

Meet GTD Swimmer Dan Slick (60-64 age group)

Dan is a swimming artist and someone who likes open water swimming vs. pool swimming. Read about his two swimming careers – do you see something of yourself in his story? Definitely check out the “Complaining Duck”!

My name is Dan Slick; I’m 60 years old. I live in Madison, Wisconsin. I have a wife and two grown daughters, all of whom are glad that I swim and don’t care a bit about swimming themselves. I have two grandchildren, and one loves the water.

I am an artist and elementary school art teacher. I am known locally as the resident painter at a couple of neighborhood festivals, and among masters’ swimmers as the guy who creates the awards for the Madison Open Water Swim each year. For the past several years I’ve worked mostly in ceramics, making sculptures of people, boats, absurd ducks, and combinations thereof. What can I say about teaching? For me as a person and as an artist, the process of discovery is at the heart of everything, so being around elementary kids, seeing them, leading them through that process is very exciting.



My life as a swimmer began at 8 with the Levittown Swimming Association summer program on Long Island, NY. I still carry around in my head an image of our coach’s beautiful freestyle stroke. Later on, my family moved out to Brentwood, L.I. where I did my high school swimming, and after graduation I went to college to study art at the University of Washington and walked on to swim team. I stayed with that for three years. My first swim career lasted 12 years.

My second swim career began at age 50 when I was recruited for masters swimming because they needed someone to swim backstroke on a relay at Y nationals. I’ve been working out as a master’s swimmer ever since, 10 years now.

This second career is very different than my first. When I was young, I would go to the pool and just do what the coach said. And I loved meets and competition. I was carrying around that Olympic dream in the back of my head. Now, I like paying attention to my stroke and trying to improve. I like the science of swimming, and designing my own workouts. I like the friends I swim with. And I don’t like competing very much.

I do like open water swimming. I think I don’t like short course pools. They are a little claustrophobic, and I don’t like turns. Open water, though: I love going from

here to there, getting that stroke rhythm going. Every time I swim a couple miles in a lake, I feel like I've achieved something substantial.

I swim four times a week, twice on weekday mornings before work, once in the evening, and Saturday mornings. I swim alone on the weekday mornings, and have to be careful not to work too hard or my last class of the day will pay. Thursday evenings is the official masters workout I join, and Saturdays a group of us get together, workout by committee, then go have breakfast together. I try to get in 14-15,000 yards per week.

I pay a lot of attention to my motivation. I read the book, "Swimming Over 50", and it had two pieces of advice that I think are true together: be consistent about your training, but also, if you find yourself just not wanting to go to the pool, stay away. I try to heed that, but in my own way. I don't have a tough time getting to the pool, although sometimes I have a difficult time giving great effort. Good effort workouts happen about once a week, sometimes twice. The other times I'll pay attention to technique, or breathing patterns, or streamlining or something, anything to take my mind off working hard. I can't go mindless, though, until I've gone over 3000 yards.

I do well without much in the way of long-term goals. I don't need meets for motivation. I use a lot of mini-goals. I make them up as I go along. I tend to naturally descend sets if I maintain my focus, so finishing a set well can be good motivation. Now that GTD is around, I have workout and weekly yardage goals. For my goal this year I decided on a mile a day, but that doesn't mean as much as getting to 100 miles before the month is out, because that's what's in front of my face and I'm in position to get there. Who knows what the rest of the year will bring.

I think I came back to swimming because I found myself thinking about it as an artist reflecting on his formative years. Water seemed to be all over my imagery, from swimmers to ducks to boats, and the light of poolside, and the smell of chlorine. What keeps me coming back are the sweet and wonderful people I swim with, and the sensory qualities of both powering and slipping through water easy as can be.

Meet the GTD Swimmer Sandy Mitchel (50-54 age group)

It is amazing how many swimmers come back to the water after having been "dry" for many years. This is another such story. It also emphasizes again the friendships we form through our favorite sport!

I started swimming on a neighborhood team when I was 5 or 6. It was very different in those days. We didn't have goggles or any of the other equipment we use now. The coach used to walk along the outside lanes pouring in chlorine as we swam. Yes, those were the days. Very red eyes and the world was cloudy for the rest of the day. I loved it though. I would go down to the pool in the morning for practice (only in the Summer

back then) and stay until the pool closed at night. As long as I can remember I loved the sensation of being in the water. Unfortunately, we moved when I was 11 and so swimming virtually ended for me then.

