

Nov/Dec 2016

# The NISCA Journal

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2015-16

## Grove City

DAKTRONICS



### 2015-16 Power Point Class 1 Champs!

The Official Publication Of The National Interscholastic Swimming Coaches Association of America, Inc.  
"Serving More Than 265,000 Athletes In Over 12,600 Programs"

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# Table of Contents

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## November/December 2016

President's Letter- Arvel McElroy.....	3
From the Editor- Betsy Hondorf.....	6
<b>Contributed Articles:</b>	
Book Review: Swim: Why We Love the Water- Dave Barney.....	8
Get to know the Letterhead: Marney Shirley and Bill Stetson.....	12
<b>Feature:</b>	
Dryland Training: Three Important Reasons Swimmers Should Strength Train- Christye Estes.....	15
<b>High School Coaches Special:</b>	
Teaching Tech: Race Pace with Ryan Woodruff - Mac Guy.....	20
<hr/>	
<b>Techniques and Training:</b>	
Training in the 'Old Days"- Howie Stein..... <i>aka Schein</i>	24
<hr/>	
<b>From College Coaches:</b>	
CSCAA Open Water Nationals, Joel Shinofield .....	34
<b>Water Polo:</b>	
Pregame Warm Up Rituals – Aaron Brown.....	37

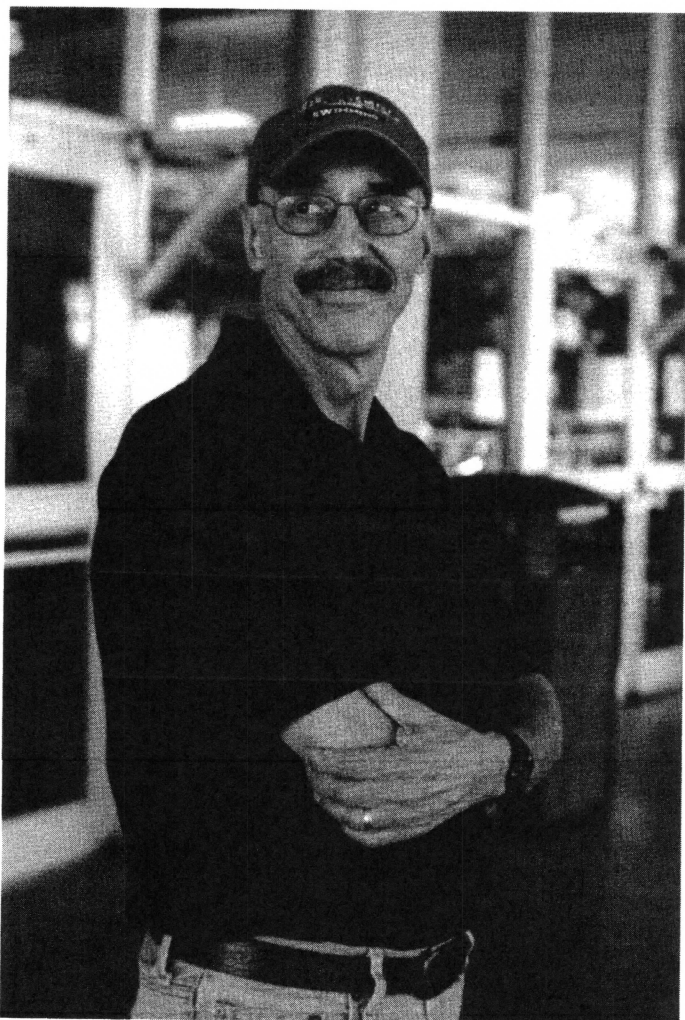
### Cover Photo:

Photographer:  
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The swimmers of the Grove City boys team emerged as champions of the Power Point Class 1- Boys Public school under 900. The Eagles are coached by Karen Wendelschafer. They topped the list with 4956 points, over 300 points more than the second place team.

