

THE LONG VIEW

Ted Haartz and 36 Years of Masters Swimming

by Christine Ennulat >>> Photos by David Balch

When 42-year-old Ted Haartz opened the latest issue of *Swimming World* magazine in 1970, he had no idea that his life was about to change

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and that he would soon become a driving force in an

organization that means much to thousands of adults nationwide. Inside was an article about the first Masters national swim meet, in Amarillo, Texas.

Since 1960, Haartz had put in lunch hours swimming at the Waltham Boys Club, just a five-minute drive from his office in Newton, Mass., getting away from the phone and engaging in informal competition with fellow “working stiffs,” he says. “We used to think that a quarter-mile of swimming at noontime was a big deal. And a half-mile, we were really putting out.” When Haartz and his cohorts, Hal



Onusseit, Ed Reed Jr. and Warren French, looked at the 1970 magazine piece, Haartz says, the four “thought that the times in that first meet looked interesting enough that we signed up for the second.”

Thus ensued a road trip that involved Onusseit’s anemic VW camper, little sleep, creative hotel arrangements and, says Haartz, “pretty close to the best times of my life.” (He means swimming times; the trip itself was nothing he’d care to repeat.)

The next year in Amarillo, he won the 100 IM. There was no turning back.

Born in Boston on April 23, 1928, Haartz didn’t find swimming until young adulthood; before then, it had been one among myriad summer camp activities he’d enjoyed as a camper for several years and later as a counselor—mountain climbing, canoeing, baseball, tennis, aquaplaning, skiing, sailing and the like. Haartz had little time for extracurricular activities as he blitzed

through his three-year high school in two. Swimming found him at Tufts University (then Tufts College).

“After high school, when I got into college, I decided I wanted to earn a varsity letter,” says Haartz. When he didn’t quite make the tennis team, the tennis coach, who was also the Tufts swimming coach, suggested swimming. Haartz didn’t make it the first year, “but I practiced with them,” he says, and describes the original twice-daily workouts as “swim 20, kick 20, pull 20, go take a shower.” His sophomore year, he made the team and was a dependable fill-in. His senior year, he says, “I became the team breaststroker. It was a natural for me, it turned out, and my senior year I set the team record for it. That stood for seven years. I was small potatoes, but I earned my letter two years in a row.”

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Through college, he worked summers in the family business, The Haartz Corp., manufacturer of con-

By his senior year at Tufts, **TED HAARTZ** was the varsity swim team breaststroker. The team record he set that year stood for seven years. Since then, Haartz has set 16 world records, 12 of them in the breaststroke, three in the IM and one in freestyle.

vertible topping material for Detroit automakers, and signed on full time after graduating with a liberal arts degree in winter 1950. Less than a year later, in October 1951, he was drafted into the army and served two years in Japan (and experienced a typhoon atop Mount Fuji), returning to work in 1953. Two years later, Frederick H. "Ted" Haartz married Alicia

"Lee" Daniels of Maine, and they settled in Sudbury, Mass. ("People call up asking for Frederick, and that automatically puts me on guard," he says. "If they don't know me, then it's either real business or something I don't want to be involved with.") Son Douglas was born in 1957, Alexander in 1959, and Benjamin in 1965. The oldest and the

youngest now work at Haartz; Alex is administrator of the health division of Nevada State Health and Human Services. All three boys swam—Doug played water polo, Alex swam until he beat his father's times, and Ben swam distance.

Between early parenthood, a full-time job and returning to school for his MBA, completed at Boston University in 1960, Haartz had little time for anything else. But he did begin to carve out those lunchtime swims. Fast-forward to 1971 in Amarillo. By 1972, Haartz and his friend, Onusseit, were active in Masters at the national level, Onusseit in compiling records and Haartz tracking the top 10s.