Over the years, I would get the opportunity to swim once or twice in the summer at a local pool where we were living, but nothing much more than that.

In 2005, after a hiatus of some 35 years, I decided I was going to start swimming again. I joined the local YMCA and swam a fairly leisurely mile three times a week. In 2007 a friend asked me to do a Sprint Triathlon with her and another friend as a relay. So, I would be the swimmer. I was pretty nervous after not having competed since I was 11! But, after doing that one I was hooked. I joined a local group called the Tucson TriGirls and started swimming with them and their coach. They are an incredibly supportive and friendly group of gals who do triathlons. Even though I only participate in a relay, they welcomed me as one of their own. So, my friends and I did two Sprint Triathlons that year and again in 2008. That got my interest for competition peaked again. So, I decided to take a swim clinic and met a fantastic coach, who is still my coach today, Geoff Glaser. After taking his clinic for a month in 2008 I decided to join his newly formed Masters group in June of last year. I was absolutely hooked! So, now I was swimming two days a week with this group and one day with the Tucson TriGirls and their coach.



I am extremely fortunate to have such a fantastic coach. He inspires me, pushes me, encourages and also makes us all laugh a lot, which we need especially at 6 am practices. We have a wonderful team. Five lanes of terrific people that all watch out for each other and encourage one another. I couldn't ask for a better team.

It was incredible to workout with a coach again after all those years. I feel like I have learned so much from him. I never pushed myself or did sprints, or knew my stroke needed work when I was swimming on my own. So, I decided to compete. Kind of a scary, but very exciting too. My first meet was up at NAU (Northern Arizona University) at an altitude of 7,900 ft. That posed a bit of a challenge. But I found that diving off blocks after 38 years was a big challenge too. It didn't seem so high or wobbly when I was a kid :)

If you asked me a couple of years ago if I would be competing again in swimming at this age, I wouldn't have believed it. I am having the time of my life though! I love my workouts and try not to miss one for anything. I am currently training for the State meet in March, so my training plan had me swimming 6 days a week, with two swims one day each week. It was exhausting because I found with work, husband, a long commute, etc. I just couldn't get enough sleep. I am now tapering for the meet and am enjoying more rest.



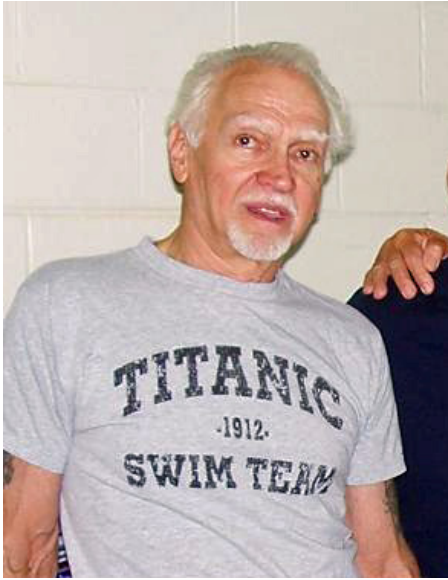
I couldn't do this without my incredibly supportive husband. He has not had me around much for the last three months. Sleep routines, eating routines, and everything else has had to be modified, etc. He has been great. He's also my timer for the Postal events I have been doing and a lap counter at my last meet up in Tempe.

I turn 50 in a couple of months; so I have set a lot of different goals for this year. I want to try open water. I'm a bit nervous about it, but figure if I like it, it will open up so many more possibilities for swimming. Plus, after having done the 3,000 yd Postal and One hour Postal recently, I am tired of turning and counting laps! I am thinking of the freedom of just swimming and concentrating on my stroke. I have a childhood friend who I swam with on the team from ages 6 – 11 who has been in Masters for years. We have reconnected and are planning to both celebrate our 50th birthdays with an open swim together after all these years. I can't wait!

I am also going to do the LCM 5K Postal this year as well. I like long distance as I feel like I finally start to get in a rhythm after about 20 lengths. I love that feeling. But, I am still competing in sprints as well. I haven't quite figured all that out yet. At my first two meets last year I swam all freestyle from 50 meters to 800 meters. My coach encouraged me to try butterfly. So, in January I swam my first butterfly (50 yds only!) since I was 11. I did get hooked, but not for more than 50 yds or 50 meters.