# TECHNIQUE AND TRAINING: TRAINING IN THE “GOOD OLD DAYS”

*Howie Schein*



In the 1978 summer My first masters meet was around 2001. The Central Illinois Masters club hosts a yearly meet in March in Bloomington, Illinois. (That's where Nadine Day, USMS president, prodded me to swim my first ever 400 IM race.) I walked on deck and sat on the bleachers. Soon after, three other old guys joined me. Pete Anderson swam at Indiana under Doc Councilman. He told me that he met my swim-coach-uncle when Pete's mom and my aunt shared a hospital room. My uncle invited Pete, then a high performing high school swimmer at Evanston HS, to take a lesson or so. Pete told me that my uncle radically transformed

Pete's breast stroke....kick and THEN stroke. Then Plamen Alexandrov, a Bulgarian Olympian in the 1980 Olympics, joined us. Dave Malborough was the next oldster to join us. Dave and I established that we both swam at Grinnell College...he in the '30s and I in the '60s. Then came the stories.

When you see laughter coming from a cadre of the 70+ Masters swimmers, jawing about the old days, you may overhear some of these memories, but, unfortunately, usually, old *guys* are sharing these stories. Pre-Title IX, women were sparsely represented at the club level, and high school/college swimming was men-only.

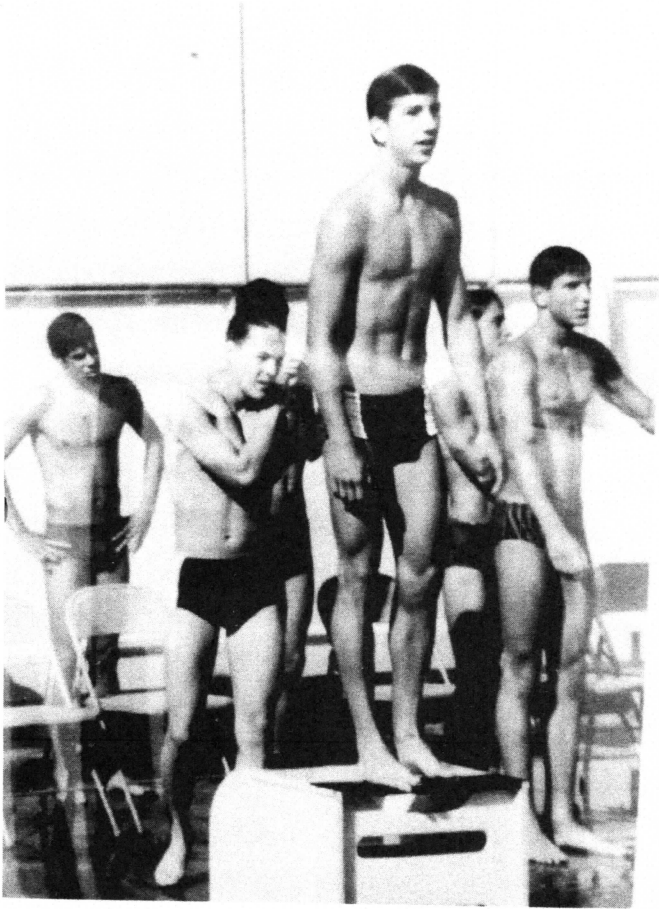
And, keep in mind that the old guys and gals are laughing at stories. 50ish years away from these stories, who knows how close we are to actuality. So what, we say. That's part of our laughter of camaraderie that keeps us coming back to the joy of competition.

## **Swim suits:**

Guys practiced (and sometimes competed) naked; girls in PE class wore woolen "tank suits." (Tom remembers the Ohio State Cheerleaders "mistakenly" coming on deck during naked practice.)

Amongst many others, my cousin, Bill Newman, remembers competing in swim suits made of wool with brass-buckled belts. The generation before Bill had an additional woolen tank top.

Adolph Kiefer remembers winning Olympic Gold in 1936 wearing a silk swimsuit. After WWII, he posited that the material of nylon stockings would be a good material for swimsuits. He found a distributor of nylon cloth, and, as the cloth was white, he found a way to dye it black. He then found a cutter/stitcher couple who worked after their day jobs, to make nylon suits. Adolph sold them from a Chicago based shop, and the world of swim attire was changed.



Nylon racing suits looked like today's drag suits: baggy and double layered. AND, modesty restrictions: Cannot show your buns. Of course the suits were so baggy that, without tying them tightly, they'd easily slip off on the start. For some swimmers, this became a regular comic addition to their races...no one kicked very much anyway, so a suit around a swimmer's ankles wasn't much of an impediment.

Our standard racing suits were equivalent to today's drag suits; we dragged with Levis and canvas Converse ankle high gym shoes.

Gear bags? We just rolled up our swimsuit in a cotton towel and stuck them under our arm. We didn't have "gear." Everyone went barefoot on deck, and to enter the pool, we had to step into a chemically treated waterbath to ward off athlete's foot.

