

Ozark Swimming Hall of Fame

Class of 2008

AL ACKERMAN

Al began his swimming career with the Clayton Shaw Park Swim team. During his time with CSP, he set numerous Ozark Records, as well as many National Records. During his age group years, he and Mark Spitz traded many different National Records. All told, Al set 10 National Age Group Records, was ranked #1 in the Nation 10 times and was ranked in the Top 5 47 different times. Al was also part of numerous National Record Relays for the Clayton Shaw Park Swim Team. Al went on to swim high school at Kirkwood High School, where he won a State Championship while swimming for Wilson Stocker.

DEE BROWN

Dee was an age group swimmer for the Parkway Swim Club and Clayton Shaw Park Swim Team. While swimming for Parkway, Dee set numerous team and Ozark Records while being ranked Nationally 37 times, 1" 8 different times, and still holds 2 National Age Group Records while an 11 - 12-year-old in the Long Course 200 and 400 Free. Dee competed at the Olympic Trials as well. Dee was a swimmer and basketball player at MICDS in high school and then went on to play basketball in college.

Currently Dee is coaching High School Swimming in Kansas City.

JEFF COMMINGS

Jeff started swimming at the age of 4 at the Herbert Hoover Boys' Club in downtown St. Louis as a butter flyer swimming for 2008 Ozark Hall of Fame Inductee Val Taylor. By the age of 10, his breaststroke abilities were becoming clear, and he began to find success in that stroke at age 12, when he set his first Ozark swimming records. At age 14, he qualified for his first Junior National Championships and placed second in the 100m breast at age 15 in the 1989 meet. He made the championship final in the 100y breast at his first senior nationals in 1990 and would place in the top four in the event for the next three years. As a student at St. Louis University High School, Jeff won the state title in the 200 IM his senior year and won the 100 breast twice. The state record of 54.78 that he set in 1991 still stands.

His best performance on the international stage was a bronze medal in the 100m breast at the 1991 Pan-American Games. At the University of Texas at Austin, Jeff was named All-American nine times in the breaststroke and relays. He won four consecutive conference titles in the 100 breast and still ranks among the top 10 in that event at Texas. Jeff competed at the 1992 and 1996 Olympic Trials and was a member of the USA Swimming National Team from 1989 to 1995.

He currently competes in Masters Competitions and has three world records and 11 national records. He works as an associate producer for Swimming World TV in Phoenix.

GUSSIE CRAWFORD

Gussie Crawford began her association with Ozark Swimming in 1968 as a Clayton Shaw Park parent doing timing, working in the meet office, and bull pen. This was in the days of stop watches, calculators, and no touch pads. She followed by representing CSP at the swim committee meetings and then representing Ozark Swimming at the national AAU convention (pre sports act of 1978). During that time, she served as National AAU secretary and later vice president and president. She has been the Ozark registration and membership chair since 1984. She served on the USOC Board of Directors from 1980-1992. She served on the St. Louis Sports Commission & the St. Louis Olympic Festival Committee which was instrumental in getting the RPLX pool for the festival in 1994. She was presented with the Women's Sports achievement award in 1997 by the St. Louis Sports Commission. She was honored with the USA Swimming outstanding service award sponsored by Phillips Petroleum Company.

STEVE CROCKER

Steve swam for Jim Halliburton and the Rockwood Swim Club. Some of Steve's accomplishments include:

National Champion - 50-yard freestyle - Chapel Hill North Carolina

National Champion - 50-meter freestyle - Federal Way, WA

US Open Champion - 50-meter freestyle – Indianapolis

World Record - SC 50-meter freestyle - Dallas 1992

Pan Pacific Games - Tokyo and Edmonton, (bronze medal - Tokyo)

World Cup Champion, SC 50-meter freestyle - Bonn, Germany

Three-time qualifier - USA Olympic Trials (placed 3rd 2 times)

USA National Team - 1987 – 1992

Top times:

50 yard free - 19.27

100 yard free - 42.87

50 meter free (lc)- 22.32

50 meter free (sc) - 21.64

LEO LETENDRE

Competitive Accomplishments

4-year letter winner at Suffield Academy and three-time Connecticut Independent Secondary School Champion in 100 yd Breaststroke, school record holder in 100 yd Breaststroke and 200 yd medley relay

4-year letter winner at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, school record holder in the 100 and 200 yd Breaststroke, ranked 4th in 200yd Breaststroke in New England Colleges

1975 NCAA Post-graduate scholar athlete

26 USMS Top Ten Swims

USMS National Championship 2nd place finishes in the 200 Yd Breaststroke, 1 and 2 mile cable swims

USMS National Championship 1st place finish in the 200 Yd Medley Relay

Fastest 50 SCM breaststroke swum prior to USMS recognizing records thus setting the time to beat to establish

Numerous St Louis Masters breaststroke records across 4 age groups
Non-competitive swimming accomplishments

Chairman and Top Ten recorder of the Ozark LMSC

President of St Louis Masters

Chairman of the USMS Rules Committee

Currently USMS Vice President of National Operations

Recipient of the USMS Ransom Arthur Award

Director of the USMS Foundation

USA Swimming Official for 20+ years, M3 certified

President and member of the Board of Parkway Swim Club

TERRY VARNEY FREERKS

Terry began swimming at age 4 for the Clayton Shaw Park Swim Team, and then became a National Record Holder at the 10 & under, 11 - 12, and 13 - 14 Age Group Levels. By winning several events at the Sectional level, Terry competed in the first ever Junior National Meet that was held in Washington D.C. in 1967. She had previously however competed at the Senior National level several times. By the age of 13 Terry had qualified for the Olympic Trials in the 200 & 400 IM and the 100 & 200 back stroke events. Terry also competed for the United States in the Canadian American Meet on 4 different occasions.

