

NEM News

The Newsletter of the New England Masters Swim Club, Inc.

Fastest Swimmers Don't Always Win

Celebrate the Clean Harbor Swim

By Katie O'Dair

When I was asked about my Celebrate the Clean Harbor swim in Gloucester (August 6), my initial reaction was "hmm, I showed up, got in the water, hung out on the beach afterward with my friends." None of this, of course, gives credit to the organizer, **Richie Martin**, and all of the great volunteers who make this an event I return to every year, so I first want to say thanks to them and then offer some reflections on open water swimming and how different it is from some other events.

Open water swim events are often misunderstood by both competitive swimmers and non-swimmers (sometimes called triathletes) alike. For some devoted masters swimmers, the thought of swimming without the little black line guiding you is a bit nerve wracking. And our triathlete friends wonder why anyone would voluntarily do what some describe as the worst leg of the race. But to me, the open water swim has the participants guessing until the race is over.

And the guessing starts early, when you arrive at the event. When you arrive at a swim meet or triathlon, you can usually size up your competition pretty well. At meets, that usually means the seed time and heat placement (notwithstanding those who sandbag, of course). At triathlons, you can usually look at overall body fat, amount of strutting around, and how expensive one's bike is to get a sense of your competition. You know these people, because you race them all the time, and the finishing times don't lie. But not the same can be said for the open water swim.

When you arrive at an open water swim, so many faces look unfamiliar, and that is because these swims attract many people who don't swim regularly in a masters program or others who heard that a local swim was happening and decided to give it a go. It's nearly impossible to scope out the competition. We don't wear our age on our arm, there are usually no age groups or the age group is something like 10-50 and 51 to 100. There is no fancy equipment, save for wetsuits when it is really cold. There are all shapes and sizes though, truth be told, this group tends to look a bit "healthier" than the average triathlon or road race crowd. We all start together to face the course and the elements at the same time. And, what I like best about the open water swim is that not always the fastest swimmer wins.

There are not too many X factors in open water swimming, unlike the other events. No flat tires, no spectators getting in your way, no sharks (debatable, yes). If you are having a bad day, it will be over soon. If you get off course, the boat or



Katie O'Dair with Bob and Karen (Ghiron) Looney at the Gloucester Swim. Photo courtesy of Karen Ghiron Looney.

kayak will pick you up or help you get back on course. The biggest X factor is who can follow the course the best. I am certain that I am not always one of the fastest swimmers in the race; I do, however, have a knack for sighting and finding a good line, all things that make a huge difference in an open water swim. It also helps that there are no walls and no coach is yelling at me to kick off the turns. And when you finish, there is usually nothing else to do but eat, relax on the beach, and socialize with your fellow swimmers.

I am happy to report that I ended up 3rd at the Celebrate the Clean Harbor swim, and received a beautiful framed print of the Lighthouse as a prize. That alone should encourage people to participate next year, but if that is not enough, the long sleeved tee was pretty nice too.

Open water swimming has something to offer competitive and recreational swimmers, fitness buffs, triathletes, and just about anyone who enjoys being outdoors and in the water. This month, as the New England open water swimming season nears its end, some swimmers share their thoughts and experiences from races, fund-raising events, and open water training.

If you love the open water as much as they do, you will enjoy their stories. If you have never tried open water swimming, read on!

five...five...five...

Counting Laps at the Mashpee Superswim

By Rachel Saks

This past June I finally had the chance to participate in the Mashpee Superswim. I first heard about the swim a few years ago and figured the mixture of Cape Cod on a warm June day, fresh water, and post race food has got to be fun. I also knew that friends and fellow members from both MIT Masters (where I swim) and the Boston Triathlon Team would be participating as well.

Now I just had to decide if I would do the 3.1 or the 1 mile swim. The longest swim I had done in competition was 4km (~2.5miles) at an age group championship triathlon in Spain. Although the 1 mile swim would be a challenge, I felt the 3.1 mile swim would be a new goal to attain.

