

# USMS NATIONAL OFFICE

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## EXECUTIVE SECRETARY – Tracy Grilli

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Where to begin...

Over the years, my report has contained the usual description of the duties of the Executive Secretary – answering e-mail and snail mail, filling merchandise orders and basically being there for whoever needs me. I think you all know the details so I would like to talk about some of the new things I've been doing and my staff.

The last sentence in my 2001 Annual Report read "I look forward to convention and would like to wish all the candidates (my future bosses) GOOD LUCK!" Well I have been working with this very dedicated group rather closely this past year, being asked to participate in their conference calls and mid-year meeting. The purpose being two-fold

- I receive first hand knowledge of discussion and decisions being made so I have a better understanding of "why" and am better educated to answer or refer questions that come from our membership
- I'm able to provide insight to the EC to what is going on at the LMSC/Club/member level based on information and questions that are received at the National Office

This has been a very exciting and educational experience for me. I am amazed at the energy, knowledge, and dedication our Executive Committee has. It is an honor to work with Jim, Scott, Sally, Doug, Nancy, Lynn and Jack!

A "major" project this year was to revise and update our procedure for issuing foreign swimmers a Letter of Invitation. In the past, I would type up Letters of Invitation to any foreign swimmers who asked and then send on to the US Embassy in their country. Since 9/11, President Jim felt that we needed to have a better "filtering" process. We have created a "Request for Letter of Invitation" form that is now sent to the swimmers National Governing Body (NGB). The purposes being that the NGB can confirm that the swimmer is registered and also review the form. The NGB is asked to send the form onto the swimmer. The swimmer then completes it and sends/faxes it to the National Office along with copies of their valid Masters Swimming registration card and passport. Once this is received and approved (by President Jim) a Letter of Invitation will be sent. Swimmers not registered with an NGB will not be sent a request or be able to participate in a USMS sanctioned event.

I have also been invited to participate on the Database Project Committee. This is another amazing group of people, all working toward the development of a database that will encompass all of our current (and future) database needs including: Registration, Communication, Championship, Top Ten, History and Archives and whatever other programs we have.

As you all know, because of the delay of convention - so the delay of the USMS Rule Book and LMSC Handbook. Our USMS Website to the rescue!!! Thanks to the cooperation between the National Office, Publications Committee Chair, Meg Smath and USMS Webmaster, Jim Matysek, we were able to get the 2002 versions of these publications up on our website in a timely fashion so that they were available to you and the membership well before the printed copies could be sent. These are the cooperative efforts the NO worked on over the past year (above and beyond the daily tasks):

- Communications Committee (Hugh Moore, Chair & Michael Moore) and Webmaster (Jim Matysek) -updated the process of maintaining the LMSC Officer database for the listing on the USMS website
- Convention Committee (Michael Heather, Chair) - created an electronic file of the registration packet so that it could be sent out to the delegates & LMSCs via e-mail
- Finance Committee (Tom Boak, Chair) - updated the budget forms for 2003
- Long Distance Committee (Peter Crumbine, Chair and Eric Nordlund) – participated in the discussion and created a procedure for the mailing of the Long Distance All Star certificates
- Marketing Committee (Rich Burns, Chair and Aimee Fitzgerald, Public Relations) - sent out news releases via e-mail to BOD, LMSC Chairmen and Editors, Club contacts and coaches
- Publications Committee (Meg Smath, Chair) – updating and printing of Building A Successful Masters Swim Club
- Records & Tabulations Committee (Pieter Cath, Chair) - revision of process for confirming the membership of Pool All Americans

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- National Sponsor Liaison (Mel Goldstein) - sending out information (brochures, SWIM Magazine, Building A Successful Masters Swim Club, LMSC/Club contact information) to those people he has met at trade shows (with the USMS display) who are interested in USMS

Esther Lyman, the “keeper of our membership database” has been invaluable to many in the USMS Family:

- LMSC Registrars - orientating new Registrars, providing back-up files to those with “crashed” systems, and “quality” membership reports to keep them informed
- Championship Committee - database for National Meets Hosts
- Long Distance Committee - confirmation of memberships especially the postal Championship events
- Coaches Committee – update Coaches database and provide mailing list for Coaches Committee Quarterly
- Communications - ongoing dialog of ideas
- History and Archives - member research
- Marketing - database for Public Relations release
- Records and Tabulations - confirmation of membership for All Americans
- Registration – well... Esther IS Registration!

I think that I benefit the most. Esther provides me with the “most up-to-date” membership information. Having this at my fingertips is HUGE and I am able to immediately assist those who have a question or need information (a swimmers registration number, why they did not get SWIM Magazine, a reporter needing information on ages, location or contact information, etc). Esther puts a tremendous amount of effort in massaging our database so that it is everything to everyone who needs it. She goes above and beyond and we are very fortunate to have her as an employee of our National Office.

Hillary Robertson is my office assistant, taking over last fall for Dee Lajoie who worked with me for the last 2 years. Hillary is a senior at Londonderry High School and a member of the National Honor Society. She is also very involved with a number of leadership activities at LHS and is a very talented ballet dancer. Hillary happily tackles the most tedious of jobs (inputting and filling publication orders, creating All American, National Record and Club certificates, typing SWIM Magazine address changes and does a lot of collating, folding, stuffing, licking and sticking!). She is a pleasure to work with.

I think I have said enough, probably too much, but I’m sure I forgot something! See you all at convention in Dallas/Ft Worth and if there is anything you need, you know where to find me.

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## DATABASE ADMINISTRATOR – Esther Lyman

As we all know as swimmers, once you have done your personal best times, you either float on your laurels for a while, or forever; or if you are a truly competitive spirit, get busy trying to beat them all over again.

The registration process, both between Tracy and I and between us and the registrars and treasurers, continues on a dependable track, and all the spin-off activities are falling into place. As mentioned in last year’s report, we are still tinkering with the underlying systems for gathering the information, getting the accounting right, keeping the information current, and reap the benefits of having electronic data going back to 1994. We try to identify more areas where our activities can support and maximize the efforts of other people and committees, for example as in our setting up a system for automatically tracking delegate entitlements and giving more in-depth support to verifying All-American swimmers and meet entries for national championships.

Predictably, we are now at a point where it becomes easier to coast along on existing systems and procedures than to keep innovating. Given that everything is functioning, and functioning well, maintaining equilibrium is not insignificant, but we would be less than ‘competitive’ if we did not try to extend beyond that.

With the formation of the database committee to look at ALL the information within the organization and how we create, collect, manage, move, analyze, distribute, and use it, not to mention safeguard it, we now have an opportunity to get innovative again. On the surface, it would seem that once registration (and address changes) can be offered online both the lives of the registrars, treasurers, and the national office staff will change. In fact, while we shift the burden of data entry onto the members, we also in the process exponentially raise the expectations for currency and availability of the data, and will still be left with the tasks of verification, accounting, data management, and security.

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An indispensable component for being able to integrate all our systems and information is having a lifetime common key to uniquely distinguish one member from the other. This is in the works, and while some members may not welcome being so uniquely distinguished or so easily tracked over time, this key is not a negotiable item if we are to make our swimming accomplishments and proof of membership as easily accessed as we envision it and help reduce the administrative burden in our still mostly volunteer organization.

These changes will definitely require all of us to come out of our 'comfort zone' with procedures and systems, but we have done it before and can do it again without losing our Masters soul.

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