Marianne Brems remembers the old nylon women's swim suits with the skirt in the front for modesty. They were a far cry from the French cut legs on the suits women now wear. It raised a few eyebrows when lycra suits first came out too since they were so much tighter than nylon suits. And then, we also had paper suits....single layer, skin tight, eyebrow raising.

#### **Pools:**

20 yard pools were our standard. Here's my high school pool (updated with starting blocks): <http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks/schreiber-playground-park/sullivan-high-school-pool/>

Many pools had no lines at the bottom of the pool. Some had lines on the bottom of the pool that demarked the boundaries of the lanes, but having these bottom inlaid lane lines was not the standard since many pools were too narrow to have demarked lanes. The lanes were so narrow and unclearly demarked that lane "ownership" was not part of the race. We laugh at how the first racer to the wall had to turn very deep in order to leave under incoming competitors. When four butterflyers competed head to head, the race resembled a boxing match with hands and feet knocking opponents'.

The Chicago Public High School League had two championship meets; one in a 20 yard pool, and another in a 25 yard pool.

When pools did have top of the water lane lines, these were hemp ropes with floaties to keep the ropes from sinking. Adolph Kiefer had yet to invent wave reducing lane lines.

The 220 and 440 (close approximations of 200 M and 400 M distances) were standard races, developed for 20 yard pools: 11 and 22 lengths, respectively. When the 220 and 440 were swum in 25 yard pools the referee would stretch a rope across the pool to demark the finish mark. The rope was either across the water or in the air (much like the current flags, but lower), and the timers would visualize their swimmer's going through the perpendicular plane of that line.

A few years ago a 20-yard course meet was held, and one of Tom's records from the '60s was finally broken.

In 20 yard pools, high school sprints were 40 yards and college sprints were 60 yards. The 500 Free was the college distance race for most of us. And, we had to know how to count when we swam. We didn't have counting boards.

John and Mary Pohlman remember pool lengths in those days of 20, 33 1/3, 50, and 55 yards, both fresh and salt water with separate records for each type. Records in 55 yard pools counted as records for 50 meter long-course since 55 yards is longer than 50 meters. The Hall of Fame Pool in Ft. Lauderdale was a 55-yard salt-water pool.

### **Timing system:**

We usually had only one timer/lane with a sweep second hand watch.

Timers also served as false start relay "officials." Timers would put a finger on the little toe of relay members in order to determine whether the exchange was legal. The timer would look for the touch and feel whether the feet were still on the block.

Coaches at big meets were frequently timers for their own team, seemingly without concern about biased time reporting. Tom remembers his coach, Ohio State legend, Mike Pepe, timing Tom in a three-way swim-off to see who would take the last spot in the 1960 Olympic Trials finals in the 200 M Breaststroke. Tom also remembers a teammate's dad timing his son at a national meet. Meets had "finish judges." They determined the placing of the racers, not the stopwatch times.

