



Local Legend *Let's swim!*

Local Legends Sue McGlennon: Living for Two

Desert Heat and Two Cute Lifeguards



I was born in Palm Springs where my earliest memory of swimming was at my grandparents' pool. It was so darn hot that every time I put my fingers on the coping to get out, my fingers would just frazzle! Then we moved to San Mateo and I remember taking Red Cross swimming lessons at San Mateo High School. The different levels were called Sand Fleas, Super Sand Fleas, Dunkers and Minnows! I don't know why I remember that!

There were seven children in my family and my Mom piled us all in the car and took us to swimming lessons, starting the summer when I was seven or eight. Sometimes when I do a flip turn now, I get that smell—if water goes up my nose—and I'm reminded of my swimming lessons. It's the chlorine or something that takes me back to those days.

Then my family all swam at a club pool on a summer swim team. I also dove, which I enjoyed very much. I remember going to this pool with my family, and I always had my eye on the two very good-looking lifeguards! I swam until I was about 14 years old. None of my siblings went on to swim past high school. I'm the only one who still really swims.

Sun Worship Gone Wrong

My childhood friend, who lived next door, also had a pool, so a couple friends and I were over there practically every day. We would lie out in the sun and burn ourselves! We had peeling parties! Who could get the longest peel? Our motto was: the redder the better! We put on mercurochrome and baby oil. It was not a good thing. Sunscreen was not on the scene. I think there was Sea and Ski, but that was it, and my friend, who had more money, bought Bain de Soleil. I did everything to get that bronze summer glow. Then in the winter, I'd go skiing and tilt my face up to the sun while on the chairlift! Not good! My advice to all you younger swimmers with nice skin: stay out of the sun!

Aquacades, Not Varsity

I went to Notre Dame High School in Belmont, and I don't believe they had a swim team. I was on Aquacades, which was synchronized swimming. It wasn't actually competitive; we performed only once a year after practicing for a couple weeks, and then it was over. All girls, of course. There were solos and duets, and a team of like six, which is what I did. I wasn't much of an athlete and didn't do any other sports.

Swimming Saved My Mind



During college, at San Jose State, I would go to the pool and just swim laps. I worked in the front office of the student health center at Stanford after Pat and I got married, and on my lunch break I would swim a mile every day. I didn't have to pay.

Then I was a stay-at-home mom with four kids, and I was going nuts, so, for the sake of my sanity, I needed to find an outlet.

That's when I found Masters. I was at Rinconada for 17 years and moved to Menlo Masters in 1998 when Rinconada closed down for remodel. It was one of the best days of my life when I joined Menlo Masters. Such a supportive, challenging, compassionate team of swimmers! Now I've been at Menlo Masters for 27 years. I hope I can swim here for the rest of my life.

My husband, Pat, was so competitive. He played football, baseball, basketball. He's the one who got me to compete! He did every sport but swim. All our kids were in sports. That's all we did was go from gym to field to pool. That was our life.

Employee Perk → Triathlon Habit

I worked at Burgess Park Pool because I had asked Tim about an office position I'd heard about working for the Solo Swim Club. He said, "Sue, I have a position for you at Burgess. Come and talk to me tomorrow." So I worked in the office there for seven years. I loved working there, being in the atmosphere of the swimmers. I was doing scheduling, billing and customer service.

My interest in triathlon started when I was working in the office at Burgess and I had access to training with Team Sheeper. Because I was an employee, I didn't have to pay for the tri team, so I got into biking and running, which were both quite new to me. I spent many, many hours getting in shape. I did that for a number of years until I couldn't do it anymore because of my heart.

The Michele Standoff: "Sue, Did You Sign Up?"

The most incredible triathlon I did was the half ironman in Hawaii, in May, 2008. Michele Santilano...oh my God! So, when I was working at Burgess, every day she was asking, and I was saying, "I will never do a Half Ironman." I always did Olympic distance. But every day she came into the office,

"Sue, did you sign up?"

"No, Michele, I'm never doing it."

"Sue, did you sign up yet?"

"No, Michele, I'm never doing it."

