

Jill Whitney Hall of Fame Story 2017

Jill began swimming with her father teaching her the basics on their annual week vacation when she was young. At age 9, a local municipal pool opened in Pennsylvania and Jill began swimming lessons that summer. When they began a swim team the following summer, she joined the team and has been swimming ever since. The local YMCA began an age group team when Jill was 13 and she began swimming year-round.

Jill swam through her high school years but she didn't swim for her high school team. Her high school had a really good team and she didn't think she was good enough to be on the team and chose to continue swimming for the YMCA team.

College swimming was at LaSalle College (now University) in Philadelphia. The women's team was in its infancy and during her 4 years there, she had a different coach each year. During college, Jill qualified twice for AIAW (pre-NCAA) Small College Nationals in breaststroke events. Jill coached for a local YMCA team for about a year and a half after college while she was taking some extra classes after graduation.

Jill started swimming masters after she got her first full-time job after college. A friend that she swam with in college told her about the master's club she was swimming with and asked if she would like to join her. Jill thought it sounded like a good thing to do after work and a way to meet people outside of work. Except for a few months off here and there over the years, Jill has been swimming workouts and competing in meets since 1981.

When Jill lived in Pennsylvania, she swam for the Hatboro YMCA masters team from 1981-1995. When Jill and her husband moved to Minnesota in 1995, she wasn't working right away so her first mission was to find a master's program to join. Jill found the SEMS Master's program in Woodbury and she was a great addition to the team for the next 15 years. Even when Jill moved to South Carolina when her husband's work changed locations, she remained a SEMS member representing Minnesota throughout the years 1995 to now. Jill swims practices on her own in South Carolina and competes in meets in the area.

Her husband, Peter, has always been her biggest supporter. Jill swam masters with Peter's sister for about a year before she met him, so he knew what he was getting into. She considers herself lucky that she had the opportunity to swim for Jerry and Sharon Simpson at SEMS and working out with a great group of people also helped. It's always easier to get through a tough set with teammates challenging and encouraging each other. Jill has kept swimming all these years as swimming has been the only exercise that she has stuck with through the years. The pool is also a good place to think and relieve stress. It's also nice to see if you can still complete a challenging set.

Favorite pool is the University of Minnesota. Worst pool was at a college where one end wall of the pool was also the end wall of the building. Favorite events are 100 breaststroke and 100 IM. Favorite workout when she was younger was 10x100IM. Now that Jill practices on her own, she does a lot of ladders and pyramid sets. They are easier to count and the yards add up fast without realizing it.

Most memorable master's event or meet was the 100 fly at SCY State Meet in 1997. Jerry Simpson and Jill swam next to each other taking stroke for stroke and somehow she just touched him out. They were both surprised—friendly competition goes a long way! Other outstanding swimming experiences in masters include being able to swim in two LCM National meets at the University of Minnesota. Jill set 4 MN LMSC Long Course Meter records at the Masters Nationals in August, 2017 in the 60-64 age group.

She has had many Minnesota State Records throughout the years—mainly in breaststroke and IM starting in the 35-39 age group. As of her 2017 induction into the Minnesota LMSC Hall of Fame, Jill had placed 57 times over her 24 years on USMS Top Ten lists in individual events and 5 times in relay events.