When I arrived at John's Pond in Mashpee that morning, the weather was dramatically different from when I had left Boston. Groups of masters swim teams and friends sat on the beach and watched as the wind blew significant waves throughout the pond. Many folks commented on the wind, some noted that the water was colder than in years past, and others said the water temp should be just right. Although we knew that it was hitting 90 degrees in Boston, we were wrapped in towels on the beach to keep warm before the swim!

As the clock read 9-ish, we gathered on the beach around the race director. He pointed out the buoys that formed a triangle in the pond, and explained how the swim would work. The 1 mile swimmers would start at the buoy on the right and go around the triangle once, and the 3.1 mile swimmers would start at the buoy on the left and go around six times. When he yelled go, we'd go. No timing mats, no colored bathing caps to signify swim waves, no timing chips (like I've seen in triathlon). It was actually kind of nice! I had no idea how I was going to keep the right lap count in my head since I can sometimes be "interval challenged" at masters practice, but I had to think of a system quick!

The last decision was if I was going to wear a wetsuit. I'm very comfortable swimming in a wetsuit, but was training for a triathlon in Kansas City where the water would be too warm for a wetsuit to be legal. Although I was a little afraid of getting cold during the swim, I felt the aura of the swim community at this race (only a few people were wearing wetsuits), and decided that when in Rome...so I went sans wetsuit.

As I made my decision, the "GO!" was given and I ran into the water from the beach (just about everyone else was already waist deep!). Off we went! As we fought for position, people had fairly good sportsmanship, and I was still thinking about how in the world I was going to keep track of my laps. To me, that was going to be more difficult than the swim itself! There was a lot of time to think during those 3.1 miles, and I had to stay focused. After going once around I took the simple route and kept repeating the word "one" in my head and thought of all kinds of things that had the word "one"... then "two:... two...two..." Can't say it as the most perfect or creative system, but it worked.

One major element of open water swimming is the challenge of swimming straight. You have to learn that even if you catch some fast feet to follow, you can't always trust that those feet are going in the right direction or in a straight line. There were plenty of directionally challenged people at this race, so I kept on my own and tried really hard to keep those buoys in sight through the waves. With the triangular swim, going out was into the waves (that's when I drank a lot of the pond), the second leg allowed you to ride the current, and the third leg was just plain choppy. Most of us probably swam more than 3.1 miles, but that is part of the art and challenge of open water swimming.

Also in open water swimming, it is interesting how you can make friends. I swam with a guy for about three or four of the six laps and we somehow knew that we were swimming along side each other and keeping pace without ever speaking. He'd go wide between buoys on one leg, and I probably went wide on another, but we could just tell that we were keeping tabs on each other and helping each other set a good pace. It wasn't until after the race that we recognized each other from our swim caps, shook hands, introduced ourselves, and congratulated each other on a nice swim. That is such an interesting part of this sport – the camaraderie that comes when you might not even be able to speak with one another.

All in all, this was a great event. Happily, I was able to keep track of my six laps, and come in strong at the end. I got bored and cold around lap five, but hey, I was almost done at that point ("five...five...five...") and I made it through. What I didn't expect was a nice surprise – I won my age group with a time of 1hr 25 min. Hardware! It was great to see the rest of the swimmers finish, and then just hang with friends after the event and know that I could eat big after this hefty effort. My kudos go to all who participated – it's no easy task be it 1 or 3.1 miles! Thumbs up to this event, and maybe I'll see you there next year!



Rachel Saks, Juli Jones, and Laurie Damianos at the Mashpee Superswim. Photo courtesy of Regina O'Toole.

Escape from Alcatraz

San Francisco Bay Swim

By Josh Fisher



Josh Fisher. Photo by Laurie Damianos.

Alcatraz Island is imbedded in our nation's history and popular culture. Today this hardened place is a popular tourist attraction, a chance for those of us on the outside to experience the cold cramped cell blocks which once held some of our nation's most notorious felons. It is also the namesake and starting point for the well known Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon.

