

# The Rime

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## Note from Team President Cathy Gainor

Welcome to the KSAC-less version of the Montgomery Ancient Mariners!

First, a big thank you to all who have signed up for the fall session and have made changes to your schedules so you can continue to swim with us.

The changes have taken some getting used to, with the biggest change for many being the lack of Tuesday, Thursday or Friday night practice at KSAC (Kennedy Shriver). For many others, it's the 10 a.m. Sunday practices at Germantown — as we haul ourselves up I-270. At least we get to sleep in!

Others are thrilled that the pool is much closer to their homes and they don't have to speed down I-270 to get to practice at 8 a.m. For me, I miss our shower chats, since Germantown has individual shower stalls with doors. Sure, we can talk in the locker room, but it's not the same.

Even if you're an MLK or Olney swimmer, the changes have affected you, too, with new swimmers and new coaches at your practices. This is an opportunity to make new friends and learn from coaches who you're not used to, maybe pick up some new tips on improving your strokes.

The fall coaching calendar looks like this:

- Sundays, 10 a.m.-noon, at GISC - Tom
- Mondays, 8:30-10 p.m., at MLK - Leon
- Tuesdays, 6:30-8 a.m., at Silver Spring - James
- Tuesdays, 8:30-10 p.m., at Olney - Joe
- Wednesdays, 8:30-10 p.m., at MLK - Leon
- Thursdays, 6:30-8 a.m., at Silver Spring - James
- Thursdays, 8:30-10 p.m., at Olney - Chris
- Saturdays, 7:30-9 a.m., at Olney - Sandy (Cathy currently subbing)

Substitute coaches - Peter, Dave, Cathy

Back to the KSAC renovation: It will take a minimum of 18 months to complete, according to the Montgomery County capital budget. But we should expect the closure to last two years, maybe longer.

Many have asked what is being done to the pool, so I'll condense the description from the capital budget.

"Since its opening, the center has had problems related to the movement and condensation of moist indoor air through the building's exterior masonry walls, resulting in roof leakage throughout the building," the capital budget states. It goes on, but that is the major issue.

So here's what is being done to fix it:

- Remove the masonry veneer block walls throughout the building and install new ones
- Replace the roof
- Fix the windows and doors
- Install insulation that will function as an air/vapor barrier system
- Replace pool equipment (I assume this means the filters, in particular).
- Replace the HVAC system
- Make the entire facility ADA-compliant

We all know that the ventilation at KSAC was terrible, so hopefully this will fix it. You'll notice that the description says nothing about the pool itself, so I'm just hoping it gets a good cleaning. Let's also hope that we will get new lane ropes, new starting blocks, new backstroke flags, a new scoreboard for meets — and clean bathrooms! — when we return.

**The Ancient Mariners Annual Board Meeting is Sunday, October 27 at 1pm  
at Tom and Cathy's house (4530 Everett Street, Kensington MD 20895)**

**All members are encouraged to attend!**

## Upcoming Events

### 11th Annual Solstice Swim Meet

Saturday, November 23 - Germantown, MD  
Register Now - Registration closes Monday, November 18

### 2025 Great Chesapeake Bay Swim (4.4 Mile and 1 Mile)

Sunday, June 8, 2025  
Registration Opens Sunday, December 1, 2024

### 31st Annual Carol Chidester Memorial Swim Meet Series

Meet #2: Saturday, November 9 - Easton, MD  
Meet #3: Sunday, December 15 - Chestertown, MD  
Meet #4: Sunday, January 19, 2025 - Annapolis, MD  
Meet #5: Saturday, February 15, 2025 - Severna Park, MD  
Meet #6: Sunday, March 16, 2024 - Annapolis, MD

### US Masters Swimming Virtual and Fitness Events

Check the USMS website for upcoming virtual and fitness events



## Practice Schedule *Fall 2024 - Winter 2025*

**Germantown Indoor Swim Center (GISC)**  
*Sunday: 10 am to 12 pm*

**Martin Luther King Swim Center (MLK)**  
*Monday and Wednesday: 8:30 to 10 pm*

**Olney Swim Center (OSC)**  
*Tuesday and Thursday: 8:30 to 10 pm*  
*Saturday: 7:30 to 9 am*

**Silver Spring Recreation and Aquatic Center (SSRAC)**  
*Tuesday and Thursday: 6:30 to 8 am*



# U.S. MASTERS SWIMMING

In addition to registering for Ancient Mariners, all team members must register with United States Masters Swimming for insurance and liability purposes.