After about two weeks of her doing that I finally caved in and said yes. And I did it! That was a tremendous accomplishment. One and done! When I crossed the finish line, I was totally



spent but exhilarated.

So often when I was training, my heart was going wild, but I thought everybody's heart did this. I thought, when you're exerting so much energy, everybody's heart feels like mine did! I thought everybody was horribly short of breath. Ignorance was bliss, and I kept competing. I did further Olympic distance triathlons after that in 2009. Olympic distance is a 9/10 mile swim, 25 mile bike, and 6.2 mile run. Half ironman is a 1.2 mile swim, 56 mile bike, and 13.1 mile run. For me it was a lot!

A Guardian Angel at the Pool

When I was training for triathlons my heart would beat very fast. I would just ignore it and keep going, just rest a couple seconds, and then keep on. But one morning when I was swimming at Burgess and my heart was racing, I thought to myself, It's really racing fast, but I will make it to the end and then pause and let it relax and then start again. But when I was in mid-pool, I thought, Jeez, I can't get to the end, so I was hanging on the lane line. And the woman behind me said "Do you need some help?"

And I said, "Oh, I'll be fine. My heart's beating kind of fast, but I'll be alright."

She said, "I'm going to go to the end with you, and I'm going to wait there with you." And when we got there, she told me, "I'm a cardiac nurse, and you need to probably get out of the pool and end the workout. And you should probably go to the doctor." She even volunteered to drive me home, but I said I'd be okay. I'd go home and make a doctor's appointment. I had never seen her before in the pool and I never saw her again. She was like my guardian angel.

Locker-Room Therapy

I'd always prided myself on my fast swimming. I was swimming in lane three, and then as my heart declined, I had to go farther, and farther, and farther down, which was hard on my ego. I got down to lane five or six, the slowest lane. My doctors were just glad I was still able to do it at all. I swam until the week before I went into the hospital for my transplant, because it was so important for me. It wasn't just the exercise I wanted. I wanted the camaraderie of the other swimmers. Part of the workout is socializing in



the locker room. During COVID when we couldn't go in the locker room, it just wasn't very fun at all. I love the locker room chatter, you know, seeing other people and hearing their stories, commiserating, celebrating. It's amazing.

Firecrackers in My Chest

That was December of 2009, when my heart troubles got diagnosed as cardiomyopathy, and I had ventricular tachycardia. I ended up getting a defibrillator that would shock me when my heart rate got too fast. Because I was on so many meds, I couldn't run and I couldn't bike, but I could still swim. I had to take a month off for the implant surgery, of course. It was like a firecracker going off inside my body when the defibrillator shocked me! And I got shocked many times. The meds are also supposed to prevent tachycardia, but they make you very sluggish and tired, and I was getting slower and slower, which was discouraging. I felt like a dead horse! But at least I could still swim, and my doctors encouraged me.

"You're Going to Need a New Heart."

I left the Burgess office job in 2014 due to my heart problem. I was in the hospital for three weeks, and then I had so many doctors' appointments that I couldn't fit in working, even a part-time, 20 hours per week job. And so my triathlon days were over. While I was hospitalized, my cardiologist said, "Sue, I can tell you right now that in the future you're going to need a new heart."

I said, "You gotta be kidding me. I mean, I swim and live a normal life. What are you talking about?" But it was good that she planted that seed and I ended up living with that thought for eight years.

January 30, 2022 was my transplant surgery, at CPMC (California Pacific Medical Center) in San Francisco. I waited one week in the hospital, with a balloon pump that kept my heart alive. You have to be in the hospital to be put on the list. I couldn't sit up more than 30 degrees and had to keep my legs perfectly still. I was very fortunate to get a heart so quickly. Some people spend months in the hospital before getting the right match.

This was during COVID so I could have no visitors. Pat drove me up there, and dropped me off at the door, but they let him come up and see me the night before, as well as the next morning right before the surgery. You don't know whether you're going to live or not. One reason I got the transplant was that I was in such great shape, and I healed quickly. I've just had my 3.5 year checkup and my heart is great! After the transplant I was just so eager to get back in the pool, which I did after two months. You don't really notice my scar. You can't really see it. I just needed the camaraderie of the pool. While I was out, my team mates gave me such good love and support.

