



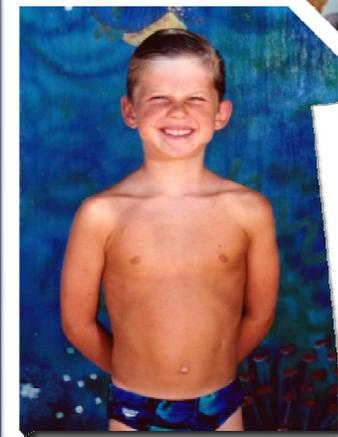
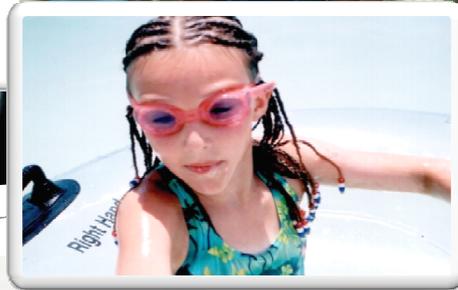
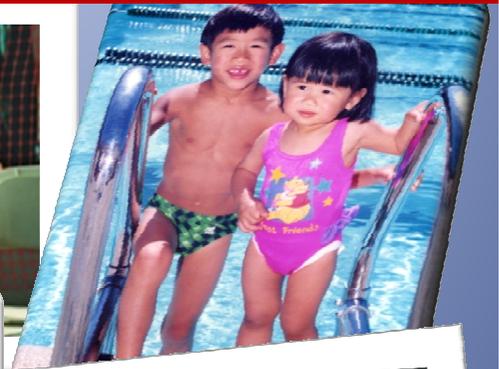
Orinda Aquatics



Team Banquet 2012-2013



Orinda Aquatics Class of 2013!



If you don't go after what you want, you could spend your entire life settling for what you can get. Stegall

Letter to Parents

We founded Orinda Aquatics nearly twenty years ago, with the intent of creating something different, something better, and something that would hopefully change the lives of young athletes. We believed unequivocally that in the process of developing young athletes, it was possible to build great leaders *and* cultures. As our overt focus is on swimming and the inherent pursuit of success, our deepest pride is in the backdrop and foundation of this program, and this extraordinary group. We could not be more proud of this organization and what it stands for, and our commitment to the greater lessons of life through sport, our commitment to putting character first, and our commitment to the community and to helping others. We sincerely hope that we have either had, or at some point will have, a positive effect on your children outside of the pool. Orinda Aquatics has truly blended success and culture in a powerful way, and the teams' mission is now recognized by USA Swimming, ASCA, NISCA, and coaches around the world. Someone had to make the case, and prove, that integrity can be the most powerful force behind an athlete's and a team's success. And you have done that.

From a developmental perspective with young athletes, our focus and philosophy has been to develop well-balanced, efficient strokes that will support them as they grow, develop, and train and compete at higher levels. After thirty-five years of coaching, we not only believe this is the best way to develop young athletes, but should be the only way. From a personal perspective, we hope to develop true leaders in sports and in life, to foster an environment that would support kids of all ages, to rise above the social fray and pull, and to make positive decisions and life choices.

As you and your children move on through the sport, we would encourage the emphasis to be on those things that promote a healthy long-term swimming career and a healthy life. The *time* that a swimmer achieves only provides a glimpse of what is really happening. It does not reveal work ethic, efficiency, team commitment, humility, a desire to pursue the sport, or a willingness to persevere in challenging times (which there will be). Be vigilant for these things and even be willing to abandon (early) success for the virtues and life lessons which *can be* obtained on a daily basis, with proper perspective. In sum, keep the focus on effort and attitude, on teammates and team success, and your child will succeed on a level that will be much more profound than a swim, a meet, a season, or an award. While many parents want early success, the real pursuit should be early *growth*.

"Today's children are the future leaders in business, politics, and sports. People in such positions of authority encounter ethical dilemmas on an even grander scale. It is imperative for teens to learn about ethics and wise decision-making today in order to equip themselves for tomorrow." *Life in Perspective*

Keys to Success for the young athlete

- Goals setting should be "top-down", beginning with effort, attitude, and attendance.
- Efficiency and technique will be more importance in the long run than performance in the short run
- Emphasize the *race* over the time
- Make your child's driving purpose to team commitment and to "*making a difference*"

We sincerely thank our swimmers and parents for supporting our team, our organization, and our message. As we close out our 2012-13 season, we look back at the great careers and commitments of our graduating class and look forward to a new and exciting season ahead.

Very sincerely, Donnie and Ronnie

***“Character is the
sum total of a
person’s choices.”***

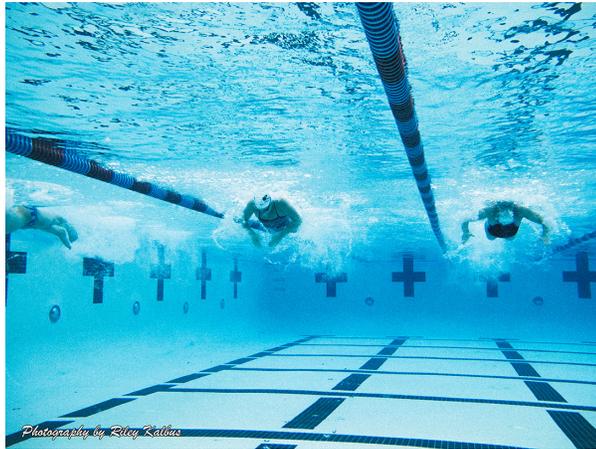
P.B. Fitzwater



***“Don’t compromise
yourself. You are
all you’ve got.”***

Janis Joplin

Orinda Aquatics Themes



The Cornerstones of Orinda Aquatics and the “High-Character Athlete”