I entered the lottery for the event, wanting to get in but wary of what that would mean. The 1.5 mile swim from Alcatraz Island to Crissy Field on the shores of the presidio is the first leg of a course that more resembles an obstacle course than triathlon. When the e-mail hit my inbox announcing my selection for the event, the first leg of the race was forefront on my mind. Swimming in 78-degree pool water was not going to prepare me for the San Francisco Bay in June. A few brave souls joined me at Walden Pond in late April, when the water temperature was in the low 50's and the air temperature dropped to the

upper 30's. This was a good chance to acclimate to the water temperature I would experience at the race; however the calm waters of the pond would not prepare me for the Bay's swift current and choppy water. For this I would have to wait until race day.

I flew to San Francisco the Friday before the race. At the pre-race day meeting, I walked to the water's edge previewing the course that would challenge me the next day. The Escape from Alcatraz swim originates from the San Francisco Belle, a large stern paddle-wheeler, which anchors just off the Island of Alcatraz. The swim start is timed to coincide when the strong tide of the San Francisco Bay is heading out. To beat the current, we were instructed to swim for 10 minutes towards downtown San Francisco, not immediately toward the swim exit to our right. Only after crossing the channel were we to head towards the Marina District and the Presidio, using the current to bring us to the swim exit. Attempting to swim a straight line to the finish would result in the current drawing you beyond the swim exit before you could traverse the channel, leaving you a choice of shoring further down Crissy Field or waiting to be pulled out by one of the rescue boats.

With camera crews on board and helicopters overhead, the race began. My wave, the first of the amateurs, was signaled to move. Not wanting to get bogged down in a sea of other swimmers, I make my way to the front of the pack, just a few feet from the door, and the cold water beyond. In a rush, the pack started to move and before I knew it I was leaping off the boat, feet first, into the choppy waters. Before I could surface I

felt other bodies jumping into the water all around me, a few hitting me as I struggled to put some distance between myself and the boat. The first few minutes of the swim were intense; neoprene laden bodies interfered with each stroke. There was elbowing, pulling, and the dreaded toe touching as the pack formed.

Unlike every other open water swim I have participated in, this swim course had no navigation buoys. A boat with a large inflatable Snapple bottle had led the pros. Quickly, however, this was out of my site, beyond the cresting waves. I did as instructed; I aimed for San Francisco proper, fighting the swim current that was drawing me to the right. After 10 minutes, I found myself alone in the water; I had let the current draw me too far to the right and the main line of swimmers was to my left. I began one of several attempts to correct for this, as I did not want to be drawn out past the swim exit, or worse, be so far out that I would have to be picked up by a boat.

After fighting the current, I found myself back with a group of swimmers. I could make out the general area where Crissy Field was but I still could not see the exact placement of the swim exit. Using the Palace of Fine Arts as my sighting, I began to swim diagonal to the shore. At this point I began to relax; I had a sense of where I was going and felt confident that I would be able to complete this leg. I began to breathe to my right, grabbing a glimpse of the Golden Gate Bridge. At one point I pulled my head up in the water and did a few strokes of the breaststroke - after all, it isn't everyday that one gets to swim in such a setting. During the pre-race meeting, an older guy who swims from Alcatraz to the shores of San Francisco every week in the summer told the group that, during our swim, we should flip on our back and take in the sights. I remember thinking at the time, "yeah right, 55 degree water, strong current, 1.5 miles to swim, I'm not going to be in the mindset that this is a Kodak moment." But, he was right. Of the entire experience, being in the water with the Golden Gate bridge to my right, the Bay bridge on my left; Alcatraz and the foothills of Sausalito behind me; and the Marina district of San Francisco ahead; is the most vivid and memorable moment of my race.

Forty minutes after jumping into the water, the crowd of spectators and the swim exit were finally visible. Some swimmers had been pulled by the current beyond the swim exit, and more than the usual number were pulled by boat. Thanks to the strong current this day, the swim times were more reflective of a 2+ mile swim, rather than the 1.5 miles we actually covered.

The rest of the race was comprised of a formidable bike course and an 8 mile run which covered pavement, trail, sand and steps, all of which seemed to fly by as fast as the swim. The entire race was truly exhilarating, and when this year's lottery opens I will be one of the first to register, hoping for the chance to hit the San Francisco Bay's waters again.

