

# Swimmer Spotlight

**Jan D. Hildebrandt**

Age: 60

Occupation: Retired from 3M

Local Team: Superior Athletic Club; Medford, OR

— submitted by Karen Andrus-Hughes

It seems like water sports, and especially swimming, have always been a part of my life, due to starting swimming competitively at 4 years old. Apparently, while taking swimming lessons at the local YWCA in Little Rock, Arkansas, the coach at the time, Mary Lou Jaworski (later Director of the Little Rock YWCA) asked my mother if she would be interested in allowing me to compete, and that was the start. Recalling my first 20 yard free event and my first “participation” medal still makes me wonder if I really won it for a placement, or was it just participation? I loved the swimming and especially the competition. We swam AAU all year around, so there was always a meet to go to, new cities to visit, friends to see again from other teams, and general all around good times.

A couple of highlights of swimming as a child were winning gold in five events in the Philips 66 Invitational in Tulsa, Oklahoma, when I was 10, and swimming on a relay with eventual Olympic gold medalist Keena Rothhammer in the 8 and under age group at the Y (before she moved to California to further her swimming ambitions.)

I continued to swim through high school and then helped

start the women’s swimming team at Vanderbilt University, serving as the first team captain. Women’s sports scholarships were also developed during this time, and I was the proud recipient of a partial scholarship for swimming and diving (which I started doing in college under the direction of the men’s diving coach, Joe Suriano.) Even though diving took the majority of my training time, I still was able to swim a few sprints and relays.

Life and family happened after college, for I started working as an electrical engineer and eventually in new business development leadership roles with several companies, ending at 3M for the majority of my career. No swimming for 37 years with family commitments and work.



*Jan Hildebrandt at the Roman baths in Bath, England.*

With retirement on my horizon 3 ½ years ago, and our 4 children out of college and supporting themselves, I elected to have a full knee replacement (due to a college injury) after which it was logical to start swimming again as a method to rehabilitate my knee. One thing led to another, and my husband, Larry, who is also a swimmer, suggested that I might be able to compete again with Masters Swimming. With his support and diligent coaching, attending this year’s Long Course Nationals in Minnesota was a highlight. As we had lived in St. Paul, Minnesota for many years with my work at 3M, it was a great opportunity to swim and see old friends. And, as a surprise, I reconnected with 2 swimmers whom I knew in Little Rock, Arkansas, when swimming as a child: Trip Strauss and Doug Martin. Swimming on the Oregon

Women’s A medley relay was an extra special surprise since we took home the gold. I have to thank our Oregon team coach, Matt Miller for convincing me to swim with the Oregon team and for making the meet memorable in so many ways.