

GEORGE HAINES, SANTA CLARA'S SWIM MAESTRO, DEAD AT 82

Competitor, Educator, Coach, Patriot

March 9, 1924–May 1, 2006

Cecil Colwin

The World of Swimming is mourning Coach George Frederick Haines, foremost producer of Olympic Champions in the history of competitive swimming. George Haines passed away in his sleep early on the morning of May 1, 2006, in Carmichael, California, four years after suffering the aftermath of a severe stroke.

Between 1960 and 1988, George Haines, coaching maestro of California's mighty Santa Clara Swim Team, produced a total of 53 Olympic swimmers who won 44 gold medals, 14 silver, and 10 bronze medals. Enshrined with Haines in the International Swimming Hall of Fame are 15 Santa Clara Club swimmers, more than from any other club.

George Haines was three times Head Coach of the United States Olympic swimming team, and served on the support staff of four other Olympic squads. He was Head Coach of the United States team to the World Championships in West Berlin, 1978, a team considered the most successful in United States swimming history in terms of medals won.

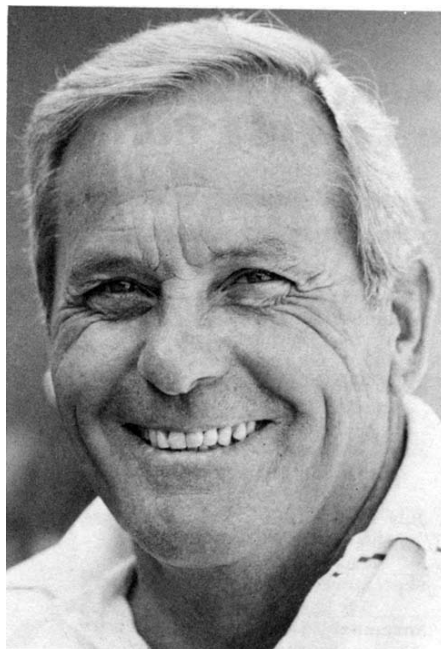
A Modest, Self-Effacing, and Beloved Mentor

George Haines was one of history's great swimming coaches, and one of the most charismatic, inspiring, and beloved mentors to tread a pool deck. His chief attributes were a vast knowledge of the sport, a shrewd strategic sense, and an uncanny ability to motivate and produce both male and female champions.

The handsome George Haines will always be remembered as a striking and genial man of unusual presence and ability, the type of person who stood out in any group, and above all, as a coach who cared. A man of high principles and strong moral fibre, Haines liked people, and people liked him too. It was not surprising that he attracted swimmers from every point of the compass. Not only did he draw them in, but he made many of them great.

Among his colleagues, Haines was a popular, entertaining, and beguiling raconteur with a wonderful sense of humour. To hear him talk about "impact people" was something to remember. Not for him were self-aggrandizement, pontificating, or the customary technical buzz-words. Without drawing attention to himself, George Haines spoke with the natural quiet authority of a great intuitive coach who had done it all.

Haines' stories, told in the flat, flinty tones of his native mid-West, were tinged with wry humour and a sharp eye for human foibles. Haines talked about other great coaches, great swimmers, their achievements, and the lessons he learned from them, yet he never personally sought the limelight, remaining modest and self-effacing about his own



The George Haines we knew and admired

swimmers' successes, always giving his teams full credit for their achievements.

Throughout a 50-year career, Haines took the pressures of top-level coaching in his stride, remaining relaxed, outgoing, good-natured, and free of hang-ups. While Haines kept firm discipline in his teams, he never lost his sense of humour.

His swimmers too were relaxed and confident, just like their charismatic coach. The team T-shirt sported one of the cleverest slogans ever seen at a swimming meet. It said a lot in two words: "By George!" It also meant "best in the world."

It was commonplace to see a Santa Clara swimmer step to the starting block, look over at George, and give a wink. George would smile and wink back. Then the race would start, and yet another "By George" product was on the way to a championship medal, or perhaps another world record.

Haines Founded a Dynasty

George Haines was born to coach. His career took off in December 1950, when he founded the Santa Clara Swim Club, a team destined to achieve a spectacular record, winning 44 Senior National titles.

The Santa Clara Swim Club first competed in meets in the summer of 1951. The team started with only 13 swimmers, but ended the summer season with 54 age group swimmers.

Santa Clara's first major title came when winning the 1957 Women's Short Course National Championships at Hollywood High School. Thus was born the George Haines Dynasty, and from here the young coaching maestro took his club to a plethora of National Titles.

Within the next three years, the Santa Clara Swim Club had impacted the world scene with such stars as Chris von Saltza, Lynne Burke, Anne Warner, Steve Clark, Donna de Varona, George Harrison, and Paul Hait, all of whom made the 1960 Olympic Team to the Rome Olympics.

The addition of Don Schollander and Mark Spitz during the 1960s further strengthened the men's team while Claudia Kolb headed the powerful girls' team. Pokey Watson, a fast improving Donna de Varona, Sharon Finneran, and Terri Stickles, and many others gave Santa Clara great depth. Never before was such an array of great stars assembled in one club.

