

Meet GTD swimmer Kathy Boyer (55-59 age group)

This story is a MUST READ if you are looking for inspiration and “can do” attitude. To date, Kathy (Kat) has lost 160 pounds! Swimming is a very big part of her life.



I am a Security/IT Manager for a major Department of Defense (DoD) Contractor (kind of sounds like jeopardy doesn't it). I work at a Weapon Integration Center that provides All Up Rounds to the US Navy (yes, we are an ordnance facility and when the missiles leave us they go directly to the fleet and are ready to fire).

If you remember the wayward satellite there was so much concern about a couple of years ago, the fear was that it would re-enter the earth's atmosphere and leak toxic fuel in to our space, the missile that took out that satellite was sent to the fleet from where I work. Of course Security and Safety are integral parts of our daily jobs. We know that the warfighter is counting on our products to work each and every time and

additionally we want to protect our warfighting advantage. Many of us have family or friends serving our great Nation and I say thank you to all who serve or support those who serve. As a veteran I hold our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines near and dear every day.

I am a Certified Industrial Security Professional (ISP) and have worked in the Security field for over thirty years (I still do today what the Army trained me to do some 30+ years ago, how cool is that?). When I graduated from high school my plan was to be a nurse. After 2 years of nursing school and several years working in a hospital I realized that nursing was not my calling. Having spent my college fund on a profession that while one of the most admirable and underrated professions ever, it was not for me. (Thanks to all the nurses out there that take care of us, you all have special souls).

I am lucky to have an interesting and demanding job that unfortunately requires a lot of travel so a big shout out to all the Masters programs that allow drop-ins as your programs have allowed me to keep a somewhat normal training schedule when travelling. My life is totally busy but I wouldn't have it any other way (most days anyway). Am I doing what I thought I would be doing at this point in my life? I am not doing what I thought I would be doing at this time in my life but I am doing what I was meant to do.

I am a pre title IV woman so there were not very many sports for young girls to play when I was growing up. When I was about 10 years old, during summer break, I went home one night and asked my Dad if I could join the swim team. My brothers and sisters and I would be at the pool when it opened and would have to leave at 5 p.m. when swim team practice started. I loved the water and didn't want to get out so after thinking about it for a few days my Dad let me join the swim team.

My Dad is a true hero; he had six (6) kids aged 9 months to twelve years when my Mom died in 1961. If you think back to 1961, not many men raised families; most times if a mother died the children would go to relatives or an orphanage as men went to work and earned the money. My Dad kept and raised 6 kids, how great is he? He also supported me through many years of swimming and swim meets (he actually came to Short Course Nationals in Austin in 2006, 45 years later and he still came to my swim meet). When I first joined the swim team I was not very good but I had a wonderful coach who saw potential in me and felt my love of the water. He taught me technique and provided additional pool time and training and under his tutelage I

became a pretty good swimmer. I competed in YMCA and AAU swimming and was a State Champion and National level competitor until a car accident at 16 put an end (or at least I thought so) to the swimming chapter of my life. Through swimming I was able to travel throughout the US for various competitions and I learned many life skills along the way and believe to this day I would not have (or be) the same character if I had not been a swimmer.

I started playing softball in the military and fell in love with the sport and actively played until a life-threatening illness required that I stop playing any type of contact sport. One of my kid sisters had told me about Masters swimming over the years and I always meant to join but never quite made it. When I hit my 40's I started gaining weight, a little bit at a time and before I knew it I weighed 330 pounds and never saw it coming.

I saw a picture that my husband had hung on a hallway wall of him and a woman and I was like "who is that and where were you then". He said: "you goofball it's you at last year's Holiday party", I could not believe it. That picture has been hidden in a drawer until I agreed to write this article and I am attaching it (never saw that coming either but I didn't burn it so maybe I knew one day I would use it). I don't think anyone plans to be obese; I know in my case, it just kind of happened gradually over a 6-8 year period. Health issues contributed but in retrospect I think I just didn't realize how much weight I was gaining and that I could no longer eat anything I wanted anytime (what a bummer). A life threatening illness (not weight related) in 2000 got me back in the water.