Creating Waves to Fight Cancer

Swim Across America: 10th Anniversary Celebration in the Boston Harbor

By Steve Upson

The water was calm and with air temperatures hitting close to 100 degrees, jumping into the frigid waters of the Boston Harbor was a welcome relief from the heat. Every summer for the past ten years, I have joined dozens of brave amateur and Olympic swimmers for a 22-mile relay swim to help raise awareness and money for the fight against cancer. Over 48 athletes, including Boston's own Olympian, **Janel Jorgensen** a Danvers, MA native, and Olympian, **Jenny Thompson**, participated.

From performing "cannonballs" off the top deck of the support boats, to telling stories of friends and family who have battled cancer, it was a special day for all participants and volunteers. Swimming in the "pristine" (and sometimes mysteriously flavored!) waters of the harbor certainly brought us together and each year gives us the opportunity to do what we love for a great cause.

Throughout the day, we each swam with a team of five others (of equal ability and speed) for 15-minute legs of the relay. Over the course of 8 hours, the mileage adds up and is an incredible workout when it's your turn to jump back in. Surprisingly enough, the water is actually very clean and, except for the occasional piece of seaweed and driftwood, presents no danger. Just another day amongst the Harbor Islands!

Dozens of spectators and **Mayor Menino** greeted us all at Rows Wharf after a long day in the water to celebrate our efforts for cancer research, prevention and treatment. **Kitty**



Steve Upson tests the waters of the Boston Harbor. Photo by John Deputy. Reprinted with permission of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

Tetreault and her team of dedicated volunteers should be applauded and always amaze us with their total dedication and organization of this annual event. This year was no exception to all the hard work and energy of the organizers and participants, as over \$170,000 was raised, bringing the grand 10-year total to over \$1.5 million dollars.

If you're interested in participating in 2006, the dates are already set and spots are filling up fast, so go to

www.swimacrossamerica.com for more information.

See you on the water.

Against the Tide

Not Your Average Breast Cancer Swim

By Lisa A. Freed

One day as they sat at Walden Pond in the early 1990s, before all of the big corporate-sponsored events to raise money for cancer, **Maria**

Vetrano and **Helen Privett** were

inspired. Maria had recently lost her mother to breast cancer. Both avid

swimmers, they wanted to create an athletic event to support the Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition (MBCC) and raise awareness of primary prevention of breast cancer. *Against the Tide*, a fundraising swim, became their vision.

This year, just like the last 12 years, I participated in the annual *Against the Tide* swim for breast cancer. The event, sponsored by the Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition raises funds to support the prevention of breast cancer and research into the causes of this disease. Of all my athletic endeavors over the years, none compares to my passion and feeling for this event. In the time it takes for you to read this article, another woman will have been diagnosed. In 2005, over 40,000 women will die of this disease, more than twice the population of my Town. However, for me, statistics do not tell the same story as the feeling of now being within a year or two of my mom's age when she was first diagnosed.

The swim is for all ages and abilities, bringing together families, teams, and friends for the 1-mile competitive swim and a recreational swim. For those who do not swim, MBCC also provides a 3-mile walk and a 2-mile kayak event. Families, children and relatives crowd every event to cheer for each and every finisher. The event is held twice a year, once in Hopkinton and once on the Cape. Hopkinton is always a temperate, pleasant swim on a well-marked course and a feast afterward. One of the best parts of the swim is that the competition is "self-dictating." Many of the swimmers are not there to race; they are there for their own personal challenges and motivations. For someone just starting open water swims, this is the perfect event. Its setting, attitude, and diversity of participants make it ideal.

Against the Tide takes place every year in June in Hopkinton, MA and in August in Brewster, MA. Participants can choose to swim, walk or kayak. Everyone is asked to raise a minimum of \$150. Thanks to sponsorships of local companies and the work of lots of volunteers, 100% of money raised by participants goes straight to the work of MBCC. In 2005, *Against the Tide* celebrated its twelfth year, and has raised over \$1,000,000 for breast cancer PREVENTION. For more information, visit: www.mbcc.org/swim



Jane Katz, USMS Top 6 All-American Champion & World Masters Swimming & Synchronized swimming Champion, honored by FINA at the Sydney Olympic games. Krystal Cappola, 11 years old raised \$3,000 for *Against the Tide* Cape 2005. Photo courtesy MBCC.

