

Jim Stewart's Hall of Fame Story 2014

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Jim grew up in Michigan. He learned to swim about age 6 or 7 in a neighborhood pool. He swam on a county club summer team until high school. In high school he had to swim in the winter, indoors, yuk!! In college, at the University of Michigan, he swam the distance events, the 1000 and 1650, for two years.

He took a job in Rochester, MN. One day, while getting dressed, he split his pants. He said, "I have got to do something to control my weight". He started to swim with the age-groupers in town. He began talking up Masters and eventually his little group was able to fill one lane, still with the age-groupers. Then he filled two lanes. Eventually, there were enough participants to have their own Masters workouts.

Jim first competed in Masters in 1982. He made that national Top Ten list that year. His 1650 time that year of 17:05 is still on our state record books. It is the oldest Minnesota State record we have. He currently holds 13 state records even though he has not competed in the pool since 2007. Between 1982 and 2007 he placed 32 times on the USMS Top Ten Lists. We'll get to his open water placements in a minute.

He said it was Roger Bosveld that encouraged him to swim in national competitions. So he did. Jim tells the story of the 2006 Spring Nationals. There he ran into Masters coach Bill Rose sitting with a bunch of his young swimmers. Bill had coached Jim way early in his swimming career. Bill asks him "are you still swimming?" "Been pretty much straight through?" "Plan to continue?" Yes, yes, yes. Bill turn to the group of young swimmer and said; "See I made a lifetime swimmer out of this guy!!" Swimming is a lifetime sport.

Not only did Jim swim nationally, but international as well. Remember the name Vince Herring? He and Vince worked out together and did a number of crazy swims together. How about the windy swim through the Straits of Gibraltar? How about the relay in the Maui channel? There was an open spot that year on the relay in this annual event. After he agreed to swim, he learned that the previous swimmer had been chased out of the water and on to the support boat by a 16-foot shark. He swam anyway.

It may seem odd that he is more motivated by the workouts than the competitions. He enjoys the workouts and does so 5 to 6 times per week. But, he truly is a lake guy. He likes them long, but not too cold. He considers his worst race on June 6 in Lake Darling, near Alexandria. The water temp was 57 degrees and he only made ½ mile and was sore for day's afterword. Roger Bosveld will not have to worry about any English Channel competition from Jim.

Jim is clearly most famous for his distance swims both open water and pool long postal event. As previously mention, if you win one of the distance events nationally, you are designated All-American for that year. Jim has been All- American for 16 years. What this number does not show is this - if you win two or three events nationally in a year, you are just All-American. There is no double or triple All-American. The same is true in the pool. But during those 16 years he won 41 national events.

Now there is a category that helps recognize this kind of a feat. It is called "All-Star". For each of these distance events, points are assigned based upon placement, 20 point for a first, 18 for a second, so forth. The person in each age group that has accumulated the most points is the All-Star for that year. Basically, this person is the top distance swimmer in the country in their age group. Jim was the All-Star 12 years in a row. One year he accumulated 140 points. That is a lot is distance racing.

Recently Jim and his wife recently moved to Port Orange, Florida and his workout group swims outdoors. Yeah!! He totally enjoys being one of the few "silver" haired guys working out in the fast lane. They do plan on sending summers in Minnesota, and Jim plans on continuing swimming and competing in Minnesota lakes.