"I used to keep 4x6 filing cards for every event in every age group," Haartz remembers of those late nights "downcellar" under a fluorescent light. When Onusseit died suddenly in 1975, Haartz took on his task. In 1976, Haartz's service earned him the Ransom J. Arthur award, USMS's highest honor. In 1977, he



became USMS secretary.

Six years before, there had been a major political shift for Masters swimming. John Spannuth, who had staged that original Masters' meet, with its fewer than 50 swimmers, in 1971 left his position as executive director of the American Swim Coaches Association to become executive director for aquatics at the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU).

Working with Spannuth, USMS President Ransom Arthur sought a home for Masters swimming within AAU. "But U.S. Swimming [a committee of the AAU at that time] did not want U.S. Masters, so John made us the U.S. Masters aquatics committee of the AAU," says Haartz. "They thought it was going to be just a bunch of old people dropping dead in the pool." Still, USMS grew, and participation in the third national meet, in San Mateo, Calif., was double that of the second.

In 1978, USMS elected Haartz as its third president, after Ransom Arthur and June Krauser. It would be an eventful tenure.

The same year, Congress passed the Ted Stevens Amateur Sports Act, which called for individual sports to create their own national governing bodies (NGBs) that would in turn be overseen by the United States Olympic Committee. Thus, U.S. Swimming became its own NGB. Masters swimming, not an Olympic sport, remained as a committee of the AAU.

Early on, new president Haartz set out to achieve what he still considers as his most significant contribution to Masters swimming: pulling out of the AAU.

"They were not doing anything to help us that I could see other than collecting our money and giving us back a little of it," he says. By then,

Masters had a couple thousand swimmers nationwide, and AAU had \$1,000 of Masters' money. With legal counsel, Haartz incorporated the organization twice, one day as the AAU Masters Swimming Committee—"that's how we were known in AAU," he says—and the next as USMS. Then there were all the W4 forms to gather, to establish nonprofit status for all the Local Masters Swim Committees (LMSCs) in all the states. Haartz never was able to recoup that \$1,000 and eventually wrote it off. USMS participated in its last AAU convention in 1979. Since then, says Haartz, "we are independent. We can raise our own funds, we write our own rules, we determine our own destiny."

"It was a busy time," he adds, with typical New England understatement, all the more so considering swimming was about to get a huge publicity boost. In 1979, Phillip Whitten wrote an article on Masters swimming for *Parade* magazine, touting, among other things,

Ted Haartz's World Records

(* denotes Masters records in the U.S.)

Year	Course	Age Group	Distance	Stroke	Date Set	Time
1972	SCY*	40-44	100	IM	05/09/72	01:07.70
1972	SCY*	40-44	200	IM	05/20/72	02:31.00
1973	LCM	45-49	200	BREAST	06/10/73	03:10.90
1973	SCY*	45-49	50	FREE	05/20/73	00:25.07
1973	SCY*	45-49	200	BREAST	05/20/73	02:42.30
1974	LCM	45-49	200	BREAST	09/08/74	03:09.10
1974	SCY*	45-49	50	BREAST	04/26/74	00:33.40
1978	LCM	50-54	100	BREAST	00/00/78	01:24.19
1978	LCM	50-54	200	BREAST	00/00/78	03:08.36
1978	SCY*	50-54	100	BREAST	00/00/78	01:11.68
1978	SCY*	50-54	200	BREAST	00/00/78	02:41.43
1979	LCM	50-54	200	BREAST	00/00/79	03:06.72
1979	LCM	50-54	100	BREAST	00/00/79	01:23.71
1979	LCM	50-54	50	BREAST	00/00/79	00:37.83
1983	LCM	55-59	50	BREAST	00/00/83	00:37.48
1988	SCM	60-64	200	IM	06/12/88	02:58.61

Favorite Workouts

At almost 79, Ted Haartz prefers "a smorgasbord" of breaststroke and freestyle swimming, pulling and kicking. "Whatever this old body will put up with on any particular day. "Sometimes 1,000 meters is it; other times, 1,500 to 2,000 and, once in a while, 2,500," he says.

