

# The Rime

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## CHESAPEAKE BAY AND CHALLENGE

by Dottie Buchhagen

Another year – another Chesapeake Bay swim! On Sunday, June 11, several ANCMs put their many hours of swim practices to the test to brave the 4.4-mile width of the bay or to navigate a triangular one-mile course at the eastern end of the bridge. The water was nearly perfect with almost no chop. The sun was comfortable for the early one-milers but became very hot as the cross-bay swimmers neared the finish line. In his 24<sup>th</sup> finish in the 4.4-mile swim, Bob Benson came in second in the over 80 age group (surprisingly there were two swimmers), and Cathy Gainor placed third in the 45-49 age group. In the one-mile Chesapeake Challenge, Dottie Buchhagen placed second of three in the 70-75 age group, and Lili Peng placed third in the 30-34 age group. Here are comments from the swimmers on their experiences:

### 4.4 mile swim:

**Cathy Gainor:** It was such a glorious day for the swim. While it was a bit early in the morning, the water was calm – especially compared to last year – the sun was bright, and it wasn't too hot so early at that hour. It was just beautiful out there.

**Bob Benson:** I completed the Bay Swim in 3:07 and finished second in the oldest age group (over 80). It was my third-slowest time but my 24<sup>th</sup> finish out of 26 attempts since 1989. (It is only my 23<sup>rd</sup> completion according to the records kept by Lin-Mark since they do not count my swim in 2011 when I was pulled several hundred yards from the finish line due to lightning.) At the pre-race meeting we were informed that the conditions were ideal. A simi-

lar assessment was made in the Lin-Mark summary of the race. I would not give the conditions such a high grade because of the waves I encountered after about the midpoint of the swim. Other than some cramps in my calf muscles several times, however, I felt fairly strong during the race and was surprised at the finish that my time was more than three hours.



**Holly Donnelly:** 2017 was a good year for the Bay. No wind or chop and a perfect low 70s temperature. The early start time got us all up early for a 5:15am departure.

### One mile swim:

**Jody Gan:** The one-mile swim was a little earlier in the morning than usual, but conditions much less choppy and so much cleaner than last year (none of that smelly, green spinach stuff). As in past years, I enjoyed this short swim with many neighborhood friends – both adults and older teenage children. We never usually stick around for the awards but did this year and it was great to watch Dottie get hers, and also my son, Zach, medaled in his age group! After that, our group was off to Cracker Barrel for breakfast – our tradition!



Lili Peng and Dottie Buchhagen

**Lili Peng:** The one-mile Chesapeake Bay Challenge was my first time swimming in the briny open waters on the East Coast. I had a great time swimming it and am in-

(Continued on page 4)

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## FROM THE EDITOR

◆Check out all the meet results and upcoming swimming events on our website at [www.ancientmariners.org](http://www.ancientmariners.org)



Bob Benson

# ANCM JEN WHITMAN: ELITE UNDERWATER HOCKEY PLAYER

by Pam Blumenthal

I met Jen Whitman at a meet a few years ago. She mentioned she played underwater hockey, so I assumed she was a bit crazy. You are probably thinking, “underwater hockey, what is that”? Wearing mask, snorkel, fins, water polo head gear, and a glove, players dive down to the bottom of the pool to push a weighted puck along the bottom with short wooden sticks, coming up for air as needed. Underwater hockey is played six-on-six, and the strategy is similar to soccer, basketball, and ice hockey, but played in three dimensions. Underwater hockey requires a combination of speed, finesse, and holding your breath for a long time. (It’s hard to picture, so you may want to check out a video: <http://usauwh.org/media/video/uwh-promo-video>). I only knew about the sport because my husband had played underwater hockey years ago.

Jen joined the ANCMs in 2012 when she realized she needed more training in the water to meet her underwater hockey goals. She wanted a team atmosphere to get her back to lap swimming after leaving it behind when she went to college. With the Ancient Mariners, Jen rediscovered that she loved swimming, even though we do not allow headbutting (which was one of her signature moves in

underwater hockey long ago).