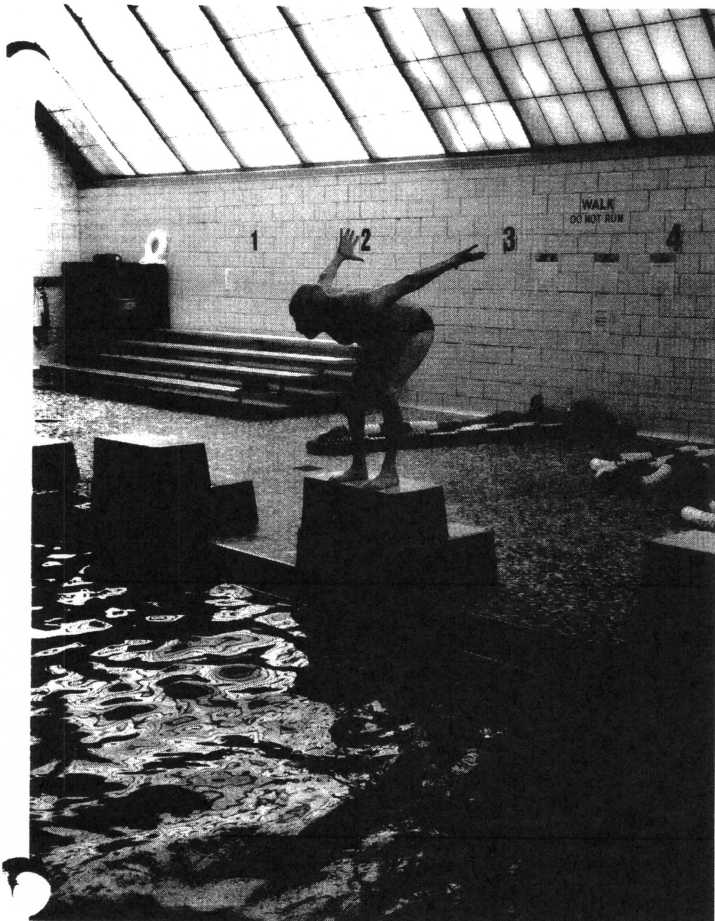
### **Starts:**

"Step up, Swimmers-take your mark. Go." GO was a whistle, a BOOMING pistol, or two pieces of 2x4s banged together. Sophisticated starters put a hinge on the adjoining 2x4s to make it easier to clap the boards together. Swimmers who watched the starter would see the beginning of the action of the banging of the 2x4s and get a nice jump on the start.

Speaking of jumps on the start: When we started swimming, each swimmer got 2 false starts before being DQed on the third. The first false start was frequently on purpose, just to get in a practice start. Meets took more than forever. Rules changed; each heat was allowed 2 false starts. Whichever swimmer

took the third false start was DQ-ed. Steady starters would purposely take the first two false starts on the heat putting their nervous opponents on edge for the third try at a successful start.

Many of us didn't have starting blocks. We started from the deck, and sometimes we draped a wet towel over the edge for grip. Most of our blocks were just that: A block of wood, maybe with roughened decks to prevent slipping. If we were lucky, these blocks were secured to the deck. A teammate usually sat on the block to steady it when we started. My college pool (20 yards, 4 narrow lanes) had one long strip of wood across the width of each end, about two feet up from the deck. We needed blocks at each end since the 400 yard relays had two members starting from each end.



On starts, we were trained to "skim" over the top of the water with what we now would call an elegant belly flop. We still see these starts at Masters' Meets when we on deck get soaked. Starting at the 3-foot shallow end was no big deal since no one went deep on the start. AND, big windups from an open stance with both feet at the edge of the blocks, much like a modern relay take-off. Many of us started kicking when we were in the air. This translated nicely for me when, during a Chicago Beach lifeguard save, I was running in the air during my jump to the sand from my tower. Swimming instincts came in handy!

#### **Training methods:**

John Pohlman remembers workouts as "lots of swimming." No intervals. Kick, pull, swim was our workout. THEN, big breakthrough: Intervals and speed repetitions. We planned our intervals on the basis of 60 seconds/50 yards swum. SO: 50s on the minute; 100s on the 2 minutes; etc. That was revolutionary. There was no such thing as USRPT training back in the mega-yardage days. If you missed the interval you just kept swimming!

Fins were called "flippers". They were a chief tool in Uncle John's method of learn-to-swim. An inner tube around the chest & "flippers" were provided. The swim lesson consisted of 2 words, "Have fun." As the pupils became confident, they would be called over and watch as "Judge" deflated the tube saying "you don't need so much air." Eventually the pupils would simply stop using the tube. That's when they would learn to put their heads down into the water, usually by diving to the bottom to recover pennies, which they were allowed to keep. Tubes could be inflated by pressing one's eye tooth into the valve thus depressing the little wire

and blowing into the valve. Tubes were inflated for kicking and deflated for pulling.

My Uncle John's Lane Tech High School in Chicago won nine Illinois state championships. He also coached several Olympians. He coached at Lane Technical High School in Chicago, with 5,000 boys enrolled. Uncle John, nicknamed Judge, would cruise the lunchroom during the weeks before the swim season began, spotting potential swimmers and cajoling them to join the team. The day before a meet, Uncle John's teams had swim-offs to see who would swim each event the next day.

Marianne remembers using wooden kickboards. The boards were frequently made of heavily painted balsa wood, and, as the paint peeled, the wood got water-logged and very heavy. Imagine the damage those boards could inflict!

And, another use for kickboards: use them between our knees instead of modern day pull-buoys. We didn't rotate, so the kickboard rudder kept us on an even keel.