When you are really ill or dying and reviewing your life your mind thinks in strange ways. I felt good about my faith and good about my family and like the Jimmy Buffet song "some of it's magic, some of it's tragic but I had a good life all the way". My one regret was that I never joined Masters swimming. So when I recovered, I had one good lung and one lung severely damaged by scar tissue from blood clots. When I was cleared to start strenuous activity, I joined a local Masters program. The same week I joined another woman joined that had been a tennis player but her knees would no longer allow her to play tennis. Her Dr. told her about his local Masters program and we both joined on the same day. We would swim one 25, talk for 10 minutes and then try another, we became very close very quickly as we spent a lot of time on the wall chatting (she is now a National and World Champion who supported me during my weight loss journey-thanks Janie).

The weight loss challenge was complicated because I am not supposed to eat any green vegetables (vitamin K is a natural clotter). I will have to take Coumadin (blood thinner) for life but it's a small trade off as it keeps me alive. None of our training partners ever said anything about my weight; they just encouraged me to keep swimming and to keep trying to lose weight. My first Masters swim meet was at SMU and I had a partially torn Achilles tendon (no fins for me) and was in a boot cast to walk to the block, had to start from the water and no flip turns (which were not easy for me anyway as I had a couple too many layers of stomach) and when I finished my 200 free (well behind everyone else, in fact they were all out of the water) everyone stood up and applauded. I didn't realize it was for me at first but even though it was somewhat embarrassing it did let me know that these were people who would not judge me but would encourage me and you all have for several years. The faces change but the positive attitude and willingness to share stories and helpful information are always there. With swimming, walking and counting everything I put in my mouth. I have lost 160 pounds since I joined Masters and only have 10 pounds to go to reach my goal weight.

I usually compete in at least two (2) National pool championships a year and I try to do all of the Postal Events. My biggest challenge is that after an almost 30 year break from the sport, I'm like Peter Pan who forgot how to fly; I have forgotten how to race. I battle panic attacks before each event (all suggestions, ideas, recommendations are welcome) and have yet to swim as fast in a meet as I do in practice (I know, its nuts and very frustrating).

Swimming is a hobby that enables me to be more effective in my profession, when I am swimming I am able to think more clearly and that makes me better in my professional life. I try to practice 5-6 times a week, every day if I am feeling great and nothing hurts.

In the summer I practice at the local City outdoor pool which was built in the 1950's but is 50 meters x 25 yards so I am lucky to have a long course pool to train in (there are no lines on the bottom, no lane lines, and after one 50 fly it is like swimming in white caps but I figure it's good training). The City gave me my own key so I am able to train pretty much when I want which is normally 5-630 a.m. Their one rule was that I do not swim alone so my wonderful husband gets up when I shake him (sometimes harder than others) and say it's time to go. If I wake up at 4 a.m. and cannot get back to sleep I just wake him up and tell him it's time to go so I may get a 2 hour swim in a couple times a week (don't tell him).

He chills out in a chaise and "rests" until I am finished with my workout. This is a really sweet deal for me as in the winter I drive 38 miles one way to the indoor pool. While it is a lot of miles, I live in the middle of nowhere and it is a beautiful drive and it probably takes me less time than some who live in major cities. I like to hit 4,000 yards or meters per practice but that is often contingent on my work schedule (early meetings, late meetings, travel, and stuff like that). Unfortunately I swim alone as there is no Masters team near me (closest team is 2 hours away) but in the winter there are other people in the facility so I sometimes get to visit in the locker room.

My favorite stroke is free, my favorite distance right now is the mile but as the weight comes off I am finding my shorter distances feel better. I also love butterfly but am only able to do a 50-100 right now due to neck surgery last October (but I'll get back to the 200, I love that about swimming, if you do the training you can do anything). I want to try open water sometime but don't really know how to get in to it (and am a little afraid of creepy crawly stuff) but I can swim for hours on the same pace so I think I would like open water. Swimming is a major part of my life and I intend to swim for the rest of my life as I now realize how much I missed my sport. I find peace in swimming and am a firm believer in "healing waters".

I am married to Chuck and have one child, Corey who is currently serving overseas as an Air Traffic Controller in the US Army. He is one of the kindest young men you will ever meet and I feel very blessed and proud to have him as my son. We are a blended family and Chuck has two grown daughters who are beautiful, kind and sweet and we blend well. Corey is married and I have a wonderful daughter in law, Dawn, who plays roller derby, which if you have never seen in person, is a pretty tough sport and you must be a really great skater (her roller derby name is Death by Dawn, you just have to love it).

