

## **US Masters Swimming Convention 2009. Chicago. Report from Patrick Quinn.**

This coincides nicely with the request from Dan Wall, chair of Adirondack District Masters, for volunteers to serve on the board of directors.

There has never been a better time to become active in this way, because US MASTERS SWIMMING is entering a whole new era. The Chicago convention of over 300 delegates from all over the USA indicated a few key developments, some of which you have already noted in the pages of SWIMMER magazine.

You probably all know by this time that you can now join or renew your membership online but only after our local registrar registers the club. He/she has to do so before October 14. You can then renew your membership for 2010 online. Just go to the USMS website.

### **(1)**

There is now a full time managing office in Sarasota Florida with a paid staff of nine including Rob Butcher the new executive director who is a swimmer himself. Communication with members and clubs is a primary concern of theirs and you will find more and more valuable programs to help you on the USMS website or in SWIMMER magazine. The move was justified by Rob, citing (a) lots of volunteers in the area, (b) strong support for US MASTERS SWIMMING by the local business and community leaders and (c) a large tourist base.

### **(2)**

There is a new emphasis by Rob and his team to serve the fitness swimmer including : the non-competitive swimmer; the newcomer including the one just out of high school or college who has decided that he or she doesn't want to be as indolent as some older relatives; the older one who has decided that life is more than endless clicking on a computer keyboard, or endless working to never-ending deadlines; and even that indolent ancient relative who has decided that "hey, its not too late for me to show that smart grandson of mine that I can still move the old body around with some grace, if only I can lose a little weight or get off the couch for a few hours a week. I'll join Masters Swimming and get involved with Silver Sneakers at the local Y."

A new national group known as Exercise Is Medicine, not affiliated with USMS, ( website: [exerciseismedicine.org](http://exerciseismedicine.org)) is working toward partnering with physicians to introduce this concept to patient treatment and to persuading Medical schools to include in their curricula some training in sports medicine for future doctors. The American College of Sports Medicine is also helping greatly to reshape Americans' perspectives on continuing physical health as being supportive of mental health too. The latest SWIMMER reports on a Dr. Baird's amazing findings that swimmers appear to live much longer than runners or other athletes. All of this was beautifully presented at a lunch-hour seminar on sports medicine last Friday by the chair of the Sports Medicine & Science Committee

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She revealed a new study that shows fitness can be achieved in a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of more strenuous working out per week. Pass the word on to your less active friends.

Incidentally, I had a chat with Dr. Jim Miller, former president of USMS, a practising physician and surgeon, as a result of a request from our own Scott Petrequin. Scott's orthopaedic surgeon had raised some questions as to whether some of us might lose coverage for elective surgery ( e.g. rotator cuff repair) under some proposed new legislation which might emerge during President Obama's health care program resolution.

Dr. Miller agreed with Scott's physician, and says that so do a number of his colleagues. He reasoned as follows.

There is so much money available for health care.

There are 15 million people without health care.

To care for them will mean the same amount of money spread over a wider base.

Therefore the sum available per person will be reduced.

(My own feeling is that this is a little over-simplified, but I report it nevertheless).

Dr. Miller's feeling is that elective surgery dealing with a non-life threatening condition may be denied because you can continue to live and work with the condition. (by the way, as I write this I hear on the radio that Rep. Bacchus has asked for 50 billion dollars extra for the general healthcare proposed program).

Dr. Jim offered several examples from recent history to illustrate his point, but everything depends on whatever actual bill is presented to Congress. So it is worth keeping an eye on what goes on in Washington. You should know that Dr. Miller is one of only eight surgeons nationwide who takes a particular. "exercise is medicine" approach to practice. He works worldwide with FINA on drug issues in competition. He believes that the most valuable approach to health care begins with the pediatrician and not the primary care physician you select in your later years, that his can take care of obesity, etc., years before it becomes a death threatening conditioning.

Another interesting question arose in the Sports medicine and science committee Discussions. It seems that an epidemiologist in Barcelona did a study which found that there is some correlation between water in pools, showers, water ingested, etc. and bladder cancer. It appears that the study is insufficiently substantiated at this time but....stay tuned.

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The House of Delegates at the convention overwhelmingly approved, with some amendments a new set of “minimum standards” which each LMSC, like Adirondack District Masters, needs to maintain in order to function well and do the best for its members. It describes clearly compliance with governance, fiscal affairs, social outreach, competition and fitness management as necessary for an LMSC to flourish.

Some feared that “enforcement “ of standard requirements might elicit a punitive approach to those LMSCs that may not currently meet them, but were much relieved to discover that this is a means not to restrict but to help LMSCs to grow and to thrive. I have brought home copies of the proposed standards to share with our chair and those who volunteer for the various vacant positions....secretary, registrar, records keeper, newsletter editor, webmaster, etc.

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The Finance committee of USMS has also been working on how to make it easy for the treasurer and chair of an LMSC to make sure that all financial management goes smoothly and that reporting to the IRS, etc. is a breeze. I have also brought home a couple of very easily understood sets of guidelines for the Chair, Registrar and Treasurer which I will share and which should encourage new volunteers to take on these roles.