Underwater off the wall? Firstly, we didn't know that being underwater was faster than on the surface, so our starts and turns were pretty much surface actions. Off the start and turn, we surfaced as soon as possible, although we were allowed to go as far as we could go, but no dolphin kicking....it wasn't yet invented. Butterfly had a whip kick.

Breaststroke: Underwater all the way. THEN, reversal in rules: some part of head above the surface at all times = high head bobbing breaststroke.

Chet Keller chuckled, "I had the 14-under 50-yard national breaststroke record 60 years ago. I swam

the whole race underwater...no coming up for air. Then rules about head above water changed, so my record still stands!"

IM = three strokes: Back, Breast, Free. Then, add the fly with a whip kick.

Swimming without goggles: Obviously, seeing was a problem, as was studying afterwards. We all had rainbow halos in our visual field. Some of our moms had us wash our eyes with milk. Some swimmers used vegetable oil as eye-drops prior to practice to fend off the chlorine.

Open turns were standard in the 1950s. When the flip turn was introduced, we had to hand-touch the wall before we could flip. Without goggles, turning lines, or a cross on the wall, that was an extra challenge. Even up until the late 80's, you had to be on your back while touching the wall with one hand on your backstroke turn. Adolph Kiefer remembers inventing a backstroke flip with a wall touch on the back. He didn't use it in the Olympics, however. We didn't have backstroke flags, so we'd have teammates stand on deck, stretching out over the lane, holding a dangling towel to designate that the back-stroker was an arm's length from the end.

Weight training? Carol Hartman (English Channel, 1986) swam in high school in the mid-seventies, a few years after Title IX was passed. There was a lot of fascination with the idea that we girls were lifting weights and the accompanying fear that they'd bulk up and lose their femininity. It was practically newsworthy, with talk of sending photos to the local paper to show our toughness!! As predicted by our coach, we did not bulk up like guys.

### **Rivalries/pranks:**

In one meet against New Trier High School, my Uncle John's Lane Tech fans wanted their team to get more rest so they snuck a duck dressed as a Lane Tech cheerleader into the New Trier gallery. When the official wanted to speed up the meet, they released the duck, thus causing a "meet delay because of duck-in-water." Jack Kiefer's New Trier version involves his coach's ringing the duck's neck. My cousins' recount that their neighbor then had a great duck dinner that night.

My college coach was on the NCAA rules committee. He told us that the diving was to be done on 3 M boards if both teams had them. Otherwise, diving was 1 M. He reported that, in intense rivalries, the home team, having a 3 M board, would sometimes remove the board the day before the visitors came. Hence, the visitors were practicing 3 M for the meet, only to find a 1 M board.

### **Diving:**

Our Grinnell College pool's ceiling was so low that it was recessed above the board so the divers wouldn't hit the ceiling.

(<http://howieschein.com/vitaschein/grinnellpool.jpg>)

The Grinnell divers' trick dive was a tuck with a push off the ceiling. Visiting divers, upon emerging from the dive and before the judges' scores were shown, could ask for a free repeat. One of our divers seemed to profit from overcoming this adversity. He went on to invent the integrated circuit and gave birth to Intel.

Marianne remembers swimming at Huff pool at U of Illinois which was 7.5 feet deep including under the diving board. When she took a diving class there, she knew it was shallow so she went feet first and

broke a toe on the bottom anyway. She also remembers one of her high school club-mates saying, "I want to swim the longest distance, ever." Forty-some years, teammate Diana Nyad did just that.

### **Misc:**

Our "temporary" 20-yard pool walls at Grinnell were so thin that ice formed on the inside during the winter. Our locker room was a row of benches with hooks on the wall for our clothes. Most of the older 20 yard pools were hidden in the buildings' basements, no windows, no circulating air. In one pool where I coached, we did have windows, but the air quality was still rooted in a 1940s circulation system. We had a workout rule that any swimmer, without asking, could take a fresh-air-from-the-open-window break. The plumbers swore that one of the pipe leaks was sealed with a #2 pencil and bubble gum, and that he didn't dare mess with it.

Our Grinnell coach, Irv Simone, had a bells-and-whistles pacing device that he used to torture us. The device was a series of lights and buzzers that he lowered into the water and set the pace he wanted us to follow. The problem, for us, was that the system ran on AC voltage, and we swore that we could feel the buzz of the electricity flowing through the water. In our quest to get out the pool as quickly as possible, we gave it all we had to beat the buzzers.