Registration is now open for 2025! - [Register Here](#)



Visit [ActiveMONTGOMERY.org](https://www.ActiveMONTGOMERY.org) to register for masters swimming each session and other Montgomery County programs.

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## Taking the Plunge into Masters Swimming

by Gary DeShayes



Swimming was a big part of my life in my younger days (ages 6 through 18) when I used to spend summers primarily at the pool and winters in the dark indoor pool swimming countless laps. I enjoyed the summers the most and not so much the winter swimming, as my dad had forced me to go to practice from time to time, which I did not particularly enjoy. Swimming competitively ended for me in my younger days, due to entering college and having a choice to either swim and focus on school OR focus on school and have a better social life. Mentally, I did not like the idea of taking engineering classes at University of Maryland and swimming countless times each week. So, I chose what I thought to be the “funner” lifestyle at the time.

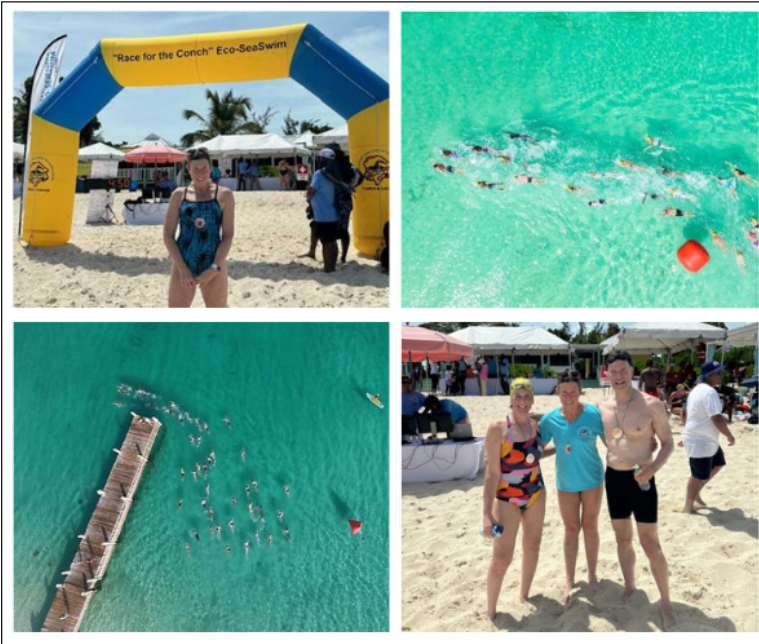
Fast forward 20 years from when I first entered college... my oldest child, Zane, started swimming for the same summer swimming pool I grew up swimming for (Mill Creek Towne in Montgomery County Swim League) at the ripe age of six years old. At this point, I decided it would finally be a good time to start swimming again. I was 37 years old (almost 38) and the only goal I had in my head at the time was to start swimming again so that my oldest child would not get faster than me. I swam only two to three times a week at this point by myself for 30-minute sessions usually for a mile total in distance.

My first Masters swimming experience was in November 2023 in a winter program, which took place in a heated pool at Montgomery Square pool. I enjoyed the camaraderie and the group environment the most as swimming solo can be quite “boring” at times. In this Masters swimming group, I met Peter Johnson who shared information regarding additional practices being offered by Montgomery Ancient Mariners. It was not until I started a new job in February 2024 that I started attending ANCM practices only on the weekends. Prior to the new job, I was working from home for more than ten years. Now, I am forced to be at my desk early each morning and sadly can’t attend practices during the week.

I swam my first masters swim meet in January 2024 and have done a few other meets this year, including the Albatross Open. I have had my dad count for me for distance events I partook in. I have experienced some Saturday and Sunday morning swim practices coached by Sandy Kweder, Tom Denes, Peter Johnson, and Dave Harmon. And I have met some gnarly ancient mariners at meets and practices including Jeff Roddin, Cathy Gainor, and Roger Leonard. I even got a free yellow swim cap!

# Open Water Swim Race Veteran or Newbie - Why You Will Love Race for the Conch in Turks and Caicos

by Nanci Sundel



For years, my swim buddies (Cathy, Kara, Holly, and Jody) tried to get me to do open water swimming, but it took the pandemic, when pools were closed, for me to head out to Holly's home near Annapolis to swim regularly in the Magothy river. They also tried to get me to do open water races, to no avail.

However, when Cathy sent out the list of open water races, I had just returned from clearing out my mom's apartment after she passed away, so a getaway and new experience were particularly appealing.