Character

- “Character is that which reveals moral purpose, exposing the class of things a man chooses or avoids.” Aristotle
- “Character is the basis of happiness, and happiness the sanction of character.” Santayana

Humility

- “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less.” Rick Warren
- “Humility is the necessary veil to all other graces.” William Gurnall

Leadership

- “When he took the time to help the man up the mountain, lo, he scaled it himself.” Proverb
- “When it is all over, it’s not who you were. It is whether you made a difference.” Unknown

Discipline

- “Followers see the hard work they must endure to climb the mountain of success, while leaders see the success of climbing the mountain of hard work.” Unknown

Academics

- “All of your scholarship, all of your study...would be in vain if at the same time you did not build your character and attain mastery over your thoughts and your actions.” Gandhi

Because...

- Character is more important than success.
- People are more important than athletes.
- And, life is more important than sports.

“Character is the only secure foundation of the state.”



“Build for your team a feeling of oneness, of dependence on one another and of strength to be derived by unity.” Vince Lombardi

OA College Bound



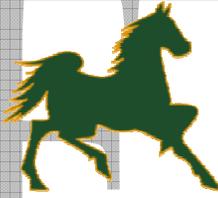
"When we dream alone it is only a dream, but when many dream together it is the beginning of a new reality." F. Hundertwasser



OA Graduating Class of 2013

Average GPA – 3.7

Name/HS	Beginning!	College	Mascot!	Notes
Steven <u>Stumph</u> Campolindo		USC Swimming		OA Team Captain Perry Inspirational Award Five NCS records National High School Record 100 Breast 53.3/Jr Nat'l Record 200 Breast 1:55.88; Nat'l Junior Team
Sven <u>Campbell</u> Campolindo		Cal Swimming		Olympic Trials/Jr Nat Final Six NCS records 3 Pacific Records National Select Camp Scholastic All-American
Megan <u>Fuqua</u> Carondolet		Boston College Swimming		OA/High School Team Captain (2 years each) Hall Inspirational Award Sectional Qualifier Academic All-American
Albert <u>Miao</u> Miramonte		UC Santa Barbara Swimming		High School Team Captain All-American swimming NCS 2 nd /School Record National SC Qualifier
Megan <u>Howard</u> Miramonte	US Naval Academy Swimming			High School Team Captain Integrity in Aquatics Award High School All-American Scholastic All-American
Megan <u>Liang</u> Campolindo		Franklin & Marshall Swimming		USA Emerging Team & Paralympic finalist Hall Inspirational Winner Pacific Swim Inspirational Award Winner
Meghan <u>Bicomong</u> Campolindo		UC Santa Barbara Swimming		HS Inspirational Award HS All-American/NCS final Grand Prix Qualifier Sectional Finalist Coach's Award

Dominic <u>Baldwin</u> Campolindo		Diablo Valley <u>College</u> Swimming		OA & HS Coach's Award and Most Improved Sectional Qualifier NCS Finalist
JD <u>Ratchford</u> Campolindo		Cal Water Polo		Swimming All-America Scholastic All-American NCS Record Holder National SC Qualifier
Colleen <u>O'Brien</u> Campolindo		Hamilton <u>College</u> Swimming		OA Coaches Award Campo Varsity Inspirational Award Winner
Cameron <u>Hoyh</u> Miramonte		Rider <u>University</u> Swimming		Sectional Qualifier DFAL Champion/NCS Finalist Eagle Scout, Most Improved
Mollie <u>Larsen</u> Miramonte		Cal Poly Swimming		High School Team Captain Sectional Qualifier NCS Qualifier/DFAL Finalist Coach's Award Winner
Erica <u>Muller</u> Campolindo		Pacific <u>Lutheran</u> Swimming		Coaches Award Winner NCS Finalist/2 nd DFAL Sectional Qualifier
Conor <u>Sullivan</u> Miramonte	Puget Sound <u>College</u> Swimming			Coaches Award Winner NCS Qualifier/DFAL Finalist Far Western Qualifier
Emily <u>Giambastini</u> Acalanes		New <u>Hampshire</u> Swimming		High School Team Captain Scholastic All-American NCS finalist Sectional Qualifier
Megan <u>Giambastini</u> Acalanes		Indianapolis Swimming		High School Team Captain Sectional Qualifier NCS Qualifier/DFAL Final Scholar Athlete
Sam <u>Flower</u>	Campolindo	U.C. Santa <u>Barbara</u> Water Polo		HS Inspirational Award All NorCal WP Far Western Qualifier

Jourdan <u>Meltzer</u>	Head Royce	Brown		Academic All-American Stanford Med School intern JO Qualifier
Lokelani <u>Woolsey</u>	Salesian	Hawaii Swimming		High School Team Captain League finalist Far Western Qualifier
Andrew <u>Ringquist</u>	Campolindo	Gonzaga		Scholar Athlete Far Western Qualifier NCS top 8



Thank you for putting Character First and leading this great team!