So hey, wake up out there and help Dan Wall to get ADMS rolling toward a new and richer program for ALL our members.

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At the competitive level there is also some news.

Ann Svenson and (channel swimmer) Marcia Cleveland finally persuaded the Open Water committee to forbid wetsuits in open water events. It is true that triathlons allow them and are growing tremendously around the country, but Masters Swimming, too is growing and is now over 54,000 in membership, most of whom are fitness swimmers.

**(Regarding the controversial issue of tech suits: The FINA Masters Congress is meeting this weekend to decide whether to allow them in Masters competition. Because we are the only country that competes in yards, and that season has already begun, we needed to decide when to make compliance with the decision of FINA effective for SCY competition. The House of Delegates approved a resolution that the effective date will be immediately on the date that the FINA Masters swimwear rule is adopted, with the earliest date being Oct. 1, 2009. A message will be sent to all members as soon as a decision is made.**

#### 4.

Ann Svenson received heart-warming applause for the extraordinary work she did in coordinating ten open water events and all the postal National championship events around the country.

She is taking a bit of a break to compete next year in the World Masters in Goteburg, Sweden, and she really needs volunteers to take over the running of the Betsy Owens Memorial two mile cable swim in Lake placid next August.

(Do you all know that, in addition to being vice-chair of the large USMS open water committee. Ann broke the national record for her age group in the postal 10K race last August?)

Next year the USMS short course (yards) Nationals will take place in Atlanta's Olympic pool, and the long course (meters) Nationals will be held in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

In 2011 the short course event will be in Phoenix, Arizona in April and the long course in Auburn, AL, in August.

But for us locals it looks like the Colonies Zone short course meters championships will be Dec. 5/6 at Flushing Meadows run by Metro LMSC.....just a short ride on the no. 7 train from Manhattan. New England SCM championships will be in Boston, 12/11-13 at Boston University. So let us organise a strong ADMS team at least for the ZONE meet at the Corona Park pool in Flushing Meadows.

In 2011 Lake Placid once again will be the site of the 2-mile cable open water national championship and the 5 kilometer open water national championship will be at Coney Island, Brooklyn.

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Your delegate is a member of the History & Archives committee which has done amazing work in the past year on organising a digital record of all our major and minor championship results. This may sound pretty insignificant to you but you ought to know that MASTERS SWIMMING is quite young (1974) and therefore programs, results and records were easily discarded, mislaid, forgotten or left to rot in someone's basement. Even the National Swimming Hall of Fame did not have very good storage and retrieval of Masters data. Well, we have a great deal of data already rescued from oblivion but now we have asked and have been granted enough money to borrow the uncatalogued file boxes from ISHOF and get them in clear retrievable order and to file them securely. One of our members reported that out of 170,000 competition results there are 11,400 for whom we still need accurate and reliable data. That gives you a little idea of the immensity of the task, which should be completed by next year. Ed Suzuki of New Jersey Masters has done masterful work in coordinating and organising data. He is the new Vice President for Member Services.

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By the way, the new Board of Directors shows a little more diversity in its composition than before.

There WAS a morning swim workout every day, but since it began with a bus leaving at 4.45 a.m. so that people could be back in time for the 8 a.m. meetings, yours truly turned over in bed, reflected that he had not slept very well and carried on snoring. Even when there was an open water practice announced for 6 am Saturday, as soon as I found that the water temperature would be 68, I opted for breakfast instead. Call me chicken, call me anything, but please don't call me to swim at 6 am in icy water.

The annual banquet saw the Swimmer of the Year award go to the wonderful Olympian, Ryan Lochtrie. The Masters board members put on an amusing version of "Jeopardy" intended to underline the "genius" of Julie Heather, winner of the Ransom Arthur award for her great contributions to Masters Swimming.

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The hotel was a long way from town...ensuring that we would stay around for business rather than gallivanting around the sights. One benefit of this was the opportunity to meet many fellow swimmers of all ages and to make new friends. One young man from Maine described his ingenious recruiting technique. He told me that he visits the high school swim teams and coaches. He reminds those who feel that they might not be up to collegiate varsity team standards that they should not think of "hanging up their swimsuits". "You can continue" he tells them "both the competition, the camaraderie and the fun by joining your local USMS club as soon as you reach nineteen." Maine Masters have now nine clubs in Portland alone.

I did manage a brief visit to wonderful Millennium Park, with its wild Frank Gehry designed stage and serpentine footbridge in titanium metal, and of course the magnificent addition to the Chicago Art Institute designed by the famous Renzo Piano. And before coming home my wife and I visited Frank Lloyd Wright's world famous Unity Temple which was built for \$60,000 in 1909 and now, in 2009, will take \$25 million to restore. The gentle congregation still carries on its worship, its classes and its lovely concerts, undaunted by the immensity of the task which the world of aficionados imposes upon it.

Downtown Chicago is a vibrant wonderful, clean city whose citizens are among the most friendly and helpful I have encountered anywhere but the trains on the Elevated are still the noisiest you will ever know.

Patrick Quinn.