I am very thankful for those who had the vision to start GTD. I do GTD because it is so helpful in keeping track of my mileage and there is no pressure and so many incredible people with incredible stories that are supportive and cool. There are some days when I just want to turn off the alarm and sleep for 2 more hours, GTD gets me out of the bed and off to the pool to train and I love to train. The new FLOG is awesome as it allows you to track your other activities (for me walking, Pilates and yoga) too. My goal for 2009 is 800 miles and luckily my Company shuts down for the December Holiday season so I am able to get more time in the pool.

Something fun to know about me, I think it's pretty cool is that I was one of the first female counterintelligence agents in the Army.

My hobbies include teaching kids how to swim and working with young swimmers on technique or providing them opportunities to enjoy our sport. I have coached swimming on and off for most of my adult life to try to give something back to the sport that has given me so much. I also love to read and walk (not at the same time of course).



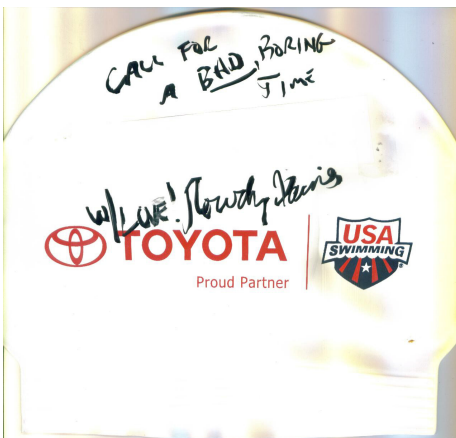
My favorite swim story has to be from Short Course Nationals in Coral Gables in 2006.

When I transferred with my Company to rural America in January 2006 I found myself without a team. I knew before I moved that I would have to train alone and figured I would swim unattached. I had met some great people (now great friends) from Masters of South Texas (MOST) at various meets and they invited me to join their team. Their Coach (Susan Ingraham, Coach of the Year in 2008) was kind enough to “adopt” me so I would

have the opportunity to swim relays (thanks again to Susan and all my MOST teammates-relays are the best). We were getting ready to swim a 200 yard free relay and I asked one of my relay mates how long you are supposed to kick in a 50 free. She looked at me in disbelief (she’s a sprinter) and said the whole 50 and I looked at her in disbelief and said you’re kidding, right? She said no and you better kick the whole 50. Well I kicked the whole 50 and after my relay mates helped me out of the pool (I had no legs) they told me how proud they were of me and it felt wonderful. Once the splits were posted we were all surprised (me the most) that I had split a 29.98 (hey, it’s under 30, barely), who knew that kicking would make such a difference (all the sprinters knew-I am a true 2 beat kicker). I still take a ribbing every time we are at a meet and I love it.

Kathy and Dara (after Kathy’s first 100 pounds were gone!)

My most amusing swim story is from LC Nationals in Mission Viejo. Toyota had sponsored a free clinic with Rowdy Gaines and Dara Torres (with Brian Goodell as a bonus). After the clinic they were signing autographs and taking pictures (they are all so gracious and such great ambassadors for our sport). When Rowdy started to sign my cap he got in to a conversation with someone else and was asking them to tape Gary Hall, Jr.’s 50 fly the next day.



Rowdy was giving the guy his phone number so I said “hey, will you write that on my cap” and he did so then I said “hey, would you write: “for a good time call” and he just smiled and wrote “call for a bad, boring time, then his number and he signed it “w/love Rowdy Gaines (again, how cool is that?).

I had to ask my Husband what 3 adjectives best described me and he said, dedicated, driven and focused (most of the time). I hope my friends (and I am blessed to have many) would say that I am fun, a motivator and maybe just a little bit crazy. I know this is long and for those of you that read the whole thing here is my life motto: Always look for the upside and you will surely find it.

Meet the GTD Swimmer Sean George (35-39 age group)

Here is the story of a triathlete – someone who likes open water, as well as bike riding and running. Sean aspires to swimming some really big swims – read on!

I am currently an elementary school librarian (beginning my 5th year), having been a youth services librarian in public libraries for nine years before that, and one year as a 5th grade classroom teacher. I am happily married, and have been for the past 11 years, with a variety of children: a 22-year-old stepson, a 20-year-old stepdaughter, the vibrant memory of my own firstborn son (who was born with Trisomy 13, and died at seven weeks old), and an energetic 8-year-old son finishing off the lineup. In addition to work and family, I am active in my church (United Methodist) and in my traditional Muscogee/Choctaw (American Indian) culture. So yes, life is very busy, even before adding exercise into the equation.