I had no idea Jen was an elite underwater hockey player until she showed up at practice a couple of weeks ago wearing a Team USA swimsuit, self-consciously explaining how she could not find her regular suit. Thinking I was teasing her, I asked if she was on Team USA. She replied yes, she had just been selected for the 2018 Women’s Masters team to compete at the World Championship in 2018 in Canada.

Jen has always loved the water, swimming and playing water polo in her youth. At the beginning of freshman year at the University of Illinois, when the clubs are out on the quad to recruit members, Jen went to the water polo club table, but the season didn’t start until winter. Reluctant to wait to get back in the water, she was excited to run into a silly group of people wearing masks, snorkels, and water polo head gear. They played underwater hockey. Jen showed up to the first practice and fell in love. It helped that she was pretty good as a beginner. Joining the team provided a great group of friends and let Jen meet new people across the country at tournaments. It was the beginning of more than a decade of competitive underwater hockey. Introduced to underwater hockey in 2004, Jen participated on the U.S. Women's Elite Team at an international tournament in Colombia in 2010 (U.S. came in second place), at the America's Cup in Milwaukee in 2012 (another second), and at the World Championship in Eger, Hungary 2013 (sixth out of 16).

USA Underwater Hockey has elite

teams and masters teams. To join the team, one attends clinics and events and then has to survive two or three try-outs before competing with the other hopefuls. The successful players represent the United States at international events. The first time, in Colombia, Jen thought it was surreal to be walking in with the team as the national anthem played, and she realized her role as a representative of the U.S., underwater hockey, and her team.

The two-week international event is primarily spent on warm-ups and competition, but even playing up to three games a day leaves time for exploring



The U.S. Women's Elite team at the aquatic center in Medellin, Colombia, in 2010. Jen is in the middle of the back row.

and getting to know the other players. The end-of-tournament banquet is always fun with team costumes, awards, and no need to hold your breath. Jen said the international competitions have been a wonderful opportunity to meet people from around the world, including owners of the corner bakery in Colombia and the employees at a gelateria in Hungary.

Many of us have taken advantage of the network of masters’ swim teams to stay in shape while traveling for work. There is a list for underwater hockey clubs, too. Jen has shown up for team practices when traveling in Zurich and Brussels. She told me, “It’s really cool to be able to show up and play a pick-up game all over the world.” Language hasn’t been a problem -- everyone uses the same basic hand signals since you cannot talk underwater, and it helps that teams play using the same three basic

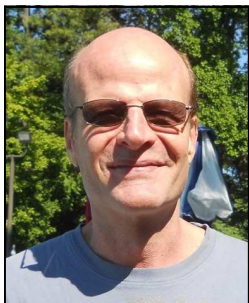
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A typical underwater hockey practice — Jen is number 5.

## A BRUSH WITH MORTALITY

by Brent Peacock



A couple of years ago I was feeling great, swimming hard around 10,000 meters a week, and really looking forward to seeing my parents back in the United Kingdom that summer for the

first time in a year. Tragically, a few days before my arrival there, my mother suddenly passed away with no warning signs. That time was the start of a very sad and difficult year for my father and a sad and testing one for me. But, it was also the start of a fascinating, albeit a little too personal, introduction to a new customized medical intervention that is getting me back in the swim.

It was not long after my mother died that it was revealed that she, and also her sister who had died 30 years previously, had both suffered from a ruptured aortic root aneurysm. An aneurysm is a localized balloon-like bulge in the wall of a blood vessel. Their father had earlier died of a ruptured abdominal aneurysm. The alarm bells started to ring quite loudly -- it was time to get myself checked out. I saw a cardiologist, who ordered a heart echocardiogram, which used sound waves to create a picture of my heart and its blood vessels, and then a CT scan. That is when I learned that I was the one of three siblings who had drawn the short straw. I was 54, with a very healthy heart but with a rather intimidating familial root aneurysm that had been completely asymptomatic. Swimming was about to take a back seat.