“Dare to love yourself as if you were a rainbow with gold at both ends.” — Aberjhani, *The River of Winged Dreams*

Orinda Aquatics 2013 Collegiate Recap

Orinda Aquatics had 29 swimmers competing for collegiate teams across the country. They carried on a tradition of excellence in academics, character, leadership (**Jill Jones – Cal Poly, Shelby Luchini – Washington State, Caroline Lukins – Columbia, and Isa Guardalabene - Brown were team captains**), and team commitment, and they continued to develop as both swimmers and athletes. They broke collegiate records (Andrea Ward, Katy Yeh, and Jenny Hu) and competed for teams winning Conference Championships (Brooke Woodward and Megan Freeman: Emory University, Sloan Caldwell: Claremont McKenna College and Chris Leon: University of California, Berkeley)

National Connection: Brooke Woodward – Emory University and Aly Levine – Williams College both competed at the NCAA DIII National Championships in Shenandoah, Texas in March. During the season Brooke earned three NCAA D3 Selection Times (200 Breast, 200 IM and 400 IM and Aly earned two D3 cuts (100 fly and 200 fly). Kristen Lewis, an OA Alum and past member of the UCLA Women’s Swim Team, is currently the Associate Head Coach for UC Berkeley’s Women’s Swimming and Diving Team which finished in 2nd place in Indianapolis at the NCAA D1 National Championships. Several OA Alumni earned their respective NCAA divisional cut times: Jeffrey Strausser – D1 “B” cuts (50 free and 100 fly), Andrea Ward – D1 “B” cut (100 fly), Hu – D3 “B” cut (100 Breast), Megan Freeman – D3 “B” cut (200 Breast) Congratulations to those swimmers and *all* of our OA alumni.



In 2013 OA Swimmers competed at:

Pomona	Emory (2)	Notre Dame	Duke
Cal	Middlebury	Fordham	Cal Poly (3)
Tufts (2)	Williams	Brown	Claremont McKenna
Pitzer	San Diego State	UC Santa Barbara	Lewis & Clark
Carleton	Georgetown	Diablo Valley	Grinnell
Washington State	Columbia	Darmouth	Franklin & Marshall

“Thoughts lead on to purposes; purposes go forth in action; actions form habits; habits decide character; and character fixes our destiny.” *Unknown*

Dear Ronnie and Donnie,

Congratulations on winning the award! Such a well deserved honor for you two!

Wonderful to have the Orinda Aquatics message, that both of you have stood for these past 29 years, recognized and embraced across the country and internationally. Your heart felt belief in "Character First" that you have tirelessly and selflessly nurtured and grown has paid off. I know you would humbly say the payoff is not in tonight's award but rather in each and every one of the swimmers who have graduated from OA and carries your well taught life lessons in their hearts on their respective journeys through life. The love, joy and respect they have for both of you is evident in the numerous letters you receive from past OA Swimmers.

When I was asked "what sets Ronnie and Donnie apart from other coaches", I would say that you have given each and every one of your swimmers a tremendous gift! They go on to college still passionate about swimming, the sport they love. Because you are selfless, they have the luxury of peaking in college, rather than high school. You don't demand that they do everything possible to get fast now. Every OA swimmer can go to college, not burnt out on swimming and not feeling like swimming is a job. Because of your humility, you give them the gift of time, which is priceless. That's what sets you apart and makes you the very best coaches of all.

With admiration and appreciation, Fred and Debi

With all of that back story, I just wanted to tell you that I am forever grateful for the Character First attitude that Orinda Aquatics demands from their swimmers. During my time I was focused on my swimming and I thought the life messages were nothing more than a reminder for being positive (whether we were talking as a group before a meet about properly warming up and warming down or in the community room talking about everything from helping others to managing finances). I have begun to realize that I was surrounded by amazing people who helped encourage positive values: the coaches (helping push me to new limits in the pool and developing my character outside of it), my teammates (motivating me in practice and cheering me during meets), and the parents (helping run the meets, and taking responsibilities/volunteering for positions that would look like jobs to many others). OA has an incredible community and since then I haven't been able to experience the positive influence and structure that OA provided to its swimmers. Despite that I am no longer going to practices anymore your influence in my life is enduring. Orinda Aquatics has instilled a lasting motivation to become a more fulfilled person for myself a positive influence for others, thank you for helping me become the person I am and for continuing to help and coach others to become more prepared and successful, in the pool and in life. I will try to stop by after I graduate in a couple months and say hello! Brian O'Hara

To the Parents



Congratulations on raising the class of youth in the world; of students, of athletes, and of people. Their discipline, maturity, respect, and humility is the by-product of your love, support, and sacrifice. You have raised and created young men and women who have profoundly impacted our team, their peers, and the community, and they will undoubtedly influence future generations and the world.

You are the silent heroes in this success story and the “we” in “we did it”.
Thank you and congratulations!



**“You are the bows from which your children
as living arrows are sent forth.”**

— Kahlil Gibran, Lebanese-American novelist and poet (1883-1931)



Thank you and congratulations!

We will truly miss you and wish you the very best, in swimming and in life.

*Ronnie, Donnie, Matt, Marc, Katie, Hayley,
the OA Board of Directors,
and your OA family!*

Senior Letters



“A good leader inspires others with confidence; a great leader inspires them with confidence in themselves.”

Unknown

I'm not eloquent enough to adequately articulate what you all have meant to me in my journey over the past several years. But just for the sake of being cliché, I'll say it anyway: You have made me who I am today.