I have always been a swimmer: Dad was a water safety instructor in the Navy; I was on YMCA swim teams from "6 & under" through middle school; I was recruited to the high school swim team because they needed someone who could finish the 1500m event; and I worked as a waterfront lifeguard at Boy Scout summer camp. Although I was better than average, and consistently set personal records, I was never especially fast in competition. So I did not swim competitively at the collegiate level, and pretty much just "played in the water" during my 20s and early 30s.

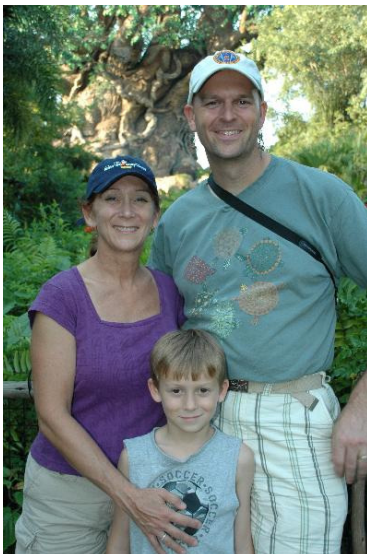


In 2006, a close friend of mine told me about his first experience in a sprint triathlon, and how much he had enjoyed it. Having always been more of an individual event athlete than a team sport player, I thought triathlon would be a good way for me to get back into an exercise habit, knowing that I would have a swimming advantage over many people entering that sport. I started training in January 2007, weighing in at 228 lbs. but, despite dropping to 190 lbs., I never reached the starting line of my first triathlon that year due to an August cycling accident that completely separated my shoulder from my clavicle. So after 4+ months of recuperation, I started running and cycling again in January 2008, then got back in the pool in May of that year. I joined USMS in November 2008, because I decided I wanted to do open water swim events in addition to triathlons, and most of those require USMS membership.

Prior to joining Masters, I was only swimming in the summer months, when our neighborhood pool was open and/or the nearby lake was nice and warm. The local Masters group I joined however, DAMA (Durham Area Masters Aquatics), practices at an indoor pool, which really increased my opportunity to swim from mid-autumn through mid-spring. I also continued to swim at the lake into mid-November of 2008, to test my tolerance for the colder open water events (one of the Alcatraz crossings is definitely an aspiration-- hopefully in 2010).

I generally try to balance my training equally between swimming, cycling and running, doing 2-3 of each workout per week, but sometimes favor one of the three more heavily if I have a particular event approaching. From November through March, I swam pretty consistently with DAMA one or two nights a week plus Saturdays. The weeknight workouts generally run about 90 minutes, and Saturdays usually 2 hours. Our coach, Andrea Stephens, is really good about mixing things up and keeping it interesting. She writes them to be about 5000-6000 yards, for the "bigger fish" in the pool, but I usually only finished 3000-4000 yards of any given workout. Since May, I have mainly been swimming solo at the neighborhood pool (for convenience) and the lake (for open water training). My solo pool workouts usually run 30-60 minutes, depending on my schedule, and range from 1800-3600 yards. Lake swims are usually 30-45 minutes, covering 1-1.5 miles (often I bike to and from the lake, @ 25 miles each way).

Although 70-75% of my swimming is freestyle, I really enjoy backstroke and breaststroke, and I consistently include both in my workouts for variety. Actually I have a strong breaststroke and use it effectively in open water events for difficult sighting situations and negotiating crowded starts. I also really enjoy doing IMs (100 yd), but the butterfly pretty much wipes me out, so I usually only do one set of four per workout. So far my longest continuous swim was 10000 yards in a short-course pool on New Year's Day this year, with several of my DAMA teammates. I have not done any pool competitions since high school-- all of my timed swimming events since 2007 have been open water (swim-only or triathlon). I'm not especially fast, but I do think I have good endurance and a pretty comfortable stroke, both of which make for decent finishes in long distance events (with plenty of gas left in the tank for the cycling and running legs of a tri). I swam the first leg (@1 mile) of an Olympic-distance tri in 32:36 (April), and a 1-mile swim only event in 32:56 (June).