My GTD goal this year is 250 miles. I think this is a great program as it is one more motivator to swim. I had been keeping track of my yardage anyway, so it was no big deal just to report in the numbers at the end of the month. I always like motivators too or seeing how many more miles I need to hit the next milestone. My typical workout is 2,500 to 3,000 yds. I am closing in on the 100 milestone, but with tapering this week, will just miss it. That's ok, now I'm challenged to try and get to 150 next month.

Keep on swimming!



Meet the GTD swimmer Larry Lenge (70-74 age group)

Please enjoy this wonderful story as much as I have! This is the second year Larry is participating in the Go the Distance program – he calls our favorite program: “a wonderful inspiration to get into the pool”.

I'm a retired high school English teacher. I taught at Newton High School, Newton, NJ, for 26 years. Since my retirement in 2000, I've been a part-time adjunct English professor at Sussex County (NJ) Community College. I teach only evening

classes, either one or two classes each semester.

As far as doing what I thought I might be doing at this time in life: the answer would depend upon when the question was asked. Before I started teaching in the year 1974, I had a variety of jobs. Upon graduation from high school, I had no specific goals or talents. Between the time I graduated and the time I enlisted in the navy, I worked for an insurance company, a company that sold and serviced sewing machines, a company that manufactured electronic components for radios, and a credit ranking business. I served four years in the U.S. Navy. After I was (honorably) discharged, I worked in the office of a company that made scissors and shears. To make extra money, I put in some overtime in the shipping department, and eventually shifted over to the factory side. After a year or so, I got a job repairing major home appliances, first for Sears and then for RCA Service Company. While at RCA, I started taking evening classes at Rutgers in Newark.

I was inspired to do so by a buddy from the navy. He had not finished high school, but he took classes after his hitch and got an equivalency diploma. He then went on to a technical school. It took me 10 years to get my degree in English and complete all the courses to get certified to teach (I was married and had three children at the time), but after I completed my program, I was offered a position teaching English at Newton High. In my previous jobs, I never really gave any serious thought to what I'd be doing 25 years hence. Once I attained tenure in my district, while teaching English, I started to think that I finally had a "career."

My children are all grown and out on their own. One son, a field engineer for Schering-Plough, lives in South Jersey. My daughter--a teacher--lives in North Carolina, and my younger son, a v.p. of interactive services for a small computer firm, lives in Ohio. My wife--an excellent portrait artist--is retired from a position in the advertising department of a small publishing company. All my children are excellent swimmers. My older son won medals at the City Championships when he was in high school. My daughter was involved in other sports in high school (softball, basketball, track, field hockey), but was a member of the swim team at college. My younger son was a league champion at the fly

and 200 free, while in high school. His school record (set over 20 years ago) for the 100 butterfly still stands.

I learned to swim at church camp when I was 9-10 years old. I got fairly good at it, and won the (Newark) City Championship (breaststroke). I stopped swimming after I graduated from high school in the early 50's. I started to go to the pool once a week at the local high school some time in the 80's. I increased that to twice a week when they ran programs at the local Vo-Tech high school, later in the 80's. I started to compete again in Masters meets around 1989-90.

I have a 2005 Honda motorcycle (the 6th cycle I've owned) and ride with my sons as often as possible. Since they both live some distance away, most of my riding is done solo. But: swimming is my main "hobby."

Since I retired in 2000, I've been going to the Y (the Somerset Hills YMCA) three days a week and swim 2,500-3,500 yards, with my workout buddy, Paul Kiell, who is also a Masters swimmer and holder of several records. We swam against each other (different strokes) in high school. I ran into Paul again at a Masters meet about ten years ago, after not having seen him for around thirty 30 years or so. I worked out alone for my first ten years in Masters swimming. Paul and I have been sort of working out together since that time.

Sometimes I swim a little more, especially if I am competing (I swim in 5-6 competitions a year), or if I do an "ocean swim." I definitely consider myself a pool swimmer, but I did a handful of ocean swims to prepare for the "Escape from Alcatraz" swim, which I did in 2006. My buddy Paul Kiell talked me into that swim; he also talked me into being part of a relay team that swam around Manhattan Island in 2007. Paul is excellent at open water swimming and at longer distance swims. He has done the Alcatraz swim a number of times, the Chesapeake Bay swim, and the "around Manhattan Island" swim several times.