I soon learned that there was no easy fix, as my aneurysm was right next to where the aorta exits the heart chamber just beyond the main heart valve. The two established surgical techniques, the Bentall procedure and the valve sparing root replacement, both involve open heart surgery on bypass to remove the enlarged section of the aorta, to be replaced with a graft containing a replacement heart valve (with the valve sparing technique your own heart valve is re-implanted). That was a bit of a

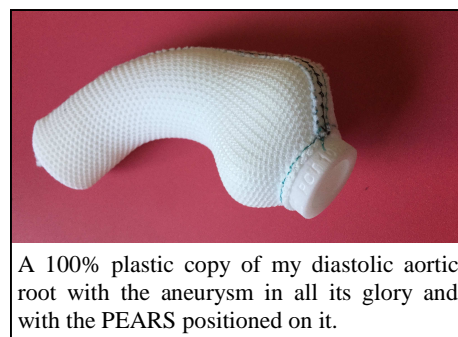
shocker, and with a potential one-in-20 chance of not making it through the procedure and a one-in-10 chance of needing a re-operation every ten years after, it was fairly disheartening.

At the time of diagnosis, I was given an annual chance of rupture of around one in 33, so the plan was to postpone surgery until the aneurysm expanded and the rupture risk breached the operating risk of one in 20. In addition, I was to dial down my cardiac output to avoid rupture and to also reduce the growth rate of the aneurysm to postpone surgery several years, thereby reducing the chance of a re-operation. This meant no more heavy lifting and, when swimming, warming up slowly and keeping my heart rate aerobic or sub-aerobic – up to around 125 beats per minute. So, I bought an underwater heart rate monitor that “told” me my heart rate every 20 seconds, cleverly transmitting it through my jawbone to my inner ear, and got back in the pool swimming in slow motion, forlornly looking over at the faster lanes where I used to swim. My passion for surfing was looking truly quashed.

I then read up on a remarkable patented invention by Tal Golesworthy. He is a chimney engineer and was born with Marfan Syndrome, a genetic disorder that affects connective tissue and results in a very high probability of having an aortic root aneurysm. Mr. Golesworthy had an aneurysm that needed treatment, and he did not like the options presented to him. So, he decided to develop a technique using CT scans of his aortic root, taken at exactly the same time interval in diastole (when the aorta is at minimum size), in order to build an exact plastic copy of his own aortic root with a 3-D printer. He then used this copy as a production mold to weave a soft external covering for his aortic root, which had the same stress properties as the aortic wall and would be integrated into the wall of the aorta. This personalized external aortic root support (PEARS) was designed to prevent future rupture, preserve the heart valve, and involve having much less intensive surgery. Amazingly, he then persuaded a leading heart surgeon to get the approval from the British National Health Service (NHS) to implant the one he had made for himself. Since then, the NHS has supported a

number of specialists providing this “PEARS” procedure, mainly for people with inherited root aneurysms. It is also used as a root aneurysm prophylactic for heart patients undergoing the Ross procedure. The surgery is still open-heart but is comparatively safe. It is relatively quick, done at normal body temperature, and mostly without bypass with the heart beating.

When I first looked at the medical studies on PEARS, although the outcomes were excellent compared to graft surgery, not many people had gotten the implant. Published data on it were thin and not yet statistically significant. But, after considering the prospect of swimming for several years at 125 bpm and listening to my heart rate every 20 seconds, probably never surfing again, not lifting anything heavy, and generally taking it easy while waiting as long as possible for graft surgery, I ignored advice from surgeons against PEARS and headed off to London to see if I was a suitable candidate. I very quickly became totally sold on going ahead with it.



A 100% plastic copy of my diastolic aortic root with the aneurysm in all its glory and with the PEARS positioned on it.