Specifically, Race for the Conch in Turks and Caicos the last Saturday in June, which was started and is run by former Ancient Mariner, Ben Stubenberg, whom I swam with when I first joined the team. At that point, it was 6 weeks away and, in reaching out to swim buddies, kept hearing the same refrain, "Can't this year – next year," though successfully convinced my sister and brother to join me, which

was perfect. As many of you know, I get unpleasantly anxious for swim meets but kept calling this an "experience" and taking it in stride.

Come the day before, I'm now calling it a race and have Nanci nerves. That day, there is a clinic where I got to see – and swim some of - the course, practice sitting on buoys (for the first time), meet other swimmers and appreciate the wonderfully chill atmosphere. After that, I was fine and able to simply enjoy it. The 2.4M swim was beautiful and, even with my rookie open water swimming goofs, I was happy with my place and time. So start lobbying your swim buddies and, while I can't go in 2025, hopefully I'll see you down there in 2026.

Now for the reasons to do this swim...

- It is in Turks and Caicos!
- If you have never done an open water race before, it will be your personal best.
- 2.4 miles is like nothing compared to a 4.4 mile (or Kara's 8 mile, Cathy's 15K, and Holly's 8 mile!)
- There are non-stop flights to Turks and Caicos.
- If you are a rookie open water swimmer and you, um, go outside the guide ropes or start to go around the wrong buoy, the nice paddleboarders will set you straight.
- No getting kicked or jockeying for position as with hundreds of swimmers.
- Cool trophies
- No chop
- No jellyfish
- Just like the Chesapeake Bay swim, there is a 1 mile option – or even a 1/2 mile option.
- Water temperature in the low 80s.
- Did I mention that it is in Turks and Caicos?



# My Swim Trek Holiday in Croatia

by Jody Gan



Swim Trek, a British company, has been offering open water swim trips for 25 years. My Ancient Mariner lane mate, Andrew Shipman, had shared great things about his Swim Trek trip to the Baja Peninsula, Mexico—which is way more off the grid than the trip I selected. I chose to visit Croatia’s stunning Dalmatian Coast and swim around the islands that dot the Šibenik archipelago. I flew into Split and first spent a few days visiting this ancient Roman city exploring the famous Diocletian’s Palace and ferrying over to spend a day on the “jet set” island of Hvar (where I also got a swim in!).

I usually travel with my husband, but he is more a cyclist than swimmer, so for this trip, I invited one of my faculty colleagues, Rose Kehoe—a strong swimmer who has swum the 4.4 mile Bay Swim 25 times! We joined 13 other water-loving individuals—mostly women in their 50’s from the UK, Ireland, and Australia. Our base was the small, family-owned Hotel Maestral where we spent six comfortable nights and enjoyed breakfast before walking just a few meters to jump on our

boat each day.

After consulting the conditions, our Croatian captain would take us to six different islands to swim around and then explore on foot. The trip was labeled “short swims” which meant about 3,000-meters per day broken up over two long swims, but our captain would stop the boat a little earlier so some of us could extend our distance to about 5,000-meters per day.

The hotel packed a healthy lunch that we ate each day on the boat before getting off to explore the islands of the day—whether to take a hike, lounge at a café, or just explore. Many of the islands visited on the tour are uninhabited and their natural beauty remains untouched. The crystal clear water was cool but comfortable. I did not wear a wetsuit but wore a long-sleeved sun shirt so I wouldn’t have to deal with sunscreen. The Adriatic Sea is chock full of silvery small fish, reddish starfish, sea cucumbers, and more. While there were sea urchins at the bottom of the sea, they were easy to avoid, and no one got stung or felt threatened by them.

We had two amazing leaders from the UK and Ireland, who were wonderful hosts and very knowledgeable about open water swimming. They took excellent care of us and offered solid swim tips. On the first day, we were each filmed with an underwater camera. At the end of the day, our head leader had a consultation with each of us in the hotel bar going over our stroke. Probably what is most memorable from the swim trip is that after each swim, our leaders served us hot tea and provided other treats that appealed to our throats -- parched from the salty sea. During the swims, the leaders who motored along with us on small Zodiac boats, tossed us our water bottles and a gummy worm from time to time! I was struck by how accommodating our trip leaders were to the needs of those who required more swim breaks and those who wanted to do more.

Our captain delivered us back to the hotel each afternoon around 4pm where we were free for the rest of the day and evening to do what we wanted. After a hot shower, most found a quiet spot to read or stretch, or grab a beer or cappuccino at the outdoor hotel bar. Most nights, dinner was on our own, but the group tended to stick together to check out the six restaurants on the island which were quite good usually serving seafood (my favorite was the grilled octopus) and Italian-inspired fare.