Luckily my heart issue isn't genetic so my kids don't have it. I have four kids and eight grandkids who all live in the area, so I can see them regularly. That's a lot of fun.

Living for Two (Me and My Donor)

I'm motivated by my brand new heart. Somebody had to die in order to keep me alive and I'm just going to live my life to the fullest, being the recipient of such a tremendous gift.

I'm retired, so I enjoy gardening and I'm riding my bike again. In April and May this year I went on a biking trip to Crete with four other team mates—Rosa, Didi, Marylou, and Megan Ankor who's now moved to Colorado. We didn't swim at all, just biked! The water was right there by the hotel, but I didn't get in it. I was wiped from the biking. I hope to do more bike tours though.

You know a lot of team mates go on these Swim Treks? I signed up for the Bali Swim Trek, but then was having shoulder pain and decided that for right now, one hour of swimming per day is plenty. I didn't want to overdo it.

Open Water: Beautiful, Freezing



I did some open water competitions—the Santa Cruz One Mile and the Santa Cruz Two Mile, and I did the Trans-Tahoe Relay, just once. I was on the boat with Laurie and Sam Sinnott. It was her Dad's boat. He almost ran me over while I was in the water! There's five people on a team; I forget who else was with us. Each person swims for half an hour and then you each swim fifteen minutes. I would just barely get warm and then I'd have to get back in again! The water is so beautiful! I love Tahoe water, but it's so cold!

And I've done the Donner Lake Swim, a 2.25 mile swim across the lake. But it's so cold! I would just shiver for hours afterwards. Santa Cruz was the same, because I wouldn't use a wetsuit.

Editor's Note: The Trans Tahoe Swim is a 10 mile relay race across Lake Tahoe, organized by The Olympic Club of San Francisco. Teams of swimmers, typically 6, compete by taking turns swimming 30-minute legs, followed by 10-15-minute legs until the course is completed. The race starts at Sand Harbor and finishes on the California side of the lake, usually at Skylandia Beach. The race follows marathon swimming rules, meaning no wetsuits or neoprene are allowed.

Podiums and Team Challenges



February Fitness Challenge 2000
Sue McGlennon Repeats as February Fitness Champ

Sue McGlennon won the annual February Fitness Challenge yardage pile-up for the second year in a row with a month consistent swimming and a big finish to top it off. She swam 25 days during the month (taking Sundays off) and racked-up 200,200 yards, an average of over 8,000 yards (4.5 miles) per day. Sue led all the way except for one brief time about mid-month when Peter Shepherd passed her. She answered that challenge and came back strong to pull further and further away from her competition.

Peter Shepherd swam a little over 100 miles (176,000 yards) to take second place and he swam most of it backstroke. Anyone who came to any practice during the month probably heard Tim read off the daily Shepherd Report, a spreadsheet with Peter's totals for each stroke broken down to fractions of yards.

The middle part of the standings remained stable for most of the month, but there was a big surge at the end as Roger von Oech tried to keep his hold on third place (he did) and Deanna Lin and Scott Marshall tried to hold off a hard-charging Dave Gildea (they didn't). Dave showed up for the evening workout at the old time on the last day, just as Roger, Deanna and Scott were finishing. He did a quick U-turn and headed out to Ladera to pick up enough last-minute yards to pull him into fourth.

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Sue McGlennon

I guess it's the competition that drives me to do it! Yes, I'm a competitive person! I think it's the influence of my husband and kids. In my early years I wasn't this way. But when I started masters I used to compete in swim meets, and I wanted a podium finish, or I wanted a blue ribbon, or a white ribbon, at least. If I didn't get those, I was very disappointed! Same for triathlons, I wanted podium finishes, and I got a lot of them. But sometimes even just finishing an event can make you feel great that you did it.

Free and breaststroke were my best strokes, and I liked the long-distance freestyle events, the 1650. I had a couple of team records, but they've all been broken.