The rest is history. The deed is done, and I am now the 100<sup>th</sup> person to have had a PEARS implant. Given that the procedure has not been approved by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration, a lot of credit goes to my U. S. insurance provider who really stepped up to the plate, could see it was a good option for me, and offered to pay for it. I had not expected that. As I write this 10 weeks post surgery I have had a couple of mainly kick swims, with the heart rate monitor now consigned to the trash can. I cannot really put much load on my arms as yet, as the sternum takes a few months to fully heal. The only downside at the moment is that the sternum is a bit

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## 2017 ANCM SERVICE AWARD

by Dave Harmon



Nanci Sundel, George Humbert, Gladys Arrisueno

The 2017 ANCM service award was presented to the Social Committee consisting of Gladys Arrisueno, George Humbert, and Nanci Sundel. For the past four years, the committee has been responsible for putting together various team activities, such as the annual picnic, winter party, summer brunch after a Sunday practice at the Little Falls pool, and the post-Albatross social. A lot of organizing is involved in these events. The three members of the committee have done a great job in making them a success.

### SAVE THE DATE

JAN. 6TH

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

DETAILS WILL BE POSTED ON WEBSITE BULLETIN BOARD

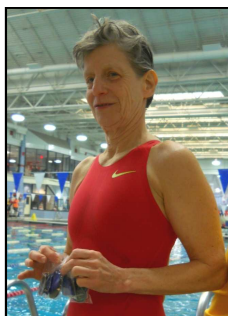
## PV LMSC AWARDS PICNIC

by Dave Harmon

The Potomac Valley LMSC held its annual awards picnic on Oct. 15 at the Cabin John Park picnic area - the same place we held our team picnic. The awards picnic had not been held for several years, so awards were given out for 2015, 2016, and 2017. Several ANCMs were given awards for past swimming performances:

- **Margot Pettijohn** received the Swimmer of the Year award for short course yards (SCY) in 2015, short course meters (SCM) in 2016, long course meters (LCM) in 2016, and short course yards (SCY) in 2017. She also won Top Performer awards for SCM in 2015 and SCY in 2016.
- **Jeff Roddin** received a Top Performer award for SCY in 2015 and 2017.
- **Clay Britt** received a Top Performer award for SCY in 2015.
- **Ed McCleskey** (who has moved to CA) received a Top Performer award for SCM in 2015.

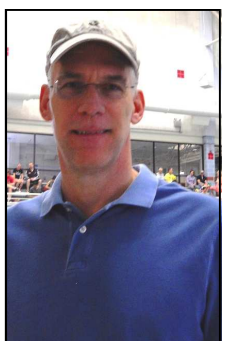
The complete list of awards will be published in the next PV Masters newsletter.



Margot Pettijohn



Jeff Roddin



Clay Britt



Ed McCleskey

## BAY SWIMS

(Continued from page 1)

spired to conquer the 4.4-mile event, hopefully in 2018.

**Dave Siskind:** A beautiful day for a swim. I especially enjoyed watching (with my lane-mate Lili Peng and Dottie Buchhagen) the first of the 4.4-milers come in – half my age and twice my muscle mass!

**Tara Inverso:** I was spoiled with near perfect conditions for my first bay swim! My nerves worked themselves out within the first mile, but the current tried its best to push me under the bridge span for the last half mile or so. So, the nerves returned! It's still TBD whether this will be my "one and done" bay swim or if I will become a regular. Either way, it was a great experience with lots of good memories.

**Dottie Buchhagen:** I had a problem with my timing chip at the beginning. It slipped and was dangling from my ankle. I had to stop to adjust it and lost some time with that. Otherwise, the swim was actually quite pleasant. Water temperature was probably in the mid 70s (but it didn't feel cold), no chop, and sunny. I am glad we swam early – by the time we left after the first of the 4.4-milers came in, it was getting too hot to be standing around.