Anyone who has experienced the rollercoaster ride that is high school can tell you that it's not exactly a walk in the park. It's not just the late nights, unsympathetic teachers, apathetic classmates, and multitude of extracurricular activities; it's the fact that you have to decide who you are in the process. You have to decide what you believe in, what you stand for, and what your role is in the Big Picture. None of these dilemmas are avoidable, and none are easily resolved. When faced with these forks in my journey, I would have been left floundering without the firm base Orinda Aquatics has become in my life.

At every crossroads I struggled with, I fell back on what I learned here. I would remember how many people believed in and supported me, and remember the high character athlete and person I dreamed of becoming. Suddenly, my path would become clear.

I continue to be inspired each and every day by the spirit of this team. It manifests itself in the smallest, most beautiful details; a warm smile, a hug, a veteran swimmer patiently explaining a drill to a newcomer, a simple "How are you doing?". I walk away from every practice reinvigorated and motivated to become a better person.

As I open the next chapter of my life, I know I will continue to rely on all that Orinda Aquatics has helped me learn about myself and what it means to be an athlete and a teammate. I hope to use this knowledge to go forward and inspire someone else in the way you all have inspired me. To each and every member of this team I have ever known, from those who were seniors when I joined to those I just had the privilege of meeting this year: thank you for everything, I love you and will miss you dearly. To Ronnie and Donnie: please continue making the world a better place, one person at a time. With love, Colleen O'Brien

Dear Coaches, Teammates, and Parents of Orinda Aquatics:

Concluding the past seven years of swimming on OA is much harder than I expected it to be. When I nervously started my first practice on OA in the junior group, I had no idea this team would impact me so much. But from day one, I knew it was the team for me. The positive culture, character-first attitude, and success in and out of the pool are only a few of the impeccable messages that this team has taught me. I never would have thought that looking back on the years I've dedicated to swimming on OA would I remember more about the team atmosphere and positive memories than swimming any race or any grueling practice.

Matt and Marc—thank you for all of your dedication and everything you do for Orinda Aquatics. Thank you for teaching me work ethic, motivation, and preparing me for the Senior Group and the next level in my swimming career.

Ronnie—there are no words to describe how thankful I am for all that you have done for me. Your support over the last four years has taught me to never give up and to be the best person I can be. Thank you for not completely giving up on my butterfly... (I would have if I were you), and for not "cutting the cord" on me. I will miss our long conversations about the economy and even you accusing me of getting out for a chocolate bar in the middle of practice. I will always remember the philosophical conversations in the car when you drove Megan and me to and from practice; teaching us valuable life lessons that I will forever cherish.

Donnie—Thank you for guiding me down the right path and helping me become the person I am today. I will never forget the inspirational and humbling lessons you have taught me over the years. I will miss all of the inspirational Friday meetings and reading articles that motivated me to be a more caring and high character person. I appreciate all that you do for this team and for every swimmer. It is obvious how much you care about each swimmer, no matter what swimming level, and I am thankful to have a coach who puts so much passion and commitment to maintaining the highest character team. Thank you for always being there for me. I knew I could count on you if

you ever had to pull a Jason Bourne stunt to the vending machine. Luckily, that never happened, but I'm glad you were always "prepared"! Thank you both for being the greatest mentors, coaches, and most importantly, friends.

Teammates—swimming is a team sport, despite what outsiders may think. Without every one of *you*, I would not be where I am today. You are by far the most inspiring, dedicated, humble, and best friends I have and will keep for the rest of my life. Continue being a group of "extraordinary kids" and lead the future swimmers of Orinda Aquatics to be the same.

To the parents of OA: this team would not be a success without all of your time and support. Thank you so much for all that you do as swim parents: driving us to practice at 5 am, driving us long distances to meets and for working countless hours at home meets.

Mom and Dad—thank you for being the best cheerleaders there are and for caring so much about me. I am so fortunate and thankful for all that you do for me.

I am nervous to start the next chapter of my life, but I know I am prepared to face whatever challenges come in the next four years of swimming, and life, because of this team. I will miss you all so much! (Ronnie—don't ever forget who the cutest twins on the team are!) Love, Emily Giambastini

For the past eight years, I have been reading the letters written by graduating seniors, thinking about what I would say when it was my time to return the favor. Now that my time has finally come, I can't help but feel at a loss for words to adequately describe my experience at Orinda Aquatics.

My very first junior group practice I walked on the pool deck as a shy, nervous, and a somewhat scared 5th grader, but my fears were soon put to rest when I was met by welcoming introductions, countless smiling faces, and yes, a pizza party. While my expectations were set pretty high after that first practice, my time at Orinda has surpassed all that I thought a swim team could be. While technically Orinda Aquatics is a swim team, made up of a bunch of kids in red t-shirts and "character first" swim caps, it is truly so much more than that. The lessons I have learned both in the pool and out have transformed me from that shy and scared 11 year old, to the graduating senior I am today. I have learned that hard work and dedication can take you places that once seemed impossible. That not even ice on the pool deck will get in the way of morning practice. That optional practices really mean "you should go" and being on time for practice involves arriving 15 minutes early. Even if it takes a little bit longer, I have learned that the lane lines will get put in and the world won't come to an end (see Ronnie, I am learning). But most importantly, I have learned that it is not times or races that matter, it really is the journey. It is the best friends I have made, the bonding on team travel trips, the cheering behind a teammate's lane, the med ball dry lands, and the theme week practices, all of which have transformed me as an athlete and a person. Orinda Aquatics has instilled in me character, humility, and leadership that will help me on my new journey to college and beyond.

Matt and Marc, thank you for helping me discover my love for the sport of swimming. It is because of you both that I stuck with it and have continued to have fun every step of the way.