Why Am I Doing This?

Boston Light Swim

By Dori Miller

I have lived in Boston for 7 years, but I never think about Boston Harbor. I think about the Charles River, the pool at Boston University, and Walden Pond. On Saturday, August 6th, I participated in the Boston Light Swim (BLS) and discovered a whole new world.



Dori Miller wins the 8-mile Boston Light Swim.
Photo courtesy of John Werner.

The Boston Light Swim, a local tradition since 1908, is the oldest marathon swim race in America. The race starts at the Harbor Lighthouse on Little Brewster Island, continues on past Georges Island and Rainsford Island, under the Long Island Bridge, around Thompson Island, and finishes at the L Street Bathhouse in South Boston.

We learned about the history of the race from race director, **John Werner**, and veteran BLS swimmer, **Fred Knight**, at the pre-race dinner the night before. The swimmers participating in this year's swim represented three countries and five states. Everyone told their story about the places they had swum around the world and why they were swimming the Boston Light.

On the boat ride out to the start, I watched the shore disappear and noted the landmarks on the islands that I should look for on the swim back. It bounced around erratically in our wake. Below deck I checked my fuel supplies, adjusted my goggles (more than once), and applied a little Vaseline under the shoulder straps of my suit.

We arrived at Little Brewster Island to find that the other swimmers had already started. I had no time to prepare myself for the cold water before jumping in, and that was probably a good thing. After 20 strokes or so, I was finally able to swim with my face in the water.

I headed in the direction of the other swimmers and the small fleet of boats. The first half hour passed by quickly, but a few of my toes were numb. I vaguely wondered to myself, "Why am I doing this?"

After 45 minutes, I was still cold. My arms were getting stiff and I was feeling cold from the inside. I was a little worried about being able to stay warm enough. I stopped to get some hot apple juice. The plan was for my crew to throw me a water bottle tied to a rope so they could pull it back into the boat. At least that was the plan. I watched as the water bottle flew through the air and came untied. This made me laugh and took my mind off the cold water.

Once I was just past Georges Island, I could see the Long Island Bridge two miles ahead. The water was starting to feel

warmer, but my toes were still numb. I could also see two other boats ahead of me to my left. Everything seemed to click into place and I picked up my pace. The waves were minimal and the current was good so I didn't have to fight the water to keep on course.

My friends asked me later what I thought about while swimming. I remember focusing on my stroke and breathing, two breaths to the left, two to the right. I watched my friends on the boat. The water was an emerald green color and clear enough to see my hands in front of me. The water was free of seaweed and litter. I tried not to think about what might be below me.

I passed the other two swimmers ahead of me and made it to the Long Island Bridge in an hour and 40 minutes. I thought that this was the halfway point, but it is actually a little further. Once I was past the bridge, I stopped again for some more apple juice and a Gu which was taped to the water bottle. I stuck the empty package in my suit when I was done. I took some photos with my waterproof camera.

Once past Long Island, the Boston skyline came into view. It felt like I was getting closer to home. I could see the planes flying into Logan. The current the next two miles between Thompson and Spectacle Islands was a little choppy. I watched the visitor center on Spectacle Island pass, and the next time I looked up it seemed like I was passing it again. I asked my crew if I was going anywhere because it felt like I wasn't.

As I rounded Thompson Island, South Boston came into view. I had no problem spotting the white walls of the squash courts at the L Street Bathhouse. It seemed to glow in the distance. I could hear the race director cheering from his boat. Half way to shore, I passed directly under the Logan flight pattern. I looked straight up and watched a few planes pass overhead. My arms were starting to get a little tired.

As I got closer, I asked my crew where the finish was. They pointed to a guy in a blue t-shirt waving on the beach. I headed straight for him while my boat circled and anchored off shore. I could feel the current pulling me towards shore and it felt like I was riding the waves. After a while I realized that there was something different about the water; I was looking at something—the bottom. When I stood up on the beach I was greeted by supporters. I had finished first - in 3 hours and 4 minutes - much faster than I had anticipated!

