

Husson Family Team at Nationals

By Bob Husson

It started as a casual conversation at a family Christmas celebration in Columbia, MD. The USMS 2014 Summer Nationals were being held in College Park, and with a number of competitive swimmers, ex-swimmers, and recreational swimmers in the family, it might be fun to put together a family team. Since there was only one registered USMS swimmer at the time, it didn't seem like the idea would get much traction.



But this is a family that likes to do things together (especially eating and drinking) and one daughter/niece would be having her annual crab feast that same weekend. So there it was in the meet program, Husson Family Team, North Carolina's newest, with seven team members from North Carolina, New Jersey, Maryland, and Illinois. The name wasn't new as some other cousins had joined this group in raising funds for the Alzheimer's Association in 2013 using the same name for the Longest Day campaign.

This was a diverse group in terms of swimming experience. Big brother Bob had begun swimming in 1955 at the York PA YMCA and had been swimming Masters off and on since 1972, when he attended the first DC area Masters meet at the old Fun and Fitness in Arlington, VA. His wife Susan, whom he met at the first Columbia, MD Masters meet in 1973, had been a founding member of the Ohio State Women's Swimming Team.

Sister Pat Atkins is a faithful lap swimmer who was the only sibling to have never swum a race. Sister Sue Swedler competed in Masters a number of years ago but followed her children into triathlons, and, eventually, the Boston Marathon. Brother Tim competed as an age-grouper, ran track in high school, and returned to swimming at Manhattan College. He had swum a few Masters Meets about 20 years ago but has found his niche as an in-demand meet official locally, regionally, and nationally. He did double duty at the meet: swimming and officiating.

Sister Ann Osborne had competed from age five, but never made it to her teens. This group had gotten together with a large family contingent for a June reunion timed for the mainland visit of the sixth sibling, Marie Wagner, who couldn't time her visit to coincide with the meet. All this excited talk drew in the last member of the team, Pat's daughter Jennifer Atkins, a former Senior Nationals qualifier at UMBC, who registered with the team and for the meet at pretty much the last minute.



During that June gathering, the four ladies who would form two 240+ In-Law relays found matching suits and then the talk turned to team shirts. While this discussion was taking place, daughter/niece Theresa Osborne was sitting nearby working with a pencil and sketch pad. She was immediately drafted as team designer and you can see the result. Sharpie on latex blanks would provide caps, which completed the look.

The meet was a blast! Some team members can remember the early days, when nationals took all day and most of the night. This was an amazingly well-run meet in a fabulous venue. Old

friends from long ago got lots of hugs and new friends were made. While Pat, Susan, and Ann only competed in relays, the rest of the family took their shots at various individual events, including a lot of Breaststroke, which had always been the main stroke for the siblings. Jennifer, having not received that gene, competed in Backstroke and Butterfly while carrying her baby due in November.

Cheered on by several family members, everyone got at least one medal and all of Tim's officiating friends were ecstatic when he came through in the final event of the meet. These were some of the same officials who tried to DQ him in his first event for "excess splash on entry." This may be the only time the Husson Family Team ever competes as a group, as Bob will return to the TRYM workout group of NCMS and Sue will search for a local team in the Chicago suburbs as she retires from marathons and does more swimming. As for the rest, it's hard to tell? Someone mentioned we should do this again in twenty years, so you never know.