What Makes George Tick?

In 1966, at a national championship meet in Lincoln, Nebraska, I quizzed Don Schollander, former Olympic champion, and one of Haines' greatest proteges, on the subject of his coaches' psychological approach. His response was, "George Haines, in my opinion, is the best all-round coach, at least in the United States. George does something that all the other coaches don't do nearly as well—that is a sort of father-companion to his swimmers. He knows each swimmer so well—it's almost a natural thing—that he can work with them individually as well as in his large team as a whole.

This knowing each individual so well is, I think, Haines' forte in being able to work with them."

At the same meet, I asked Donna de Varona, another of Haines' Olympic champions, "What makes George tick?" She replied, "Despite his large squad he knew how to handle the individual swimmer. His training sessions were fun and we never did the same workout twice. He knew when to make us swim hard and when to swim easily."

It was during these "easy" swimming periods that Haines would perform his spontaneous pool-side high-jinks, such as an accomplished soft shoe shuffle, or his favourite trick of chair-flipping, in which he tossed a chair into space on the tip of his toe, then caught it again on his foot and lowered it back to the floor.

On other occasions, he suddenly demonstrated his own athletic ability by hurdling over a line of small deck chairs. His workouts were always fun, whether he was challenging or entertaining the team.

The Santa Clara Swim Club

With over 240 swimmers on the roster, ranging from 5–6 years old through to a senior group with the oldest swimmers about 22–23 years old, George Haines was one of the pioneers of the large super-club. Together with two assistant coaches, Haines would take teams of about 40 swimmers to national championships. Haines always acknowledged the work of the Club's active Parents' Association, saying they did "a fantastic job" over the years in raising money in support of team travel and the club's general operation.

Organizational Gifts

Haines was highly skilled in organizing practices, training 55–60 swimmers in the 50-m Santa Clara pool, using circle formation training to make best use of space. His swimmers trained using mostly 50 s, 100s, 200s, and 400s repeat swims over even distances, so that the swimmers could start from opposite ends of the pool, using the newly developed circle training method. Huge training clocks were placed at either ends of the pool enabling his swimmers to time everything they did, and even to time the total workout. In this way, Haines ensured that his swimmers knew exactly what they were doing, whether they were swimming, kicking, or pulling.

Quality Training Produced Quality Swimmers

While George Haines believed in providing a strong background of early season endurance training, he was one of the first coaches to concentrate on training swimmers for the pace of the race. Most of his training was done with quality-type swimming where he gave the swimmers a slightly longer

HISTORY AND COACHING CAREER

Swimming Coach of the 20th Century

Born - March 9th, 1924 in Huntington, Indiana. Swam for the Huntington YMCA under Coach Glen S. Hummer from the age of 9 through 21. A member of two National YMCA Championship Teams under Mr. Hummer.

Military service - U.S. Coast Guard 1942–46. Taught survival training, 1943–1945.

College - San Jose State - Graduated in spring of 1950. Swam for three years.

COACHING CAREER

1950-1974 Santa Clara High School

Won 20 SCVAL League Championships. Won 215 straight dual meets. A record W-284 L-4 Won 16 North Coast Championships.

The Santa Clara High School Swimming Team (boys) held every National High School record in every stroke and distance including relays in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

George Haines produced 300 High School All Americans who set over 200 National High School Records.

In the late 1960s, *Swimming World* magazine said that the Santa Clara High School Swimming Team was capable of placing in the top five at the NCAA Championships.

Santa Clara High School Olympians: Don Schollander, Joe Bottom, Mike Bottom, Wayne Anderson, Donna de Varona, Terri Stickle, Claudia Kolb, Judy Reeder, Mark Spitz, and Mitch Ivey

A total of 53 Swimmers coached by George Haines swam in the Olympic Games 1960 through 1988.

1974-1978 UCLA Head Men's Swim Coach

1979 Foxcatcher Swim Club

1980-81 De Anza Swim Club

1982-1988 Stanford University Head Women's Swim Coach.

1988 George Haines retired from coaching.

rest, and asked for better times, saying that "we train most of the time in a slight state of fatigue because if you don't, you are never going to build up a resistance to fatigue and oxygen debt." Haines said that, two or three weeks before the nationals, swimmers should do "a lot more fast swims starting from a dive, at or near the pace they were aiming for in the championship."

Early Influences

During his successful career, George Haines witnessed

over 50 years of modern swimming history, and was often an important part of it. The Haines saga started in Huntington, in northeast central Indiana, where George was born on March 9, 1924, the son of George Fremont Haines and Frances Mae Mow.

George Haines was a direct descendent of pioneer settlers, Richard and Margaret Haines of Anyhoe of ye Hill, North Hampshire, England, who set sail with their children on the ship "Amity" from Downs, England and arrived in America in 1682, where they settled in Burlington, New Jersey.

George Haines is survived by his brothers Richard, Schuyler, and Edward, all of Indiana, and a sister, Eva Ervin of Arizona. Haines is predeceased by a brother, William, and sisters, Clara Bir and Esther Patten.

