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AT Special Feature: *Suzanne Heim Bowen - The First Open Water Swimmer to be Inducted into the International Masters Swimming Hall of Fame!*

As recalled by Suzanne Heim-Bowen



"The evening of September 26 at the United States Aquatic Convention held in Anaheim, was an extraordinary moment in my swim career and was made even more special by being with my family and many friends in the aquatic community for the International Masters Hall of Fame Induction as the first Open Water Swimmer to be recognized. I was very proud and honored to be inducted into the IMSHOF with outstanding athletes and some of my role models from swimming, diving, water polo and synchronized swimming."

"It was very important for me to share this award equally with my husband (Phil)---my best friend who manages to stay calm during moments of 'distress'. For example, I was not able to find my cap and goggles right before an event, and was frantically dumping out my backpack, turning my pockets inside out, and, of course, asking Phil if he put them in a special place. Of course, Phil tells me,

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'Suzanne, they are on your head! "

"I had the opportunity to thank my parents who have instilled self-confidence in me, not just in swimming, but also in life in general. They have encouraged me to pursue my passions and swimming is just one of my passions. I do have another passion, which is working with students who have severe and profound needs. I have [learned] and continue to learn a lot from them. One of the lessons is to make sure to embrace the present! Another personality trait that I can thank my parents for and is common to many open water swimmers is tenacity---that 'stick-to-it-ness' trait common to open water swimmers. Tenacity comes in handy during those character building long hours in the ocean. My mother also swims Masters in the 80-84-year-old age group and those who know my mother tell me, 'Suzanne we know where you got IT from! "

"There have been many mentors and supporters who encouraged me along the many adventures, and there have been many adventures... sharp shooters on boats for any swim outside the Golden Gate Bridge, a U-turn in the middle of the English Channel due to a construction zone and my pilot boat almost sinking because soggy donuts became stuck in the bilge. The San Francisco Dolphin Swimming and Boating Club is where my open water swimming career began at 19-years-old -- watching those 'old timers', ages 80- and 90-years-old -- make sure to get their 'daily dip' in the San Francisco Bay -- some of them not missing a day in 25 years in water temperatures ranging from 47 to 62 degrees. To me, that is inspirational!!! Now I certainly have nothing to whine about if it is a little chilly on New Year's Day!"

"United States Masters Swimming became a part of my life before I was 19 when Master swimmers did not even include the 18- to 24-year-old age group. I joined a small team in Marin County, Tamalpias Aquatic Masters, coached by Marie McSweeny. I watched the 'older' master swimmers diligently train and could see how much fun they had and were training because they loved the sport. I thought, 'Hey I can do that, too!' Several years later, I needed to get some speed for the shorter open water races and pool swimming and trained hard with coaches Pete Raykovich from De Anza Cupertino Aquatics and Ray Mitchell from the Terrapins (Gold Medal Club status for 5 years in a row from United States Swimming). [And,] there is my current Masters's Coach, Kerry O'Brien, with the Walnut Creek Masters (which just received the Club of the Year Award from United States Masters Swimming) who I appreciate how he always has a positive spin on any performance.

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Most recently, during a rather character building meet he said, "Suzanne, if you can't be well-prepared you may as well be well-rested!" Okay, 'well rested' I certainly was!!!"

I am very humbled by this induction and want to share this award with the swim community. Many coaches and volunteers put in countless hours and give so much of their time to devise interesting and innovative programs that have provided opportunities, motivation and challenged me so that I would be able to follow my aquatic passions. Thank YOU!"

Is your team not being covered in AT??? Do you have a swimmer(s)/coach that you would like to be featured in AT? Then give us a call at 60 WATER.

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WHO's Charlotte Brown
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USA Swimmer, Jocelyn Phillips
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Sean Peneyra-Vista Diablo
Sam Craven-Vista Diablo
Jocelyn Chang
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