At the time those were very important to me. For February Fitness every year—I was obsessed! I hated February because it was cold and dreary, so I'd swim every day, except Sunday, and spend two or three hours, sometimes coming back at night! Totally obsessed!

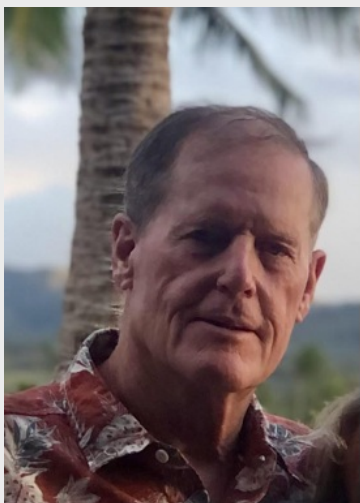
Editor's Note: The article from the Almanac in 2000 reports that Sue swam 200,200 yards during the month of February. That's an average of over 8,000 yards a day (4.5 miles) for 25 days. Peter Shepard was the next contender at 176,000 yards. The article spices things up by saying that Roger van Oechs had to hold on for third place, with Deanna Lin and Scott Marshall trying to hold off a 'hard charging' Dave Gildea (they didn't). It's like watching a movie that takes an entire month!

Now I don't compete, and I don't do Killer Quad. I haven't done any of the events in years. I just swim an hour. I start getting cold after 50 minutes, even if the pool temperature is fine, so an hour is plenty. It's strange. I'm swimming, and I'm warm, and then I just start to get chilled. I go thaw out in the hot, hot, hot shower. I get out of the shower and am still cold.

I have not done butterfly in many, many years, but for some reason yesterday, I decided to do a couple of the 25's fly. It was not pretty! The best part of the workouts is on the wall at the end, knowing that it's done, and you did it. It was hard to get used to the 7:00 o'clock workout time—seeing the people who were already done, and leaving, and I'm just getting there!

I swim Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, at 7:00. I used to do all the events—Killer Quad, Dynamic Duo, February Fitness and I got Swimmer of the Year in 2007. It was all so important to me for so long and now, it's not.

Senior Games



I used to do the Senior Games at Stanford. One year Pat bought me this suede jacket that said Senior Games on it. That might have been the only time he watched me compete. He never came to a triathlon. He was always busy with his own life, his own competitions. Pat died last year. He supported me as an athlete and I'm grateful for that.

Being an athlete has given me a lot of inner strength and mental toughness. I learned to just endure the training, for swimming and triathlons. To get to the finish line I had to do a lot of hard work. Raising four kids was a lot of work too!

Coach Tim: Serving and Leading

I've swum with Tim for 27 years now and I don't think I've had the same workout twice! His workouts are so creative and interesting. I don't know how he takes four strokes and makes so many different workouts. The hour goes by quickly counting the laps, thinking about my stroke and, sometimes, watching the clock. I'm grateful for the thought he puts into designing each workout, including elements we love and elements that are good for us!

I want the current situation at the pool to be resolved in a way that keeps Tim motivated and lets him know how much he is appreciated in the community and by Masters. He does such a great job of including all ages and abilities of the community, getting all those programs to fit in the pool hours, and he includes everybody. Nobody could run the pool as well as he does. I admire him for staying in the fight. I hope the decision makers can understand the enormous amount of work and attention to details it takes to operate a pool. I saw some of that when I worked in a customer service capacity at Burgess.

Tim is so quiet about his accomplishments. Like, I know when he's done an event, a race or something, and I'll ask, "So, Tim, how did you do?". He'll say, "Oh, I did alright." And he won it, actually!

I want all of us, Masters swimmers and our excellent coaches, to stay together for a long time and continue to swim, share and be happy.

This narrative was collected and transcribed by Frances Reneau. It was edited by Kim Freitas.

About Local Legends

Menlo Masters is gathering and sharing stories of extraordinary individuals on the team. We hope these narratives will connect us with each other and inspire us to swim often.

If you know a swimmer who has some stories, please send an email to Tasha Capen, Menlo Master Team Manager tasha@menlomasters.com

Menlo Swim & Sport menloswim.com