

Ruben Berg Hall of Fame Story - 2016

Ruben is truly a role model for all of us in how to age gracefully. He was a devoted, engaging, and caring person. His story is one of hard work, dedication, perseverance and overcoming challenges. He believed and consequently taught others that these were important parts of life! He had many passions - fishing, camping, hunting, traveling, volunteering, photography, and of course swimming.

His ambition was to be a great photographer and would take evening classes as he imagined a career in photography. However, the difficult and demanding times during the depression changed all that as family members needed to chip in to keep his father's auto repair business going. They repaired coal trucks, airplane engines and cars. He worked along with his older brother until his brother took a job working for the government flying and repairing airplanes. This left Ruben to be the son who would continue working in the family business which he did for a total of 72 years.

Ruben was married to his wife Clarice for 59 years. Although she was not a swimmer, she was a loyal supporter as coach, timer, cheerleader and travel companion. Ruben and Clarice had 3 children; Barbara, John and Gerald. He was a devoted husband, father and grandfather. He was actively involved in the lives of their children as they grew up. He was a den leader for the Boy Scouts and always encouraged his children to try new things.

Ruben had the character of a champion -- A man who persevered until he figured things out. Throughout his life, he was an avid lover of the water taking the opportunity to swim whenever he had the chance. He was a self-taught swimmer and his aquatic debut was a little disappointing as he was cut from his High School team because he didn't know how to swim the strokes properly. A difficult beginning which clearly set the challenge in play to becoming a golden age champion. Classic Ruben!

Amazingly, it was not until Ruben suffered a stroke in his mid 80's that he got seriously involved in competition and at 85 he competed in his first Masters Swimming meet. Imagine this, he trained at Chisago High School along with his granddaughter where they would meet 2-3 times a week at 5:00 am in the morning.

Ruben was an active and loved volunteer at the Hazelden Treatment Center where he gave tours and helped out in the mail room. This provided the opportunity for him to train in their beautiful pool. During his training there he thought he had the pool to himself but staff would make sure someone was always keeping an eye on him for his safety.

Ruben traveled all over the country competing in various swimming meets until he was 91 - accumulating 253 medals and 44 National Top Ten times in his 7 years of competition.

Although winning was not his main goal, he did like to win and got a great deal of joy as younger swimmers would walk alongside cheering him on.

Through his determination he saw his vision of a warm water pool become a reality in his retirement community believing that all should be able to experience the lifelong benefits of swimming. Ruben was well-loved wherever he went and his passion for his swimming has been an inspiration to many of all ages and abilities. A true legacy.