## MORTALITY

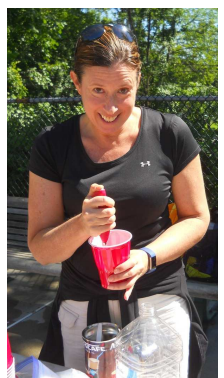
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sore from the wires binding it together, apparently as a consequence of me being a bit on the skinny side! I think the techniques used to lock a sternum together using screwed-in plates or fixings would make the chest wall much more comfortable in the recovery stages, as swimming involves so much rib action. But those techniques tend to be reserved for patients with conditions that compromise normal sternum healing. Hopefully the wiring will settle in over the next few months and, with the help of the spare part (see photo), I can slowly return to the other side of the pool or at least to the middle lanes. And, later get out into the surf again.

*Editor's note: Brent is now back swimming in lane two but being careful not to get his heart rate too high.*



# JULY 30 BRUNCH — LITTLE FALLS POOL IN BETHESDA





## FIVE-MILE BRIDGE SWIM

by Holly Donnelly

Julie Roddin and Holly Donnelly swam the five-mile "to the bridge and back" race in the James River near Richmond, Va, on Oct. 15. Julie finished first in her age group (40-44) and third overall. The water was 72 degrees and pleasant. Peluso Open Water ran an organized, professional event with great food and swag.



Holly Donnelly and Julie Roddin

## SOLSTICE MEET AND RELAY: DEC. 2



The Germantown Masters created the Solstice Relay (with its huge trophy) as a way of stimulating competition for the best USMS team in the area. The event is handicapped for both age and gender, so that each team can use its best swimmers. In 2016, the Terrapin Masters was the victor — the first time a non-Germantown team won it. The ANCMs can make a serious effort to keep the seven-foot tall trophy away from Germantown this year. Germantown wants to make this the Stanley Cup of swimming.

## CHESTER RIVER SWIM-FOR-LIFE — JULY 15



ANCMs Alejo Rodriguez-Jurado, Kara Permisohn, Cathy Gainor, Tara Inverso, Tom Denes, and Pat Inverso enjoying the post-race banquet

## NORTH EAST TRIATHLON — AUG. 27



Cathy Gainor

Tom Denes

Dottie Buchhagen

Three ANCMs celebrated aging-up by participating in the North East Triathlon in North East, MD. Cathy Gainor placed second in her age group (50-54); Tom Denes came in third in his (60-64); and, Dottie Buchhagen finished second in hers (75-79). Conditions were perfect!

## ANNUAL ANCM TEAM MEEETING

### UNDERWATER HOCKEY

(Continued from page 2) formations.

I looked at the USA Team description of advanced skills for team members. It includes being able to string individual skills together, for example: 1) curl, reverse curl, figure 6, figure 8- sprint out; 2) 2 tic-tac, sprint kick forward 6 kicks, the V, sprint out; 3) front-back, figure 8 under shoulders, figure 8 under hips, sprint kick forward 6 kicks, curl, sprint kick out of curl 6 kicks, shoot, chase. Other than the sprint kick, I have no idea what any of that means, but I'm sure Jen can give you a demonstration if you see her at the KSAC during a Sunday practice.

We wish Jen the best and look forward to an update after the Worlds in Quebec next July.

The Annual ANCM Team Meeting was held on Sunday, Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup> at the home of Tom Denes and Cathy Gainor. It was a sunny day — perfect for the patio and a continental breakfast.

The minutes of the meeting are posted with those of past years at [www.ancientmariners.org/documents](http://www.ancientmariners.org/documents) on the ANCM website.





**PICNIC — CABIN JOHN PARK — SEPT. 23**



**View photos from the first 25 years of the ANCMs on our website at [www.ancientmariners.org/photos.htm](http://www.ancientmariners.org/photos.htm)**

## LANE CHAT

● ANCM Amy Mensch gave birth to son Remy John Mensch Bernard on July 18. Remy weighed in at nine pounds, two ounces and was 23.5 inches long. Amy's husband is Matt Bernard.