Breaststroke was my favorite when I was a teenager, and freestyle was 2nd. Now my favorite is freestyle. The only time I swim butterfly or backstroke is when I do an I.M. event.

This is only my 2nd year in GTD. It is a wonderful inspiration to get to the pool and keep in shape. My goal for 2009 is to do as well as I did in 2008, when I swam over 225 total miles. Advice: Make swimming--or any exercise--a regular endeavor; that is, make it a habit. Don't give yourself excuses for not going to the pool or the gym. As a teacher, I had a saying posted on the wall of the room. It was: "Continuing education is the closest thing to the fountain of youth." I would amend that to include, "The wellspring of that fountain is at the local pool."

I think I'm quite ordinary. As a comedian once said: "I'm a dull guy. When I go to parties, I stay in the room with the coats." If there were anything at all interesting or fun about me, then my friends or family would be better at answering that. As far as what my friends would say about me: something pleasant, I hope. One of the questions asked was: "what 3 adjectives describe you the best?" I asked my wife about this. She said: "dedicated, reliable, athletic."

A story: well I don't know how amusing it is, but I once went to an ocean swim at the Jersey shore, but I had forgotten my bathing suit. Luckily, Jeff Jotz (an outstanding open water and pool swimmer) loaned me one of his extra suits.



Meet the GTD swimmer Cameron Sullivan (40-44 age group)

Talk about a positive attitude: wait until you read Cameron's story!

Benefit #1: When training steadily, I eat 2,400 calories a day and still fit into my "skinny" jeans. My husband would also argue that my swimming is vital to household and marital harmony. Swimming keeps me happy and healthy; it serves an important role in

my often-harried life as a professional writer, wife and mom of three.

Until the recent nosedive of the daily newspaper industry, I wrote a weekly humor column for a group of Bay Area newspapers for several years. These days I'm finishing my first novel -- a challenge almost as great as an elusive National Qualifying Time for the 1500-Meter Freestyle!

I joined Masters in 2001 primarily to shed 20 pounds the year after I gave birth to my twins. The weight came off quickly but was soon replaced by a competitive fire that hadn't sparked since high school. Now I love competing, even if I am a "guppy" compared to some of my teammates.

If you surround yourself with positive, successful people, good karma rubs off on you. Of course you still have to work, but the effort pays off if you live your life to the fullest and push yourself to reach for goals.

In 2008, Tri-Valley Masters had five All-Americans, plus nine swimmers who ranked in the Top-Ten nationally, 14 Top-Ten national relays, and four swimmers who earned a combined 11 FINA Top-Ten World times, one of whom we refer to as the "Supreme World Goddess of the 200-Meter Backstroke." In the midst of that crowd, my role is more about cheerleading and friendship, but I do take pride in the fact that my workout lane is only three lanes down from theirs!

This year I knew I'd need a regular swim schedule to achieve my goals. So far, I'm more consistent with workouts than ever, swimming three or four times a week, about 4,000 yards each practice. I'm aiming to swim personal-bests in the short and long course miles. With a goal of tallying 400 miles, GTD helps me focus and stay grounded, which isn't easy for someone with an overabundance of energy.

If you want a peaceful, quiet workout, don't swim in my lane. My swimming friends would call me equal parts determined and clownish. The coaches are always telling me to shut up; it's part of my charm.

The funniest practice ever was when I drank an entire Monster energy drink before a pre-dawn workout last summer. "Cameron -- on an energy drink? What's THAT like?" one person asked after hearing of my Monster swim. Alas, the experiment backfired at Long Course Nationals in August. Lesson learned: My own natural energy is more powerful than a Monster.

Finally, when I began answering questions for this feature, I almost started out by mentioning that I have epilepsy caused by a head injury during a snowmobiling accident 25 years ago. But instead of long-winded melodrama about how my strength as a high-school swimmer helped pull me out of a coma after the accident, and the fact that I've taken medicine to control seizures for most of my life, I decided I don't need to belabor minor details.

Everyone has issues; everyone has a life that sometimes gets in the way of swimming. But our issues shouldn't define us. Instead, it's important to focus on the positive and embrace achievements for what they are.



Voracious effort, for instance, is a form of victory.

That said, if swimming doesn't work out, perhaps I'll train to be on "Dancing with the Stars."

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P.S.: Only 9.2 more miles to swim by the end of the day next Tuesday to get to 100) :-)