It wasn't long before the rest of the swimmers arrived on shore. Everyone looked happy and proud to have completed the distance.

I could not have done the swim without the help and support of my friends (**Jen**, **Dave**, and **Dave**) and especially **Bill** and his boat. Thanks to **John Werner** and **Fred Knight** for keeping this great tradition alive.

I now have a map of the Boston Harbor Islands on my desk. I like to study it and think about other swims. I will swim the Boston Light again, but a year seems too long to wait.

For more information on the Boston Light Swim and photos from this year's swim, go to: <http://www.bostonlightswim.org>.

Those Aren't Loons!

Open Water Training on Golden Pond

By Page Wasson

Five women from Minuteman Masters gathered On Golden Pond to train for the 10K USMS race in Ft. Myers this fall. Three of us (**Laurie Damianos**, **Mary Lou Tierney**, and I) swam five miles and two (**Kathy Connolly** and **Edith Gardner**) paddled the support canoe on a steamy Saturday in an idyllic setting. It was one of those days when the best place to be was in the water. Not one of us has ever done a 10K and we're not sure how to train, but a weekend on Squam Lake sounded like fun, and we could test our open water endurance in a beautiful setting.

During the first half of the swim we stroked into a pretty strong wind and choppy water. We stayed close to the canoe to be protected from the motor boats. We felt strong until we crossed a channel where the wind and waves strengthened. We were next to Little Loon Island where a pair of bald eagles successfully hatched two chicks earlier this summer. Battling the rough water, we weren't able to do any bird watching! However, a guy on a jet ski came by with a serious and puzzled look on his face as if he were saying, "ummm... those aren't loons... not dolphins either... I've never seen anything like this on Winnepausauke... yellow capped heads???" Giving him a wide berth, we rounded the island to enjoy the wind and waves at our feet for the second half - homeward bound!

We were tired and sore, but elated when we finished. This 5-mile trial swim reassured us that we would be able to do the 10K race in October with the details of boat support and how to eat and drink along the way to be sorted out. The next day was not a "rest day," as might be expected. We all got back in the warm, clear water to swim a 2-mile loop in the cove together. It's great to have friends that want to do something crazy like a 10K or support that craziness. Who would think that a wild and fun women's weekend getaway would include some serious distance in the water in addition to delicious food, drink, and chatting on the dock!



Edith Gardner, Page Wasson, Laurie Damianos, Mary Lou Tierney, Kathy (KC) Connolly On Golden Pond. Photo courtesy of KC.

Truly Like Artwork

A Perspective from the Support Crew

By Edith Gardner

Paddling, am I paddling evenly? Heaven forbid I drift away from the three swimmers in the glimmering water, or rather head toward them!

This was the first time I'd been in a canoe, and it was a wonderful experience accentuated by being at Squam Lake and playing watchdog to our fellow swimmers training for their 10k swim in October (**Laurie**, **Mary Lou**, and **Page**). Meanwhile, my good buddy, **KC**, helped me learn the finer techniques of navigating a canoe.

The hours passed quickly. I can't imagine the same was true for the swimmers, but they seemed to go along with ease. It was truly like artwork, not to mention inspirational, watching their arms move through the water with sun washing over the scenery. Occasionally, a speedboat (with or without water-skiers) or jet ski would catch our attention. We'd ensure they saw us, and that the swimmers saw them. One comical passerby on a jet ski halted suddenly, stood up, and stared at the swimmers as if they were flamingos in Alaska – "what are these strange creatures propelling themselves without motor?" his expression relayed as he passed.

If only every weekend could be filled with beauty and inspirational events like this. Best of luck to those with their open water goals in the coming months!

Open Water Swims

September 10 (Saturday)

1.4 mile Swim for Life Provincetown – Provincetown, MA

Jay Critchley, Swim for Life, PO Box 819, Provincetown, MA 02657, 508-487-1930, thecompact@comcast.net; The high-energy fundraiser for AIDS, Women's Health and Youth on the tip of Cape Cod was founded in 1988; Celebration of Life Concert and Mermaid Brunch included in weekend festivities.; www.swim4life.org; Sanctioned by NE LMSC; Deck entries only

October 22 (Saturday)

USMS 10K Open Water National Championships - Fort Myers, FL

www.usa-openwaterswim.com, gregg.cross@usa-openwaterswim.com, 239-462-3322

Brown Sprints a Great Success!