Remy Bernard

● ANCM Patrick Hussmann and his wife, Kat, welcomed Amelie on Easter, April 16. Amelie weighed five pounds, 10 ounces. Patrick says that she is a very calm and easy baby ... the total opposite of what their son Luke was like. Amelie loves watching and listening to her brother, taking naps with her dad, and she started smiling at her first trip to the pool in June.



Pat, Luke, Amelie, Kat Hussmann

● ANCM Julie (Mstowski) and Ryan Shombert welcomed their daughter, Alyssa Grace Shombert, on Aug. 23.



Alyssa Shombert

**SWIM PRACTICE — NEW POLICIES: Drop-in swims and two-step on-line registration**  
 ([www.ancientmariners.org/registration](http://www.ancientmariners.org/registration))

## VISIT THE ANCM BULLETIN BOARD - KSAC LOWER LEVEL

Photo credits: p.1: Cathy Gainor, Dottie Buchhagen; p.2: Jen Whitman; p.3: Dottie Buchhagen, Brent Peacock; pp.4, 5: Dottie Buchhagen; Yali p.6: Holly Donnelly, Dave Robinson, Cathy Gainor, Tom Denes, Piranha Sports; p.7: Dottie Buchhagen, Yali Fu; p.8: Amy Mensch, Patrick Hussman, Julie Shombert

**THE FALL SESSION BEGAN ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 — REGISTER AND RENEW YOUR USMS REGISTRATION AT [www.ancientmariners.org/registration.htm](http://www.ancientmariners.org/registration.htm)**

**VISIT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR WORKOUTS AND TEAM NEWS [www.facebook.com/ancientmariners/](http://www.facebook.com/ancientmariners/)**



## TEAM GEAR

- **SWIM CAPS:** All registered ANCMs receive one free swim cap.
- **OTHER GEAR:** swim caps:\$3.
- **SPECIAL:** Team T-shirts (wicking) \$10.

## EVENT CALENDAR

### 2017

**12/02:** Germantown Masters Winter Solstice SCM meet, Boyds, MD. [https://www.clubassistant.com/club/meet\\_information.cfm?c=2124&smid=9383](https://www.clubassistant.com/club/meet_information.cfm?c=2124&smid=9383)

**12/08-10:** NE-LMSC and Colonies Zone SCM Championships, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, MA. [https://www.clubassistant.com/club/meet\\_information.cfm?c=1997&smid=8648](https://www.clubassistant.com/club/meet_information.cfm?c=1997&smid=8648)

### 2018

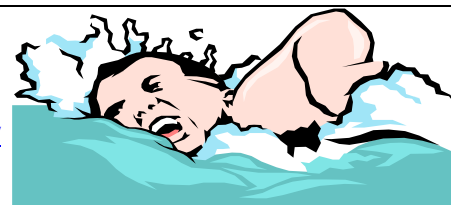
**TBD: ALBATROSS OPEN. KSAC, NORTH BETHESDA, MD.**

**04/13-15:** Colonies Zone SCY Championship, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA.

**05/10-13:** 2018 Nationwide USMS Spring National Championship, SCY, Indianapolis University Natatorium, Indianapolis. [www.usms.org/comp/scnats18/](http://www.usms.org/comp/scnats18/)

**05/27:** Jim McDonnell Lake Swim, Lake Audubon, Reston, VA. USMS Middle Distance Open Water National Championship — two miles.

**06/10:** Great Chesapeake Bay 4.4-mile swim and one-mile Chesapeake Bay Challenge, Stevensville, MD. Lottery is now open for the 4.4-mile swim. <https://register.chronotrack.com/r/31962>. The one-mile Bay Challenge will open to on-line entry on Feb. 5.



These are only some of the upcoming swim events. Go to [www.ancientmariners.org/event.htm](http://www.ancientmariners.org/event.htm) for details and events.