Donnie, thank you for showing me, my teammates and the sport of swimming what genuine dedication and passion looks like. Your unwavering commitment to Orinda Aquatics and swimming is truly remarkable. Thank you for setting such a high standard and helping me to reach my potential both in and out of the pool.

Ronnie, thank you for your mentorship and guidance but, most of all, your friendship. You have taught me lessons that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. Thank you for never giving up on me, even when all I had left were my "looks and personality." Thank you for the life talks. For our chats about how the weekend went, my thoughts on whether we should go to Nations in the morning, or how I am going to like living in the cold for the next four years. You have truly inspired me and for that I will always be grateful.

Mom and Dad, thank you for your love and support. I would not be where I am today if it weren't for the incredible sacrifices you have made. Thank you for always believing in me, even when I doubted myself. I love you both more than anything!

To the past OA swimmers: thank you for being exemplary role models and creating a team environment that is truly unique. To the current OA swimmers: enjoy your time left at OA because it really is something special and it will fly by faster than you can imagine. Thank you for the laughs, the support, and the friendship. To the future OA swimmers: joining OA will be the best decision you make. You are so lucky to be just beginning your journey, it will be incredible.

Saying goodbye to Orinda Aquatics and all of the friendships I have made is not easy, but I know that they have shaped the friend, athlete, student and person that I am today. Thank you for an unforgettable journey. With love,
Megan Fuqua

When I joined Orinda Aquatics, I thought that the team wouldn't be much different from all of the other year-round teams that I have practiced with - a team with a name, logo, and some fast swimmers. I was mistaken. Orinda Aquatics was not only a team, it was truly a team of high-character athletes; athletes that had a different outlook than swimmers I had encountered on other teams. I am very thankful and grateful that I joined Orinda Aquatics. It has become a like a second family to me. When I'm not at school or at home I'm most likely at the pool training hard and I don't know what I would do if I didn't have this team and my teammates.

I want to thank Matt and Marc for coaching me in those two years of swimming in the junior group. You reminded me how much fun swimming is every day, and you made me feel so welcomed my first year here. I will definitely miss you guys when I go to college this fall.

Donnie, thank you for moving me up to the senior group. All those hard theme practices with the clip art pushed me out of my comfort zone. Without that push, I don't think I would have ever been the person I am today. These years with you have been the ride of my life. I'm a much better person because of what you taught all of the swimmers including me: true character and humility. Because of you, I will always keep the "character first" mantra in my mind. It was a privilege to have you as a coach. Thank you for being a great coach, mentor, and friend.

Ronnie, there is so much to say about you. I remember when I joined Orinda Aquatics you were really intimidating at first, but as soon as I got to know you better, you were just as funny and caring as anyone. You have trained me to my limit in swimming and taught me how to have fun and enjoy life. You helped me advance my swimming career and taught me lessons that I will never forget. You also made me a more mature person. Without you, I would not be the person I am today. Thank you for being you, and for being the best coach I could ever have. I will miss you and Donnie when I'm off to college.

Ronnie and Donnie are one-of-a-kind coaches that one may not find anywhere else. I am so lucky to have been coached by them and to have been a part of this team. I'm grateful to have gone to the Friday meetings and read those articles as they helped me to become a better person. I don't think that any other team does this and that is one thing that makes OA so unique.

To my teammates, all of you guys inspired me to swim faster and harder in practice every day. You are an inspirational group of athletes and people. Thank you for being so welcoming and for always making my day brighter. So go and take the path less traveled, and take advantage of the opportunity that you have from swimming with OA, as not many swimmers have the opportunity to be on such a wonderful team. OA has changed my life and I hope you guys have the same memorable experience I had on the team.

I thank my family for supporting me throughout out my swimming career and for loving me to the fullest. I will always love you guys and I will greatly miss you guys when I go to college. Again thank you everyone for everything. Best, thanks, and love, Meghan Bicomong

To my Orinda Aquatics family:

These past five years on Orinda Aquatics have been an extraordinary experience that I will forever hold dear to my heart. As I look back on my journey, I realize that it is difficult to recall every challenging set (aside from the theme week workouts) I endured or every race I have swum. It is easy, though, to remember the lifelong friendships and the lessons that have helped mature me into the person I am today.

When I first joined, I was antisocial, negative, and short. I lacked talent and character. Five years later, I'm still short, but I have changed for the better. While my times have dropped, my biggest improvements were in my attitude and perspective on life as a whole. Before, I was constantly frustrated with the fact that I couldn't keep up with my peers and teammates in the pool. I came to learn that my swimming experience was not defined by my times. Over the years, I have embraced qualities like humility and sportsmanship, and I have learned to be positive in every aspect of my life. I know that the lessons I have learned from OA will absolutely help me excel in my future endeavors both in and out of the pool.

I wouldn't be at this point of my swimming career if it weren't for the members of this program. Every swimmer, every coach, and every parent has helped me get to where I am.

To the coaches – thank you for your endless dedication to us and to this team. You are our mentors, role models, and friends. Matt and Marc, thank you for your continuous support throughout the years. You both have taught me dedication to the sport and to my team. Ronnie, thank you for teaching me how to be tough in the pool and out in the world. You have pushed me to be a better person and swimmer. Someday, I will successfully complete the 100 fly long course. Just you wait. Donnie, thank you for your endless wisdom on swimming and life. You have helped me become not only a better swimmer, but a better person. I'm sorry I was never able to complete the robbery of a bank. Maybe one day I'll get to it.