A decade or so ago, Haartz favored this workout:

- 4x250 on a 5-minute interval
- 4x200 on 4
- 4x150 on 3
- 4x100 on 2
- 4x50 on the minute

Total: 3,000 yards

"All crawl and done in one hour!"

the putative benefits of the sport to one's sex life. He included Haartz's home address at the end. The Sudbury post office never quite got over it.

"I'd never disown Phil," chuckles Haartz. "We did get members out of it—14,000 [responses]." Teammates from the New England Masters came over at least three nights a week and, over cookies and coffee, sorted the letters by LMSC. In his replies, Haartz wrote that in Masters swimming, "competition is a tool to encourage ongoing and

repetitive swimming exercise for the rest of one's life." Up to a decade later, inquiries still trickled in.

Meanwhile, the other newly formed aquatic NGBs—swimming, water polo, synchronized swimming and diving—found themselves without a voice to communicate with FINA, the Fédération Internationale de Natation Amateur, which governs aquatic sports worldwide and which, by law, recognizes only one organization from each country. So, in 1980, the four NGBs created United States Aquatic Sports

(USAS), an umbrella to represent their voice within FINA.

Until the late '80s, Haartz remembers, international Masters swimming was governed by Masters Swimming International. U.S.-based Masters swimming was unique in its independence; in other countries, Masters athletes in aquatic sports were members of their respective FINA-sanctioned federations. FINA declared that these international athletes, by competing in events outside FINA's purview, "could subject [their] federations to sanctions of their swimming, diving, water polo and synchro divisions if their Masters members

strayed from the FINA fold, and the federations were not willing to jeopardize their major programs for Masters events," says Haartz.

USMS, rather than abandoning international competition altogether, ultimately acceded to FINA's authority. In the late '80s, USMS president Tom Boak negotiated for USMS to become a fifth partner in USAS.

Looking back now, Haartz wishes he had been able to do more for USMS in terms of garnering sponsorship dollars, but, he says, "I was very leery of sponsorship money because, during my term as president, a couple of sports bodies that were

financed by sponsorship went belly-up as soon as the sponsors withdrew their sponsorship and went elsewhere. And that scared me, with a small organization." A fond hope he holds for USMS is the eventual hire of an executive director, "a person with experience and contacts in the world of corporations, contacts in the world of sports, someone who can open doors for Masters swimming, to a wider range of sponsorships," he says.

Through it all, Haartz also found time to swim, competing in every short course national since 1971—that's 36—and every long course national since the Chicago meet, in 1973, "with the FINA worlds replacing our long course national in 2006," he says. Along the way, he picked up many, many Top 10 swims and national records ("I lost count a couple of decades ago," he says), as well as a fair share of world records, mostly in breaststroke. He's also attended 33 USMS conventions since 1974 and notes

that second USMS president June Krauser also has 70 nationals, "but she is ahead of me by at least two conventions, and probably more!"

For a while, Haartz maintained a goal of swimming 365 miles a year. Now, at almost 79 years of age, he has scaled back and aims for a still very respectable 365,000 meters (about 227 miles). "The first couple of years I was really active with this [in the early '70s], the medical doctor I had recommended that I back off, that I was going to kill myself," Haartz recalls. "This particular doctor was one of those like the old folks at the AAU: 'The damn fools will kill themselves!' I went from over 300 miles one year down to 260 miles the next year. Then I went to another doctor who thought [swimming] was the greatest thing since the invention of peanut butter."

Some years, Haartz logged more than 400 miles. And it was never just for fitness' sake. "After a particularly bad day at the office, I would get home, and Lee would take a look at me and say, 'Why don't you go down to the pool, and I'll delay dinner for an hour.' Because she could read what was coming through the door," he says with a laugh.