By Homer Lane

A LCM meet held at Brown University on August 6, 2005 resulted in 54 New England all-time Top 10 times. This included seven New England record times:

Mary Perroni-Vesey – Women 40 to 44, 200 m breaststroke

Susan Livingstone – Women 65 to 69, 200 m butterfly

Stephen Joe – Men 30 to 34, 200 m breaststroke

Stuart Cromarty – Men 40 to 44, 100 m butterfly

Greg Shaw – Men 50 to 54, 50 m butterfly & 200 m IM

Laszlo Eger – Men 60 to 64, 50 m freestyle

Leading the way on the flurry of 54 new Top 10 was **Susan Livingstone** with five top ten swims. Other individuals with four new Top-10 times included **Jeanne Garr**, **Eileen Craffey**, **Barbara Matorin**, and **Laszlo Eger**. Also supporting the spree with three new Top-10 times each were **Donna Neuendorf**, **Joan McIntyre**, **Peter Hodge**, and **Homer Lane**.

Upcoming Meets

September 25 (Sunday)

WestConn Fall Masters Meet

Western Connecticut State University; Danbury, CT

O'Neill Center Natatorium, 6 lane, 25 yard pool, Colorado Timing System, Hy-Tek Meet Manager, Pool Gallery for spectators.

Maximum of 5 events entered, \$15.00 for the meet if postmarked by September 22nd, \$20.00 for deck entries plus \$3.00 per event. Deck entries close at 9:30 am – no exceptions. Hy-Tek Meet Manager will be used to run the meet - we encourage all of you to get your entries in early!! Meet Director: Jill Cook, (203) 837-8624 phone, (203) 837-9050 fax, cookj@wcsu.edu

October 10-15 (Monday-Saturday)

All Americas Competition

LATyCAR and Sao Paulo Masters; Sao Paulo, Brazil

A Fina Masters event open to all American continent residents. Includes LCM swimming, open water, water polo, synchronized swimming, and postal events.

October 22 (Saturday)

6TH Annual George Erswell Swim Meet

Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME

Warm-up 11AM, meet starts at 12 NOON. Meet Director Brad Burnham (207) 725-3527.

November 13 (Sunday)

Maine Masters Sprint Meet

Bath Area YMCA; Bath, ME

Warm-up at 10AM. Meet starts at 11AM. Meet Director: Richard Derector at 207-442-8681 or frontstreet@hotmail.com

December 2-4 (Friday-Sunday)

New England Masters Zone Short Course Meters Championship

Wheaton College, Balfour Natatorium; Norton, MA

More information to follow.

How I Spent My Summer Vacation

Things You Can Learn Putting On a Swim Meet

By Tim Morse

The recent meet at Brown provided me with an excellent opportunity to find out what it's like to sit at a table organizing event cards while the rest of the crowd gets to swim in a spectacular pool. Not only that, they got to swim events with ½ the amount of flip turns, or in the case of the 50's, no turns at all. Very tempting for us flip-turn-challenged types. However, this was a sprint meet. Nothing over 200 m. That clinched it for me, I would make myself useful rather than tying up a lane.

I emailed **Homer Lane** and **Brian Casey**, the organizers and told them that I would be more than happy to help out. They actually had some pre-meet chores for me. I was in charge of chasing down the local meet official and the guy who runs the Colorado timer. This wasn't that hard, just calls and email.

The most involved I got before the meet was running up to Framingham to pick up the monster luggage that is called the "meet bag." This nylon beast weighs about 500 lbs. and contains everything that you need to put on a meet. Along with the event cards, clip boards, stop watches, rule books, there was even a bull horn. All I had to do was get the thing to Brown on Sat morning.