To the parents – thank you all for continuing to support your children and Orinda Aquatics. This team would not be what it is today if it weren't for your tireless efforts. I will miss the snack shack's Teriyaki Chicken Rice Bowl almost as much as I will miss you and your support.

Mom & Dad – thank you for everything. You have encouraged me to follow my passions and accomplish all that I have. I love you so much, and I am extremely grateful to have you guys.

And to my teammates – thank you. You all continue to inspire me with your wonderful personalities, impeccable work ethic, and long-living spirit. You guys have become a second family to me, and I know our relationships will last a lifetime. I am honored to consider you my teammates and friends.

I am blessed to have been a part of this experience, and to have shared it with some of the most amazing people I will ever meet. Thank you for the greatest memories and lessons. However, this is not goodbye. Instead, see you later! With love, Megan Liang

Dear Ronnie, Donnie and OA,

It is hard to wrap my head around the fact that my five-year long experience on Orinda Aquatics has come to a close. But as I move on to college and into the future, I know I am ready and prepared for what life has in store for me. I have learned so many lessons and developed so many memories that will last a lifetime, and for this I am truly grateful.

When I began my college search I wanted to find a school and team atmosphere that was supportive and stressed integrity. Without OA, I don't think I would have realized that these two things would be important to me in a college environment. Come to think of it, I don't think I would be looking at life the way I do now without the guidance and support of the OA coaches and teammates. I now look at life with a "glass-half-full" perspective, and this has ultimately made me a happier and more confident person. There is a combination of things that makes this team the incredibly supportive swim family that it has become: the "being above the weather" talks, the reaching out to the lower classmen, and the many early mornings to name a few. This has all helped shape me to who I have become today.

I would like to thank the coaches for all they have given to this team and for your passion, influence and support. Matt and Marc: Your enthusiasm motivated me in practices and in races and you helped me prepare for the senior group. Ronnie and Donnie: Your genuine care about the lives of others has been an inspiration to me since freshman year. Thank you for stressing good work ethic, commitment, and integrity. These are important traits one must strive for in order to live a successful life. I will continue to remember your advice on life and on swimming in the future.

To my teammates: I feel like you are a second family to me. You have motivated and supported me to strive to be the best I can be in and out of the water. I am honored and grateful to have been a part of such an inspirational and one of a kind team. The past couple years, I have come to realize that it was important for me to come to the practices for the sake of being there for my teammates, to support them in ways that they have supported me. You have left a positive impact on my life and I am constantly amazed and inspired by your drive, perseverance, and remarkable qualities. I know that I have made friendships that will last a lifetime and I will miss you so much next year. Thank you for the experience and the memories that I will cherish throughout my life. With love, Erica Muller

When I first joined the team in 8th grade, I don't think I quite understood all that I was getting myself into. I did not know that the team would create lasting friendships and a love for swimming, as well as, change me as a person. This team has not only been about swimming, but also about becoming a better person.

I have to admit, moving up to the senior group was a little intimidating, but I soon learned that I had nothing to fear. The team was, and still is, composed of people who care so much about each other in addition for their dedication to the sport. On my first travel meet to Clovis, one of the seniors struck up a conversation with each swimmer, starting in the front of the bus where all the freshman were sitting. I didn't even think she knew my name, but she asked us how we did and if we had enjoyed the meet and the whole travel experience. It was a welcoming place from the start.

Throughout my years on the team, I never gave much thought about the end of my time on the team. I didn't realize how much this team has affected me until I took the time to reflect as the end approached. I don't know how to put my appreciation into words.

Thank you so much Matt and Marc for making my first year on the team as fun as it was. The transition from all 50s to 100s, 200s and beyond was an exciting time. Thank you Ronnie and Donnie for all you have taught me inside and outside of the pool. Those lessons will stay with me throughout life. Thank you to Dave for helping me succeed when I didn't think it was possible. Words cannot describe how thankful I am for the time you spent helping me reach my goals. Overcoming those challenges has kept me in the sport.

Thank you to Mom and Dad for making all of this possible and supporting me throughout my years on the team. I appreciate all you have done for me. Thank you to everyone on the team for making it so enjoyable. Waking up early isn't nearly as bad as it sounds when you have a team like this. This team has made me the person I am today, and I am forever grateful for everyone. Love, Mollie Larsen

Dear Coaches, Teammates, and Families of Orinda Aquatics,

When I joined this team 6 years ago, I would have never believed that it would impact the way I live my life every day. In the past 4 years in the senior group, Orinda Aquatics has taught me the humility, leadership, values and work ethic needed to have a successful life both in and out of the pool. With weekly Friday meetings, team bonding activities, and travel trips, the team's motto "character first" has been a model lifestyle I try to emulate every day. Trying to live my life by this phrase has not only made me a stronger athlete in the pool, but it has also molded me into a better person.

People used to often ask me why I participated in such a time consuming, and high demanding sport, and I could never give them a direct answer. They would never be able to comprehend why I love it so much. They have never been a part of such an amazing, dedicated, and mature team. Nor have they ever experienced the highs and lows of swimming that bring the team closer together, or the joy of supporting teammates during travel trips.

This team has shaped me into the person I am today, and has given me so many memories and friendships that will last me a lifetime, and for that I am eternally grateful.

Matt and Marc- Thank you so much for running such an amazing group and preparing me for life in the senior group. Matt, I will never forget the time when you first called Emily and me "Giamba" because you couldn't pronounce our last name! Marc, thank you for all that you have done, in the junior group and high school season! I will never forget all that you have done for me!