"A Beautiful Redhead, Strong and Sure!"

On July 20, 1945, in Oakland, California, George Haines married June Elizabeth Carter, a lady whom George described through the years as "a beautiful redhead, strong and sure!" Their partnership was to last 61 years. They had four daughters: Kerry Derr (Walter), Janice Canfield (Robert), Jody Baer, Paula Baldwin (Randy), and one son, George Kyle Haines. They had nine grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Mrs Kerry Derr, Haines' eldest daughter, said "Mom is a beautiful California native. She was his 'rock' throughout his life, and was at his side daily in the four years after he suffered a stroke. She remains a wife and mother to emulate.

"They were a handsome couple. She met my Dad during World War II, at a USO gathering in Oakland where he was stationed with the Coast Guard in Alameda, Treasure Island. She has copper red hair, and as she left the USO building my Dad approached her and called her "Red," and she turned around and smacked him in the arm and asked "Who are you calling Red?" She is an independent woman who, like Dad, has a strong set of convictions. With her, giving up was not an option. She helped him stay the course. She took care of the house, raised five kids, and handled their finances."

A Sporting Family

George and June Haines encouraged their children to participate in sport. *Kerry Haines Derr* was a member of the National Championship teams during 1961–1964, and a member of the gold medal 4x100 free relay team with Terri Stickle, Pokey Watson, and Donna de Varona. She represented the US on a 30-day-long trip to Japan in 1961 with Donna de Varona, Dick Roth, and Tom Jamison, competing in various venues around Japan. *Janice Haines Canfield* competed in tennis in high school and at UCLA. *Joanne (Jochy) Haines Baer* competed



Sprinter Haines at San Jose State in 1950

in gymnastics in high school and at college at Long Beach State. Following in her father's footsteps, she had a coaching career in gymnastics for many years. *Paula Haines Baldwin* was an all-city tennis player in high school. Kyle Haines wrestled and competed in track in high school, running the 200

After retiring, George Haines played senior softball several times a week, and coached, managed, and played third base on the 65-year-olds' team that won the Senior Softball World Series in West Palm Beach. He was an avid golfer in retirement, playing three times a week into his 70s, and had just started coaching his then 12-year-old twin grandsons, Brent and Clint Baer, to play golf when he became incapacitated.

The Influence of Coach Glen Hummer

Records at the Huntington YMCA show that a Haines has been a member of the "Y" since 1932, and this is where George and his brothers became interested in swimming, under the spell of coach Glenn Hummer, coach-mentor at the local Y.M.C.A. who was also the high-school biology teacher.

In the 1940s, George Haines was a member of the Huntington YMCA swim team that Hummer coached to

two YMCA National Championships. Glen Hummer was to become the major factor in developing the young George Haines' interest in competitive swimming, and in the shaping of his character. Hummer's friendship and guidance continued as he assumed a mentor role for George when he began his competitive coaching career in the 1950s.

Even before he became a swimming coach, Haines learned the value of a good early distance background, because Glen Hummer first trained him to be a 1500 swimmer. (Haines was later to become the conference champion

in the 50 freestyle at San Jose State College in California, a big drop from swimming the 1500!)

When Hummer died, Haines said: "He was a great, great man. His techniques were ahead of the

time. I felt his loss as if an arm had been cut off."

War Service

In World War II, George Haines enlisted in the US Coast Guard, on December 12, 1942, at the age of 18. For two years, Haines taught swimming survival skills at the Crystal Plunge pool in San Francisco to Marines and Merchant Marines going overseas. He later served on the USS Casper, which sailed out under the Golden Gate Bridge exactly when World War II ended, hearing shouts from the wharf-side crowds that the war was over! He received his honorable discharge on February 12, 1946.

Demobilized from the Coast Guard, Haines attended college on the GI bill, graduating from San Jose State University in 1950 with a Bachelors Degree and a teaching certificate. He later earned an additional certificate in Administration.

A Natural Coach

Dr Charles Walker, Haines' swimming coach at San Jose State University, was a big influence in Haines' choice of swimming coaching as a career. He advised Haines to accept a teaching post at Santa Clara High School in 1950, where he was to teach physical education, and coach football and swimming for the next 24 years.

It did not take the school authorities long to see that the young George Haines' coaching skills were not limited to the swimming pool, and they asked him to coach their light weight football teams. During the 1950s and 1960s, his football teams remained undefeated for seven years.

"The Greatest of the Great"

When the high school completed its pools in 1951, George Haines started his first swim team with nine members. Before long, his high school boys' swim team became the team to beat, both locally and nationally. At one time, his high school swimmers owned the national record in every event.

The Santa Clara Swim Club grew out of the original nine high school swimmers to become one of the most prominent and successful teams in the United States and the world. Santa Clara became the swimming mecca and the Santa Clara Invitational Meet one of the most important meets on the annual calendar.

The Santa Clara Pool was recently renamed The George F. Haines Swimming Pool, and a statue of the famous mentor serves to remind all swimmers and visitors that here is the place where one of the Greatest of the Great worked his magic. ■



George Haines in his 70s