college, and age group swimmers, as well as novices who never swam a practice before joining our team. An ex-Special Olympics swimmer joined our program and subsequently garnered medals at the recent national championships in Sarasota.*
 - *We welcome all who love to swim.*
2. *World class pool facility:*
- *There are people who move to St. Pete just for the pool facility.*
 - *Yearly, we host swimmers and triathletes from around the nation and world who practice and swim at our meets enjoying one of the best cities and pool facilities in the world (and they've told us as much)*
 - *International visitors come to enjoy our wonderful city and workout with our team.*
3. *National presence:*
- *At the recent National Championships in Sarasota, where combined ages are used to construct relays, SPM had a 320 combined age relay! It placed amongst the best in the nation. That's an average age of 80 years/swimmer. Also notable was the 200-meter backstroke when, for the first time in our history, two of our swimmers "slammed" an event; Allison Retotar and Sarah Swoch took first and second for the 35-39 year age group.*
 - *Each year, SPM has a significant number of national champions. Events include national and international meets, open water events, triathlons, 5000-meter, 10,000-meter, 3000-yard, 6000-yard, and one Hour Swim e-postal events.*
4. *International presence:*
- *We routinely compete in international meets like the 2018 Pan Am Games where we swam neck and neck with national teams from Brazil, the Caribbean, as well as combined teams representing Central America and Mexico.*
 - *At the most recent Masters Pan Am Games in Medellin, Colombia (2022), SPM was represented on the gold medal stand by two of our swimmers. Kathy and Carl Selles annually move from Colorado to St. Petersburg to winter here because of our team and outstanding pool facilities.*



SPM 2023 – Bob Beach SCY Championship (photo: G. Smith)



Sarah Swoch and Allison Retotar –2nd and 1st place finishers in the Women’s 35-39 200m backstroke at USMS Summer Nationals, Sarasota, FL 2023 (photo: S. Swoch)



SPM 2018 – Pan Ams in Orlando (photo: L. Zien)



Kathy and Carl Selles at UANA Pan Am Games in Medellin, Colombia

5. *A reason to visit St. Petersburg:*

- *Those who run ISCA (International Swimming Coaches Association), visiting college teams, local high schools, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Special Olympics, SPA, SPM, and lap swimmers continue to utilize the aquatic facilities at North Shore and help bring additional revenue to St. Pete.*
- *Everyone who visits our aquatic complex tells us the same thing – St. Petersburg has a wonderful facility that they really enjoy and even more notably, that they plan to return!*

Wedding Bells!

A belated congratulations to Marina Falcone and Scott Hensley! The happy couple tied the knot on May 26, 2023 at St. Raphael Catholic Church. They took a short honeymoon to Anna Maria Island in September, but they hope to take a longer trip to Italy this summer.

Theirs is another match made in the pool!

They met up in the DC area 7 ½ years ago at William and Mary's (Marina's alma

mater) Club Tribe Masters swim practice, but they both share a love for open water swimming and enjoy living near and swimming in the ocean. At the beginning of this year, they moved to St. Croix, where Scott's brother and family live. Scott will continue to work for IBM remotely, and Marina will be opening a Pilates studio, and of course, they will be swimming in the ocean.

We'll miss you at the pool but look forward to your visits back to St. Pete!



Scott and Marina on their wedding day, May 26, 2023 (photo: M. Falcone)

Tribute to Joe Baker

by Colleen O'Reilly and Jim Fellows

On a sad note, long-time SPM member Dr. Joe Baker passed away on October 19, 2023. After serving in the U.S. Air Force, Joe practiced medicine in the St. Petersburg area for decades, particularly for under-served communities. Joe was also known for his deep knowledge of history and his love of opera and poetry. He was also a frequent participant at Panera Bread after swim coffee gathering, where a group of SPM members meet almost daily to socialize after a swim. Joe will be missed by those of us fortunate enough to have known him and enjoyed his company. His obituary can be found [here](#).



(photo: L. Zien)

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