Ronnie- I am forever grateful that you didn't give up on the little flickering pinprick light of potential at the end of the long black tunnel back in freshman year. I can't thank you enough for all of the rides to and from practice. Even though you were a little reckless at driving, you always assured me that I was "valuable cargo" and wouldn't let anything happen. You always never failed to make me laugh and smile, especially after a finish of painful race where you almost always give me the, "at least you have your looks and personality" speech. Thank you for all that you have done for me, both in and out of the pool. I will always cherish all that you have taught me.

Donnie- Thank you so much for teaching me importance of putting character first, in and out of the pool. Over the years, you have provided me with so much support and have guided me through so much. Your dedication to this team is truly amazing and I will always admire your commitment to putting the team first. Thank you for helping me gain a greater work ethic, motivation to get up at 5am in December, and the importance of being a high character athlete.

Parents and Families- Thank you for supporting your swimmers through the hardships of year round swimming. Especially driving to and from morning practice at the crack of dawn every Tuesday & Thursday, and for working the grueling 3-hour timing shifts at meets.

The Team- Thank you guys so much for making my time here on Orinda Aquatics memorable and worthwhile. I'm honored to call all of you my friends, and can never thank you enough for all of the support and encouragement you have given me throughout all of the years. I wouldn't be where I am today without you! Love, Megan Giambastini

I never did imagine that Orinda Aquatics would mean so much to me. I never expected it to be my social circle, my support group, and the cornerstone of my character. It was never clear to me, but I am forever grateful for what it has provided me.

I started Orinda Aquatics during my freshman year of high school. I had just moved from Michigan and, at first, I didn't feel like I belonged. I had a terrible season of water polo, and after all of the harassment, I was regretting the move to California. I noticed that Orinda is a town where everybody had known each other since they were in kindergarten and that it was hard for an outsider to fit in. It wasn't a smooth transition.

The first OA practice that I went to, Donnie told me that my streamline was non-existent and that my form and technique was terrible. Ouch. As the months progressed, I began to enjoy being on the team and I began to notice that my swimming was improving as well. What really changed my perception of Orinda and the team itself was at the Summer Sectionals in 2010. All of the older swimmers included me in all of their functions and made me feel like I brought some value to the team. Through their kindness and support, I knew that Orinda Aquatics was a special group of people that I was proud to be a part of.

Since that time, I have tried to maintain the same philosophy that the older kids did for me; to make the younger kids feel welcomed and appreciated. Orinda Aquatics has made me a better person and a better swimmer. I know that when I depart for college, I know that OA has prepared me for all of the challenges that I will face. I know it sounds a tad cliché but when life knocks you down, you have to get back up and keep pushing yourself forward.

I want to thank all the coaches, parents and friends that have helped me throughout the past few years. I am truly grateful for all that you have done for me and will miss all of you in the fall. Love, Cameron Hoyh

My high school peers are probably thinking of success in terms of GPA's above 4.0, prestigious universities, high paying jobs, big houses, luxury cars and exotic vacation destinations. My seven years on Orinda Aquatics has taught me to march to the beat of a different drummer than the rest of high school students. I think of success in terms of lifelong friendships with my fellow swimmers and coaches, valuing leadership skills, and acquiring wisdom through making good choices that are sometimes hard to make and may not be popular with my high school friends.

As a younger swimmer I always looked up to the older kids and viewed them as role models. During my first senior meet, when the blocks froze over between races, Ronnie appointed Dustin Luchini to show me around and look after me at the meet. Not only did Dustin help me with my first meet at that level, but he continued to mentor me through my progression on OA, and to this day continues to send me texts about my swimming. But it was not just a single person that I looked up to, it was the whole senior group. From Ben Smith inviting me to go with his senior group of friends to homecoming when I was a freshman, to Amanda Schlenker inviting me to go to bon-fires with her friends, to eating lunch with Courtney Whyte, Eva Erickson, and Padon Sivesind at Campolindo. Swim practice has never felt like a job or chore to me, and that is largely due to all the people that have made practicing so enjoyable. Swimming in the same lane everyday with Shannon Herman, Jordan Tomamatsu, and Courtney Whyte, also known as the "fat" lane, was never boring, but how could it have been when we had Rachel Cleak cheering us on during workout. To all the senior swimmers, know that the younger kids are watching everything you do, and take your actions to heart. Don't be afraid to mentor a younger swimmer. Take them under your wing and the benefits will surpass your doubts of taking on the responsibility. To all the junior swimmers, know that the senior swimmers are excellent role models, and do not be afraid to ask them for advice or for a favor. They are more than willing to go far and beyond to help you.

My time on OA has not always been glamorous. I have had to overcome many obstacles. When I was thirteen, a week before Winter Junior Olympics, the unexpected happened, I flew over the handlebars of my bike and broke both of my wrists. Even when I wasn't swimming with the team, I felt their presence in my recuperation, when they would send me get well cards, and bring me DVD's and buckets of popcorn. During my road to recovery I learned the value of patience. I wanted to push myself to my limits, but if it weren't for the coaches continuously telling me to take it easy I probably would have caused even further damage to my wrists. A year after being completely healthy and training hard, I felt pain in my knees. Over the next two years I discovered the root of my problem was coming from my hips. The coaching staff was on board with all the doctors; Ronnie even came to see each new doctor with me and would ask them questions about what my limits were and the best way to combine rehabilitation with training. Swimming at Summer Nationals was a real challenge. Because of the pain I was in, a mere three days after the meet I had surgery on both of my hips and started the long recovery process. During each phase of my convalescence the coaches would reassess what I could do and what our plan would be

for the next couple of weeks. Ronnie still does not let me forget the eighteen point turns that I did when I first came back to practice. To all those that have injuries, know that you can make a full recovery. Do not be over anxious to come back and push your body to hard, take it easy and build into your come back, in the long run it will pay off. The coaching staff and other swimmers care about you and will help you through the rehabilitation process. Everyone on Orinda Aquatics wants to see you heal fully.

