

# Mamie Brown's Hall of Fame Story - 2014

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Mamie Brown was born in 1904, 68 years before Title IX entered our vocabulary. Sixty-eight years before women in sports became a reality. Mamie married, had three boys, raised three boys, divorced and became a single parent. Mamie had the skills of the day: shorthand and typing. She worked for Central Lutheran Church and the Minneapolis Women's Club.

Mamie's three boys, believe it or not, were Tom, Dick, and Harry. Mamie would always smirk when she said that. All three boys were swimmers, although Tom was an outstanding football player as well. Mamie's boys had a knack for finding the water. Streetcars gave them the ability to find the local swimming holes. Dick was a Minneapolis lake lifeguard. He taught Tom and Harry to swim while he guarded. Other pools they found were the King Cole Hotel near Loring Park and John Ryan Baths in Northeast Minneapolis. Dick swam for Roosevelt High School. Tom and Harry went to Minneapolis Central where the woodworking teacher, I mean the "coach", gave the swimmers tokens to ride the streetcar downtown to the YMCA. The kids on the swim team would commandeer a blackboard and plan the lineup. Mamie did not swim at this time, but she certainly supported and encouraged her boys.

In the early 1970s, Mamie was on her own. Harry was swimming Masters in Florida. He suggested to her that she should be swimming. Fighting a bone disease, the low impact of a water workout was just what Mamie needed. The socializing of Masters helped too. Mamie was swimming with North Shore Aquatics Club at Chippewa Middle School with Ray Hakomaki, Tom Hodgson, Jean Freeman and Mamie's son Harry who had moved back to Minnesota. Mamie was part of an eclectic group of swimmers who showed that it takes all kinds to make a team.

In 1977 Mamie and a large contingency from North Shore Aquatics made their way to Spokane, Washington for AAU Masters Long-Course Nationals. NSAC scored high and finished in 5<sup>th</sup> place. Mamie and her three sons all competed, making it a family event.

Mamie competed in Masters meets for twenty years. Her first meet at age 71 in 1976. Her last meet was at 91 in 1996. She mostly swam freestyle and backstroke, but at 75 years old she swam a legal 100 IM. Not bad for a 75 year old newbie. The distances she covered went from 50-yard swims to the 1650. Mamie was game for just about anything.

Mamie had 87 USMS Top Ten swims and 5 USMS All American times. At fourteen years after her death, Mamie still holds numerous Minnesota Masters Records; six Short Course Yard records, three Short Course Meter records, and one Long Course Meter record.

1993 Long Course Nationals was another big meet for Mamie. The Brown family came out in force with Mamie, her children and her grandchildren all participating in the meet in the new University of Minnesota Natatorium. She was the force that got three generations swimming competitively.

In addition to swimming, Mamie's hobbies were painting and writing. Before she stopped driving, Mamie was known to road trip on short excursions like a trip to Colorado.

Our memory of Mamie beyond the pool was her fierce independence. She lived alone as long as she could. She rode the bus and metro mobility if she could. One time she took metro mobility to a meet at the Southdale YMCA, which meant heading to the meet hours early and possibly waiting hours for the return trip. It was her preference. She did not want to be a burden to others. Sarah Hromada would drive her to some meets and remembers Mamie was always upbeat and joy to be around.

The Minnesota Masters Hall of Fame recognition goes to Mamie Brown, an independent, always willing to learn, young-at-heart, swimmer who showed us all the benefits and beauty of aging gracefully and getting out there and participating.