Terry swam interschool at Clayton High School since at that time there were no organized Missouri State High School Leagues for girls. She attended Arizona State University where she was an AIAW All-American. Terry later went on to coach the Clayton Shaw Park Swim Team and has been with the team in a coach or Team Director role since 1974.

Terry entered Masters Swimming at the age of 25, and in 3 decades at this level, she has set National Records, won National Championships, and attained All-American Honors.

TRACEY (METZ) WEBB

Tracey began swimming for the Parkway Swim Club where she was coached by 2007 Ozark Hall of Fame inductee Penny Taylor. At age 12, she held the 50 M breast stroke National Record. In 1976, Tracey won the AAU Junior Olympics in both the 100 and 200 meter breast stroke with record times. Tracey trained at the Olympic Training center in Colorado Springs and traveled to Mission Viejo California to compete in Seventeen Magazine's Swim Meet of Champions. She was also selected to compete in the Women's International Cup; the first female only international swim meet held in the United States. At age 13, Tracey finished 6th in Nationals and earned a position on the 1978 USA National Team, competing in Holland and France where she won the 200 M breast stroke. Tracey also qualified for both the 1976 and 1980 Olympic Trials.

Tracey led Parkway West High School to two consecutive state championships in 1980 and 1981. Her high school career culminated with 3 state records and back-to-back wins in the 100 yard breast stroke, 200-yard IM and 200-yard medley relay.

As a student athlete at Purdue University, Tracey was a 4-year letter winner, 2-year captain and won MVP honors as a Junior and Senior. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and is currently teaching sixth grade in the Wentzville, Missouri School District. Tracey and her husband Ken have been married 21 years and have three children, Jordan, Lexi, and Tyler.

VALLIANTI AL TAYLOR, JR

A native of the "Show Me State," Vallianti "Val" Taylor, also known as Mr. Taylor, had a magnificent mission ahead of him to empower children through the art of swimming. Today, he is the aquatic director for the Mathews-Dickey Boys' & Girls' Club, a St. Louis-area youth organization serving more than 40,000 young men and women, annually.

At an early age, Taylor was stricken with Polio in his left leg and swimming was recommended as a source of excellent therapy. The therapeutic experience made him physically strong and boosted his morale. This helped him motivate others to choose swimming as a positive alternative to any challenges they may face in life.

Taylor attended Turner Elementary and graduated from Charles Sumner High School

in 1951. He earned a bachelor's degree in education and physical education from West Virginia State in 1957 and master's in education from Washington University in St. Louis in 1958. As a member of the West Virginia State University swim team, he won championships in the 500, 1650 and 200 yard free style.

The summer of 1982 brought Taylor closer to accomplishing his youth service mission. While driving down Kingshighway, he saw an excavation under way at Mathews-Dickey for a new swimming pool. In his excitement, he inquired about a position for an aquatic director and was hired by Club President, CEO & Co-Founder Martin L. Mathews, once the pool opened. Taylor is stroking on 25 years later, as a motivator in swimming as the Club's aquatic director.

Throughout the years, Taylor has shared his love for swimming in other aquatic positions, including life guard, cabin leader and counselor at Camp Rivercliff in Bourbon, Mo. He also taught water safety and lifesaving classes at the American Red Cross, and was aquatic director at Herbert Hoover Boys & Girls Club. His favorite swimming stroke is the back stroke.

A dedicated family man, Taylor is married to the former Eleanor Williams. The couple have two talented daughters, Darlene Cooper and Cecilia Whitley, and four grandchildren. As a surrogate father, Taylor has mentored hundreds of young men and women on an elementary, high school and college level. Approximately 85 percent of the young people he taught became successful swimmers. His swimming career has been most rewarding, because he has had the pleasure of watching his protégés grow from child to adulthood, including: Jeffrey Commings, Diane Jones, John Pitts, Brandon Taylor, Phalen Thomas, Steven Whitfield and Lubbie Yaber. Many of these youth have become successful Olympic medalists, dentists, educators, pharmacists, and corporate leaders residing in various cities throughout America.

Taylor is extremely honored to be inducted into the prestigious Ozarks Swimming Association's Hall of Fame. In his 68 years involved with the sport, Taylor has received numerous awards for his achievements: the Black History Swim Meet Hall of Fame award in Washington, DC, "I Dare You" Award by the Danforth Foundation, and Key to the City of St. Louis for being an outstanding coach in the Public High School League. Taylor says that one of his most gratifying experiences was working hand-

and-hand with Mathews to make a difference in the lives of young people at Mathews-Dickey Boys' & Girls' Club.

