

Meet the GTD swimmer Peggy Armand (45-49 age group)

Here is a delightful story about someone who has fun with swimming and has made her sport a "family affair".



I just swim for fun. I don't have any Top Tens, or National anything titles. I haven't hit the mile a day mark. And I don't get up at 4:30 just to start my day with a couple of miles. I joined Masters because I wanted a challenging workout, and I stayed because of the support and friendships I have made on my team. I am not the fastest on our team, and we have only about 10 who compete on our little team. I have only been swimming Masters for three years.

In my real life I am married to Greg, ex-football player turned Masters swimmer. We have four kids, Matt is 20 Casey and William are 18, and Sarah is 15. I was a teacher for a long time and in 2004 went back to school and became a surgical technologist. Because I work at a Level One Trauma Center our schedule runs 24/7-365 days a year. With weekend duties, holidays and call shifts it does get in the way of swimming sometimes.

I do love swimming Masters. The first year I didn't compete. It had been way too long since I had been off the blocks. The second year I did. Laughed myself silly the first time I was up on the blocks for the first meet. That was the year I got my husband to join me going to practices. It is always hard to go to practice alone, but with my husband going too, it is something we do together, and we help each other out of the house. It should be mentioned that my husband is a former football player. Not a swimmer, never before a swimmer. His first practice, we thought we'd have to call the rescue squad. This last year was my second year competing and my husband's first.

I was raised in the water and swam through high school. After HS I really didn't swim much, but an occasional spurt here and there.

When I had my kids it was important to me that they all know how to swim, and they learned by exposure. Like my parents did when I was growing up, I took my kids to the pool every day. I hoped for at least one swimmer, but they all liked to play, more than race. After a long absence from swimming - and watching the pounds stick, I started swimming at our park district pool to get in shape. It happened a few times that we'd see the Masters swimmers practicing, and the coach, Randy Brezina, invited me to join them. After a couple times saying no, I finally tried it. He gave me a week "free" and the next week I signed up.

My coach had told me a couple years ago to log my swims and distances. I started in late spring 2008 and swam about 135 miles. This year I'm at 175. My GTD goal was to swim farther

and I aimed for 150. I hit that and am unofficially aiming to break 200. I also swim the Big Shoulders Open Water swim in Chicago at Ohio St. beach. This year was my third time.

I had originally heard about Masters from my brother Bob who swims with the Rockford Y masters. We talked about competing in the same meet some day. In 2008 we swam together at the Dekalb meet. It was fun to be swimming with him and to have his support. He swims for a smaller club and I swim for a small club so we have an unofficial rivalry going between our clubs. It is all in fun, his club usually beats ours, but we have a good time. After that first meet we went out to dinner together and that meet has become a tradition. Last year we got our parents to come and see us swim again as they had for so many years as we swam as kids.



Peggy, her husband and her brother at the Big Shoulders swim.

Now Bob and I connect for meets and our favorite I think is swimming the Big Shoulders event. This year he swam the 5K, and I stick to the 2.5K, just not ready to step it up that much yet, I guess! We have a really good time. His wife and kids come to cheer us on. We make a weekend of it.

During the season I try to make swimming a priority and we swim 4 days a week. Off season I train for Big Shoulders, (when I can) then take a break. This year my goal is to get rid of the terrible crossover I have on my free. Whenever I ask my coach, "What can I do to go faster?" he always says, "your arms are crossing over the midline!"

I definitely enjoy swimming and competing. I know I'll never be super fast, but I have a lot of fun. When practice gets hard I remind myself, "practice hard now and you'll be able to swim hard at meets. That was true at the State meet this year. My swims felt great and I have never been faster--for me. I think I matched times that I swam in high school--though the memories are faded, so who really knows for sure. :)

Meet the GTD swimmer Marie Girouard (30-34 age group)

Marie not only enjoys swimming for fitness, the friendships formed through her sport are equally as important to her (as is the case for many of us!)

I am a commercial banker and enjoy my job. It is a challenging, yet rewarding job. Although swimming is a hobby for me, it is an important part of my life. Not only does it help me stay fit, masters swimming has brought much joy into my life. I have had an opportunity to get to know some great individuals that I probably would not have ever met without swimming.