Years passed, the boys grew up and retirement



Ted can name every peak, ridge and rock formation along this Medera Canyon trail in the Santa Rita Mountains. He and his wife, Lee, each have 3,000-mile hiking patches and were halfway to 3,500 when Ted's left leg gave out the day after this past Thanksgiving.



approached. In 1989, thanks to a convoluted series of connections, the Haartzes took a vacation to Green Valley, Ariz. “I took one look and said, ‘Forget Florida—this is it.’ The surrounding islands of mountains, the valleys, the dry climate—Lee already had arthritis, so Florida was a trial for her.” The stars aligned, and they moved to Green Valley for part of each year beginning in 1991. Haartz retired as vice president of the Haartz Corp. in early 1992; Lee retired from her post as middle school administrative secretary later that year, and they settled in Green Valley permanently in 1994.

Haartz leads a busy retirement, what with swimming (of course), serving as ex-officio member on both the USMS and USA Swimming boards, tending his cactus garden, collecting stamps and photographing the mesmerizing landscape, sunsets and rattlesnakes. He and Lee can see the Santa Rita Mountains from their window. The move West also inspired a new passion—hiking, which they do with a hiking club every Thursday. “I’ve always liked going to the top of things for the view,” says Haartz. “My wife thought all the rocks in the world were on the coast of Maine, and she found out that was not true.

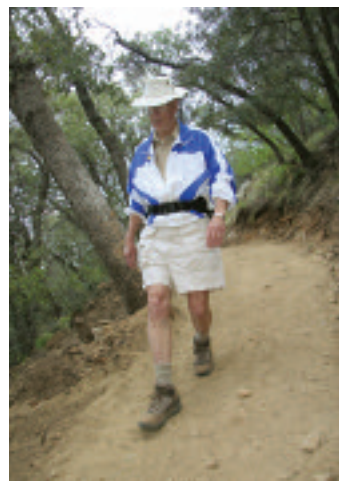


“We each have 3,000-mile patches for hiking, and we were halfway to 3,500 when my left leg gave out the day after Thanksgiving.” There was no significant pain—but, after even a little exercise, Haartz’s quadriceps would tighten and he could not lift his left leg to put his left foot in front of his right, so hiking went on hiatus. Initial tests showed that circulation in his left leg was 80 percent of that in his right, and the reason why was a mystery for several weeks. Haartz wasn’t happy about being in medical limbo. “I’m a grouchy old man,” he laughs ruefully, “and these are some of the grounds as to why.”

But in early 2007, Haartz learned that the leg problem was due to a partial blockage of his femoral artery, to be resolved with a stent in an outpatient procedure. “If I’m not in the doctor’s office,

Photography is one of Ted’s many hobbies, and Arizona sunsets provide him with breathtaking subject matter—as does the occasional rattlesnake sunbathing in his backyard.

I’m in a board meeting,” he says. Or at the pool, working that leg alongside his fellow swimmers in Green Valley, among them Max von Isser, 86, world record holder in 50-meter fly and a role



model to Haartz.

What Haartz calls “the very real glue that holds us all together” is this: “We really do not look at age or sex, believe it or not. We are all just swimmers,” he says, with equal emphasis on each word. Having participated in eight age groups since 1971, he says, “I think outsiders looking at Masters swimmers swimming, they would divide us much more than we swimmers divide us, by age.” To Haartz, the group just looks like family, with all its generations. “The old folks and the young folks talk to each other and everyone in between.”

“Nothing is perfect,” he says. “Our [USMS] corporation is not perfect. But a lot

of people are getting a lot of exercise in a program they didn’t have before 1970, and for which we are all grateful to several San Diego Naval Air Station doctors.” He’s deeply thankful “to those who have gone before us and those who will come after us, in the growth and maintenance of this form of exercise, which we as a group all love.”

For his part, now, Haartz views himself as a resource. “I try not to be intrusive,” he says. “I try not to be in the middle of things—I much prefer for people to ask me do I have any advice, what is my take on something, and I leave it that way.”

If you go? Best call him “Ted.” <<<