I have made friendships that will last a lifetime. The first day that I walked onto the pool deck at the Soda Center, I knew no one, but kids came over to introduce themselves to me, and asked if I wanted to swim in their lane. My 'swim friends' have always been there, from understanding why I am going to bed at 9 o'clock at night to bringing me cookies and get well cards after my surgery. They have stayed as some of my best friends throughout the years, even those who have left for college. We still laugh about the guy to girl ratio when I first started in the junior group, 1 boy for every 20 girls. I am lucky to say, that I know I will keep in touch with my OA friends and mentors. .

Not only have I formed relationships with my peers, but also I have bonds with my coaches. To this day, every time I do breaststroke I remember Marc telling me to open elevator doors. Every time he was telling me that, he was encouraging me to break his records. It takes a great coach to not only coach his swimmers, but to inspire them to be better. Thank you Marc for always inspiring me to be a better swimmer. As swimming can sometimes be tedious, Matt would always keep things light-hearted during practice, and knew when it was time to be become focused or compassionate and sincere. Thank you Matt for being fun and genuine and helping me in my early years.

I know I have had incredible coaches who really cared about me. They've really been there for me and I mean been there. Donnie was even at my house to help carry me down the stairs three days after my surgery so I could go to my doctor's appointment. He even had the group over to his home to talk about goals, quotes, and life while eating made-to-order tacos. Thank you Donnie for caring so much about me as a person, and doing everything in your power outside of the pool to make me a man of character.

Away travel meets with Ronnie are always an adventure. You may not always come home from the meet with best times, but you will always come home with great memories and funny stories. The van ride in Las Vegas and walking through the parking lot in Indianapolis looking for the rental car for 20 minutes are just a few to mention. What makes Ronnie a unique coach is that he is a master strategist. Most people do not know that Ronnie tells kids certain things and has them swim particular events for a reason. At first his reasoning seems strange, but once you sit down and have him explain himself, you immediately see the logic and reasoning behind his decisions. This goes for not only swim events but also for every aspect of his swimmers lives. Training with Ronnie was fun and sometimes not so fun. On the plus side, doing lower yardage and focusing on technique was fantastic, but holding your breath during under-waters and kicking with a parachute was less than fantastic. But the perfect combination of the both made training enjoyable and successful. Thank you Ronnie for making swimming enjoyable and invariably looking out for my well-being. To all the future swimmers, value the coach's experience, these coaches always have your best interest in heart. Good luck, Steven Stumph

I've been on Orinda Aquatics for seven years now, and it's hard to imagine my time with the team has finally come to an end. I could never imagine this swim team would change my life so much, from all the great friends that I met along the way to the amazing coaches who have always been there for everyone.

I had never been the fastest swimmer in polar bears not even in the junior group, I was probably mediocre at best, however it was Orinda Aquatics that taught me that being the best swimmer isn't what is important, what is important is the person you become and the character you uphold. I would never have imagined that from a nervous freshman, I would be in the position I am today, and looking forward to collegiate swimming. There is so much to say that I cannot put into words how grateful I am to have found this team. I need to start by thanking

Kevin Lai. If it were not for him I would not have joined Orinda Aquatics. Coach Kevin coached me from my Polar Bear days with Dave Schurhoff to my last rec swimming days on Moraga Valley Pool.

Past teammates have provided the leadership and humility that was necessary for me to mature into the person I am now. Without their advice and actions, this team would not be what it has become. This team has been built up on past legacies and each year it seems that the graduating seniors continue to uphold the tradition of strong integrity passed down to them. I know that the teammates who are still to come will flourish in the type of environment that the coaches have created and developed over the years. The personality of this team is incredible, and I can say that I'm thankful in every way to have been a part of it.

To Matt and Marc, you two have helped me so much throughout my years in junior group and still continue to be more than just coaches to me. The dedication that you two have toward coaching and to this team is something that everyone should praise. Matt, thanks for coaching me in my early years, for your passion, and for all of the little things you do for this team. Marc you always seem to have a smile on your face and you balance a warm demeanor with great coaching skill. My heartfelt gratitude for all you do.

Ronnie, am I a part of the Asian Connection? Will you finally believe that I'm actually going off the college? If it wasn't for you I don't even know where I would be going to college. I'm going to miss hearing all your stories about the past legacies that swimmers left behind. I hope that you continue to hone your (van) driving skills. I am honored to have had you as a coach. I know you have done a lot more for me than I probably know of and I am so grateful for everything.

Donnie, no I don't remember taking your stopwatch because I kept nagging you to take splits. You have been my coach not only for Orinda Aquatics but also High School swimming. Your dedication to this sport is beyond anything that I have seen from anyone else. You always tell us stories of how you praise our team at clinics, but really we should praise what you have done for us.

Coaches, teammates past and present, thank you. Albert Miao

“Know who you are, and be it. Know what you want, and go out and get it!”
Carroll Bryant



Here's to a very bright future!