The pace of the trip was leisurely. We departed at 9am each morning which didn’t feel too early and were out on the boat all day. If you would enjoy a not-at-all touristy swim vacation with dramatic coastlines, superb water quality, and sunbaked islands, this is your trip. I do wish there had been more opportunities to learn about Croatian history and culture, but I used my down time to read the books I had brought about Croatia and was glad I had the time to explore Split first. Swim Trek offers trips all over the world along with a \$50 discount for US Masters swimmers. Next time, I will do one of the 5000-meter trips.

Please feel free to reach out to me ([jodygan@gmail.com](mailto:jodygan@gmail.com)) if you would like to learn more about my experience.

## Waterlogged 5K Open Water Swim Race with Steelman Racing

by Marci Goldberg



On Sunday August 18, I was able to accomplish a goal that I had planned in the summer of 2010. I completed my first ever 5k open water swim race at the Steelman Racing Open Water Classic 3 Miler in Quakertown PA. I had only done open water swimming as part of multi-sport races; with a bike and mostly run after the swim so it was nice to only do an event where I swam. I had come to love swimming in the open water because of triathlon and having completed 4 Ironman distance swim (roughly 2.4 miles) I thought this swim distance would be perfect for me. I had signed up for this open water swim event in April thinking I would have all summer to train properly; but that wasn't the case. Going into this open water swim event on race day, I knew I could accomplish this goal I had set 14 years previously even with all the twists and turns the actual swim brought.

Steelman Racing also offered a 1 and 2 mile open water options; which brought chaos to the later stages of my swim. The weather was iffy that morning and after the pre-race safety briefing for the 6-loop swim, myself and the other 50 3-mile swimmers weren't sure we'd get the full distance in, hearing storms were about 10 miles away. I didn't let looking at the dark and scary skies above get to my brain too much. Each loop was supposed to be about 800 yards in total and even with the 10 buoys marked. I knew which buoys to sight off of, which buoys to turn at, and which one meant I was done; I had my Garmin beep every 1000 yards knowing I'd be swimming around 5000 yards knowing swim math as well as who in the world could keep count of 6 times around buoys 1 to 10. My goal in the first and second loops were to get comfortable with getting acclimated with the buoys, the third loop was to see where I was at time wise and how my body felt halfway through. It was only the pink caps (3-mile swimmers) through my third loop and the water was calm. The fourth loop and fifth loop I dealt with the green (2-mile swimmers) and yellow caps (1-mile swimmers) starting their swim; making for choppy waters and chaos that open water swimming is. The sixth and final loop, I dealt with dehydration, cramping and thoughts of being water logged.

I was honestly grateful to have finished what amounted to be 5,750 yards or 3.27 miles in just a shade over 2 hours. This was the toughest event I have ever completed. I will go back and do this exact open water swim race in the future when I'm better trained as I found a new respect and love for swimming that day in which it never rained or even stormed.

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## My Year in Swimming

by Neal Gillen



Neal Gillen (pictured above second to the left) at the Pan American Masters Games in July.

As one of Montgomery Ancient Mariners' oldest active members, at the age of 87, I swam well in seven meets this year, including the Albatross Open and I am looking forward to the upcoming Germantown Solstice meet in November.

Starting the year at the Tropical Splash Short Course Yards Meet, I placed first in my age group in the 50 and 100 freestyle and 50 and 100 backstroke events. I had similar results at the Albatross Open meet in March.

At the DC Water Wizards Emancipation Day Freestyle Event, I placed first in the 50 and 100 freestyle. The year continued at the Colonies Zone SCY Championship meet, where I won the 50 and 500 freestyle and 50 backstroke events and placed second in the 100 freestyle.

I traveled to Cleveland for the Pan American Masters Games in July, where I won the 50 and 400 freestyle events. I also placed second in the 100 freestyle and third in the 50 and 100 backstroke.

This fall, I won six events (50, 100 and 200 freestyle and 50, 100 and 200 backstroke) at the Maryland Senior Olympics, I also competed at the DC Senior Games in September and won seven events in my age group (50, 100, 200 and 500 freestyle; 50 and 100 backstroke; and 50 breaststroke).



## Bob Benson Profile

by Julie Goldberg



*Bob Benson (pictured above, top right) with his daughter Sue and fellow Ancient Mariners teammates after the 2024 MD Winter Distance Meet in March.*

Bob Benson is 89 years old and has been a member of Montgomery Ancient Mariners for many years and swims at Martin Luther King Jr. pool in Silver Spring.