When shaving for meets sprung into swimming, Irv swore that resistance wasn't the issue. He conjectured that the new feeling of exposed nerve endings was a big contributor to better awareness and consequent speed. So, in his experimental mode, Irv had us rub on his secret potion in place of



**shaving.** Apparently, his potion had a water-activated acid in it, and it stung our legs way more than the shaving we were used to. To incite us to assert our manhood, Irv would challenge us, "Would you run through a plate glass window? Would you kill a cow?"

**Tom** remembers his club coach saying, "Ok guys. We're going to Nationals next week." I asked Tom about cut times. He doesn't remember needing them, or at least, not knowing that they were necessary. Apparently, "getting cut times" was not the mantra of his team, and Tom has no memory of cut times being in place. He did medal at Nationals, so maybe he was fast enough not to need to notice?

**At an age-group meet,** Tom swam in a lake course that was between two floating docks with lanes demarked by rope/floatation buoys. The bullpen was on the shore, and each heat was transported out to the starting deck in a rowboat.

**Tom's Ohio State teammate, Artie Wolfe** remembers living at home during his Ohio State college years. In 1958, the year he entered OSU, the tuition was \$75 a quarter and you could take as many classes as you wished. For at least one year he had a scholarship for around \$600 for the year; so, since tuition for the year was about \$225, he got his scholarship money and went out and bought a new sports coat. Artie is still swimming with a recent world record relay posting.

**Howie** remembers paying \$10K for four years at Grinnell College. In today's dollars, that's about 50,000. That same school's four-year price-tag is around \$250K.

**A Meet Surprise:**

On the way home to Grinnell College in Iowa from a two meet weekend in the Minneapolis area, our coach told us that he had garnered two lanes for us as an add-on team in the Iowa/Indiana dual meet in Iowa's 50-yard pool. At that time, Indiana swimmers probably comprised half of the coming Olympics swim team. We swam and we laughed a lot.

**What stories were the older swimmers of our youth telling us?** One that stands out for me is the now defunct event, "plunging." Basically, competitors plunged into the water and motionlessly glided with a 60 second time limit. The winner was the plunger who went the furthest. A rather inelegant description from Wiki: In later years, the event was subject to criticism as "not an athletic event at all," but instead a competition favoring "mere mountains of fat who fall in the water more or less successfully and depend upon inertia to get their points for them." More from Wiki at ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plunge\\_for\\_distance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plunge_for_distance)). In my father's rendition of the plunge, the competitors had "walkers" who would jump into the pool to haul out unconscious plungers who were pushing their underwater limits

**Suzie Trupin's story:**

When Suzie was 8, she was recruited to swim on a Y-team relay on the speculation that she was ready to learn to swim the fly leg. She started winning Y-State in Illinois pretty soon thereafter. At an AAU meet, her mom sat next to a woman who made the comment, after seeing Suzie swim an awful looking fly, that not only was she inefficient in the water, but



*Stanford Swimming  
'74*

she wasn't really sure how she completed a 50. Mom stepped up: she bought the Councilman learn-to-swim book and worked with Suzie's strokes. By the next year Suzie was 2<sup>nd</sup> nationally in the 10 and under 50 fly, and by 12 she broke the national record in 100 fly. Go MOM! By the way, Ray Essick (the first executive director of USA Swimming) was one of Suzie's age group coaches!

Suzie then went to Stanford where she set the stage for the implementation of Stanford's Women's swim team. During her first two years, the women's club

was a PE class, not a club. They swam 25s and 50s in a small AIWA meet circuit. (NCAA was not yet open to women). The women sometimes worked out with the guys', having their own lane in the mornings doing whatever the girls came up with. Suzie then bugged the administration to let the women go to their first national meet. Suzie remembers Stanford's giving women's letters the year after she graduated ('74) and then scholarships a year or two after that. About 25 years later, Suzie received her Stanford Varsity Letter.

A great video that illustrates a lot of what we laugh about is the "revolutionary" methods used by George Haines at Santa Clara Swim Club, featuring many Olympians, including the high schooler, Mark Spitz. Here's a great video of Santa Clara preparing for nationals:

<http://www.swimmersdaily.com/2015/05/05/championship-swimming-preparing-for-competition-with-george-haines>

Lots of what we laugh about was talked about in a Swim Swam Posting (be sure to look at the comments ) at

<http://swimswam.com/10-ways-know-swam-60s-early-70s/>