Mike Lane was setting up the chairs and Colorado timing when I got there. **Stephen Joe** showed up to hook up the connections to the timer. Now it was getting serious. People were coming in, expecting to register. **Homer** showed up with the pre-registered forms and the cash box. He quickly decided that he would run the registration, and I would collect the event cards after the swimmers had signed in. Once I had all the cards, it was time for lane assignments. With some 30-40 people, most doing 3-4 events, it was decided to run with 6 of the 8 lanes at the pool. So grouping people by seed times actually went well.

Waiting for the last cards with 15 min to the start got me nervous. Plus I had volunteered to time. Luckily, some SwimRI folks arrived to help time. And one guy brought 3 kids who spent the whole morning with a stop watch in their hands. I had to stay 1-2 events ahead with lane assignments, while Homer was collecting finished times from previous events. The meet official instructed timers, started events, made announcements, and the electronic timer guy operated the Colorado box, zeroing out lane times before the next start.

Mostly things went smoothly, there were some breaks in the action, with 1-2 heats per event. We would be done by noon. Excellent. I handed off the event cards to **Laszlo Eger**, keeper of the flame and Top Ten Times.

If this meet was any indication, we should be back next year, a little better organized and maybe even have something 400 m or more to add to the fun. I recommend helping out at one of these things at least once a year. It gives you an appreciation for that crowd control event they call the New England SCY Championships.

Before I Even Eat Breakfast

Open Water Swimming at Walden Pond

By Regina M. O'Toole

Every Friday morning, from April to October, I drive to Walden Pond in Concord, MA to train for the swim leg of my triathlon competitions. My teammates, along with many other swimmers and triathletes, gather together along the old gray stone wall on the beach. We gather to train. This majestic (often cold, sometimes warm) water is the ideal place to improve our stroke. We test out our wetsuits, our body positioning, sighting skills, and general comfort and endurance in the open water. My teammates spread out their bags, wetsuits, Body Glide, goggles, and caps and talk while they take in their surroundings: ½-mile wide pond centered in Thoreau's woods, small sandy beach, and best of all, quietness, except for their own chatter.

On cold days, the chatter lasts longer as a way to prolong our entry into the frigid pond. We moan about the cold, we put only our toes in and wonder aloud how long we can actually swim, and we question why we even got out of bed. What makes us get in? - bravado? I think our thirst for challenge drives us. Water temperatures range from 55 degrees to well above 80. In the colder months, my body never warms up quite enough to relax in the water. My fingers and toes are too

stiff to kick and pull like I do in a pool, and my jaw too rigid to talk with the other swimmers when we congregate at the other side of the pond. But somehow, in the winter months, swimming at Walden seems better than my warm bed because of the exhilaration I feel once I've exited the cold water and joined my teammates for breakfast. Ah, breakfast. At our breakfast spot, Helen's Cafe, in Concord center, Sandy, our ever attentive waitress, sees us piling in and quickly puts several cups of coffee on our table. We sit together to warm up, whine about our cold hands and feet, eat, and laugh.

When the weather is warm, I'm eager to get up and get to the pond, see teammates, suit up, and swim. No stripe to follow on the bottom, just trees surrounding me and acting as my guide. Walden is my chance to get out and simply enjoy my surroundings. I can stretch out my stroke and get into a rhythm that I can't find when there are walls every 25 yards. The open water makes me feel like there is so much more to swimming than just doing lap after lap in a pool. With no walls around me, I delight in the noise of the other swimmers gliding by me and find joy in the laughs we share as we rest at the far side of the pond. And as I swim back to the small sandy beach, I get to watch the sun rise higher in the sky. It's a perfect way to train, before the traffic starts, before I go to work, before I even eat breakfast. This is Walden Pond...Thoreau's stomping ground and my favorite place to greet the day.



Regina O'Toole, here with Shaun Brady, relaxes on the beach after a swim.
Photo courtesy of Regina O'Toole.



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This Issue: Musings on Open Water Swimming

Clean Harbor Swim	Page 1
Mashpee Superswim	Page 2
San Francisco Bay Swim	Page 3
Swim Across America	Page 4
Against the Tide	Page 4
Boston Light Swim	Page 5
Open Water Training @ Squam	Page 6
Open Water Training @ Walden	Page 8