I emailed Bob some questions and this is what he shared:

### **When did you start swimming? Did you have a favorite stroke or event growing up that wasn't long-distance freestyle?**

Probably before I could walk. I started swimming at Lake Minnetonka (near Minneapolis). As a youngster, I often preferred backstroke so my arms did not penetrate so deep into the lake and possibly surprise some unfriendly creature below. I swam backstroke in high school and college - not because I was so good at it, but, no one else wanted to swim it. My favorite event was the 200 free.

### **Did you play any other sports as a kid or while in college?**

Nothing organized. Neighborhood touch football, basketball, etc., and a lot of handball in college.

### **How long have you been swimming with Ancient Mariners? What do you like most about swimming with the team?**

Not sure, probably several decades. They are a friendly group.

### **How many times have you done the Chesapeake Bay swim?**

Since 1989, I have completed 24 of 27 attempts, including the 2011 finish with no official time because the event was called due to lightning when I was within a few hundred yards from the finish line after swimming for almost 3 hours. I finished in the top 3 in my age group 14 times, and finished first in my age group seven times.

### **You count your distance during the swim in "Bay Units." Can you talk more about that?**

When training for the 4.4-mile Bay Swim event, I set a goal to swim at least that far, i.e., 7,744 yards = 7,081 meters, each week. I call this distance one Bay Unit (BU). It is particularly useful for me to keep track of my swimming distance/week in BUs now that I do most of my swimming in a 25 meter pool.

## **Bob Benson Profile (continued)**

**You live at Riderwood and swim there too. What are the advantages and disadvantages of swimming there?**

Riderwood has a 3-lane 25 meter pool with non-turbulent lane markers. The advantages of swimming there are that it is only a 4-minute walk from my apartment and almost always has one or more lanes available during the late afternoon (open till 5:30 PM every day and till 6:30 PM on M-W-F). The disadvantage is that the target temperature for the pool water is 86 degrees fahrenheit.

**How long have you been retired for? Where did you work and what did you do before you retired?**

I have been retired from the NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland for more than 11 years. I was there for one year on a National Academy of Sciences Post-Doctoral Fellowship, 47 years as a Civil Servant, and I am still active at Goddard as an Emeritus Scientist. My main work there has been the investigation of the terrestrial ionosphere and magnetosphere using active radio sounding from satellites.

**What are you doing to keep busy in retirement?**

I keep very busy with activities related to family, church, emeritus-related work, genealogy, submitting photo enlargements to the Riderwood Arts Council, writing Letters to the Editor to The Washington Post, unpacking boxes from moving to Riderwood over 6 years ago, etc.





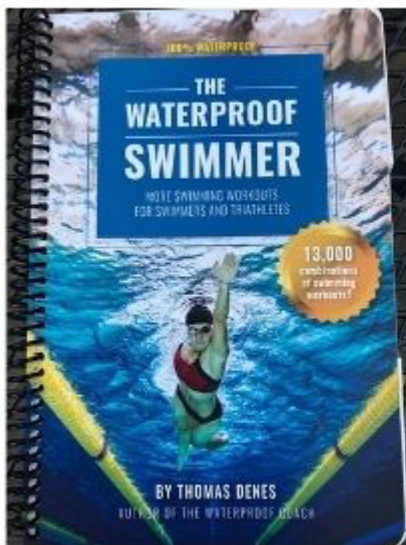
Team member Jody Gan, who is a Professional Lecturer in the Department of Health Studies at American University, published her first book earlier this fall.

## Thank You

At last, my textbook *Health Promotion Moving Forward: A Population Health Approach* is officially available, published by Springer Publishing Company. Note the open-water swimmer on the cover! In the acknowledgements section, the Ancient Mariners are mentioned! I truly appreciate the late-night locker room support and interest in my book.

I am grateful to my Ancient Mariner friends who contributed content for the book. Alison Dewey, Director of Education for the League of American Bicyclists, shared her expertise in designing communities to make physical activity easier and safer for all. Allison Alexander provided examples from the youth anti-vaping media campaign she directs for the Food and Drug Administration.

Thank you to my Ancient Mariner coaches for those long sets where I did most of my thinking for the book!



Can't attend an Ancient Mariners practice during the week? Looking for workouts when swimming on your own? Coach Tom Denes has written *The Waterproof Swimmer*, which includes over 40 pages of workouts that that you can mix and match.

To order a book, talk to Tom at practice or email him at [waterproofcoach@gmail.com](mailto:waterproofcoach@gmail.com).