I have a wonderful husband and a 11 year old dog who is still the life of our parties. My brother and his 2 kids also live near me and we enjoy having friends and family over to our house for BBQ on the weekends.

I started swimming at the local YMCA when I was about 5 years old. My parents were worried that I would fall into a pool so they wanted me to know how to stay afloat. I really did not enjoy the swimming lessons, but I did like meeting new friends. I used to compete, however, now I just enjoy the training and the time I have with my team mates. In the past few years, I have participated in local triathlons. I am still trying to get over the fact that I hate swimming in open water...and do not know what I am doing on my bike...and ...well...do not really like to run! The events are a lot of fun as they are challenging and it is a great opportunity to see friends that I have not seen in some time.

I currently swim 2-3 times per week and swim approximately 3,500 yards per workout. I swim with the Viva Las Vegas Masters team. We swim in the evenings in an outdoor facility, so it is a great way to end the day looking up at a beautiful sunset. Not only does the team train together, we head out to coffee/dinner when we can and also plan bike rides, runs and tri events with our fellow team mates.

I decided to sign up for GTD as a little project to see what my year looks like from a swimming prospective. It is fun to set a monthly goal for myself and it is especially rewarding to achieve it. (I set monthly goals for myself instead of looking at the annual goal as it seems less intimidating that way).

I have so many great swim stories from my younger years such as watermelon races, hiding in the bathroom when we had a fly set (I was only 6 and knew that I did not like fly), and watching my friend put Peanut Butter in her sisters fins as a revenge for a fight they had earlier in the day. Thankfully, my stories with masters swimming are a bit more mature since those days.

Meet the GTD swimmer Rich Johnston (45-49 age group)

Rich is currently suffering from a separated shoulder (!) Let's all wish him a speedy recovery and happy swimming.



I'm in the business of financing marine vessels for the commercial finance division of a major insurance company. I focus on ocean-going vessels such as oil tankers and large bulk carriers. Because of the current state of the financial world, work is actually a little slow, which makes more time for family and working out, which is nice, but doesn't make for much of a sense of financial security. Working from home a few days a week also makes for a flexible schedule, which is also nice.

I have been married, for 17 years now, to a wonderful, smart, beautiful and understanding woman. We have three kids. Our son is 13, and we also have twin daughters who are 12. Three kids in 15 months...yes, it was hard when they were infants and toddlers, but it's getting easier. I expect it will get harder again when they're all in high school!

Swimming is a hobby, but a pretty important one in my life. I swam competitively in high school and college. I took about 15 years off after college, and then got back in the pool with an informal masters group and the local Y. Last year (about 25 year post-college) I competed in my first meet since college.

Our Masters group is small, but a lot of fun. There are about 8 of us (men and women) who swim together regularly. Most of us are in our 40's. We have 2 "official" workouts a week, but get together, via an email list, for informal workout all the time, whenever someone's got a free morning or some other window of time to squeeze in an hour in the pool. The first Wednesday of every month is a very popular workout, because afterwards we go out for a few beers at the Jolley Trolley – a local landmark.

This year I joined a few of my Master's friends and began competing in OW swims and triathlons. We've had a lot of fun with these, but unfortunately bike riding has led to a recently separated shoulder for me...not a pretty story, but it involves high speed, a sharp curve, a curb and (according to my wife) my own overdeveloped sense of invincibility and general poor judgment.

I usually swim about 3 times a week, with a typical workout being 2500 yards in about an hour. During training for last winter's competitive season, I peaked at about 50,000 yards for the month of February, but something in the range of 25 to 30,000 yards is more typical.



We've got a broad range of events that our team focuses on – some are IM'ers, some sprinters and a few distance swimmers. Because of this, our workouts are a mixed bag, depending on who's swimming. My strong suit is butterfly, though I'm planning on doing some distance freestyle this winter. I think the separated shoulder is going to make that decision for me.

I prefer pool swimming, but I've learned to like OW.

As for GTD: I was going to swim and track my yardage anyway, but thought it would be cool/fun to do it alongside all the other swimmers across the country. At this point, my goal for the rest of 2009 is just to get past this shoulder injury without any long-term problems, so just getting back in the water and able to swim butterfly sounds like a practical goal.