In addition to my Alcatraz goal (hopefully the round-trip swim), I would really like to do the Big Shoulders swim in Chicago some day, and the Swim Around Key West in a few years. Having joined USMS in November of 2008, I did not hear about GTD until January of this year, and have really enjoyed participating. I log all of my workouts (swimming, cycling and running) anyway, so it's nice to send in the stats each month and see everyone's results. Although I only swam about 60 miles total in 2008, the indoor pool Masters practices have added several more months to my swimming calendar, leading me to set a goal of 120 miles for 2009. I'm currently at 86 miles, so I

will probably overshoot my goal. Ironically, since I don't like to cycle in any weather below 50 degrees, I actually swim more indoors from November through March than I do outdoors in the summer.

Meet GTD swimmer Carrie Kostopulos-Doebler (35-39 age group)

Meet a long-distance swimmer who absolutely loves the water (including very cold outdoor water), and who is – by her own admission – a prankster.



In October of last year I was happily married to a wonderful soccer player named Thomas. (Our cake toppers were featured on the GTD page because the groom was a soccer piece and the bride had flippers on her feet and goggles on her head).



We have a 20-week-old puppy named Ruger and hope to start a family soon. I'm a defense instructor who specializes in working with children and women. I also teach multiple-assailant defense.

My real joy is working with special needs individuals in and out of the water. I learn so much from them and when they accomplish a goal it is the greatest feeling knowing that I have helped them achieve it.

Swimming has ALWAYS been a huge part of my life. My mom started taking me to the pool when I was only 1 month old and rumor has it I swam before I was walking. (6 months old to be exact). At the age of 5 my parents started me on private swim teams. Swimming continued on into high school and it has never stopped.

I've coached swimming throughout my lifetime. I continue to coach privately. This allows me to give one on one time to my client, which I feel is extremely important when working with children or a special needs individual. I have also assisted one of my old Coaches in his Total Immersion training Clinics and hope to some day become certified as a T.I. Instructor.

I have competed at many levels and I love it. I'm one who will set a personal goal and push myself to my extreme limit. My coaches get on my case because sometimes I don't know when to slow down and take a rest and I end up with an injury or sick.

I used to swim one to two miles in Lake Michigan every morning (NO wetsuit/ I love cold water!) Followed by swim practice. I would swim again in the afternoon for about 2 hours working on stroke drills during distance sets. In the evening I would go back to the pool and work on nice long smooth strokes usually a one-hour swim nonstop. However, in an attempt to avoid a painful surgery due a third degree shoulder separation I have been forced to limit my swimming way beyond what I like. Therefore, my workouts at this time consist of a lot of kicking and one arm stroke drills.

I love TOTAL IMMERSION all the way baby! I'm a long distance swimmer who does not sleep well at night. When I swim distance using the "T.I" method, I become one with the water. Each stroke is so effortless and the longer I swim, the more relaxed I become. I often feel as though I fall asleep in the water. It is here where my body finds it place to rest.



I first started the GTD challenge as a way to push myself that extra mile. After being a part of the GTD gang I have learned that it is much more than that. I find that this challenge has brought a great number of us swimmers together to motivate each other through our ups and our downs. It has allowed us to learn so many things from each other.

For me the most valuable thing about this challenge is that it really shows that we are all equal. It does not matter how long someone has been swimming or what their age is, their background is, their swimming ability is, what it does show is that we are all one working together to improve the love for swimming and we will always provide open arms to anyone wanting join our gang.

I also am a fundraiser and I raise money for victims of violent crimes and for the families of officers who have lost their lives in the line on duty. I vow to swim so many miles and then my teammates and friends sponsor me. The GTD challenge has helped motivate me to swim those extra miles. THANK YOU!

A funny story dealing with swimming happened when my husband & I were in the Pacific Ocean. (He is not a strong swimmer so he wades in the shallow end.) I swam under water behind him and gently bit him on his side. He jumped up yelling. "I got bit!!" The look on his face was makes me giggle to this day. It took him a while but he laughs about it now.

My swim coaches describe me as unrelentless, optimistic, and loyal. I'm known to motivate my teammates often. My friends would say that I'm a prankster- I love to play tricks on them - and that I extremely competitive when we play games. (I may or may not do the famous "I WIN" dance when I win.)

Something most people don't know about me: I also write poetry, study philosophy and love to read and study quantum physics.