

June Krauser Recipient of the 2016 R. Max Ritter Award presented by United States Aquatic Sports

United States Aquatic Sports honors the “Mother of U.S. Masters Swimming,” June Krauser with its 2016 R. Max Ritter Award. Given this year posthumously in recognition of Krauser’s extensive contributions to the sport of swimming, this award honors the memory of a woman whose selfless contributions bolstered the aims of U.S. Masters Swimming, the Amateur Athletic Union, the Special Olympics, and provided inspiration and support for thousands of individual swimmers around the country.

Born in 1926 in Indianapolis, Krauser née Fogle, learned to swim in Lake Michigan and grew up as a competitive swimmer. By age 16, she was a national champion in the 200-yard breaststroke, representing the Riviera Swim Club of Indianapolis at the AAU Senior National Championships every year from 1941 through 1943. Krauser swam at Purdue University and was a 1944 Olympic hopeful until the games were cancelled because of World War II.



After graduating from Purdue with a home economics degree in 1948, Krauser took a little over 20 years off from racing to get married and raise two children, but stayed involved in aquatics in various capacities. In 1955, Krauser and husband Jack moved to Florida where she eased into the role of swim mom to daughter Janice and son Larry. Krauser soon took up officiating at her children’s meets and eventually helped found the Florida Gold Coast Association of the AAU, leading the organization as secretary, treasurer, and registration Chairman for nine years. She produced a monthly newsletter called *Sporty* for the Association throughout the 1960s, which gave her the idea for the *SWIM MASTER* publication she would later establish for U.S. Masters Swimming. In 1959, Krauser was named a delegate for the AAU Convention and represented South Florida at AAU, USS, and USAS conventions every year for the next 40-odd years.

Krauser earned national recognition for her superior swimming administrative skills and in 1964, she was appointed to the United States Olympic Women’s Swim Committee. Also in the early 1960s, John Spannuth—in his role as International Director of the Special Olympics—tapped Krauser to help him establish competitive rules and regulations as well as organizational policies and procedures for the nascent organization. Of her work with the Special Olympics, Spannuth said: “If you needed something done right, you called June Krauser.”

Krauser’s most enduring contributions to swimming began in the 1970s when she joined Ransom J. Arthur, MD and John Spannuth in pioneering U.S. Masters Swimming. She helped establish the first organization to govern and encourage adult swimming in the United States in a number of capacities, most notably by contributing her sharp eye for details to writing rules and communicating with members. Spannuth said that when the group was trying to get the AAU to “take in Masters Swimming, we needed rules. I put

all of the ideas together, but had no ideas regarding how to do them 'the official way.' June did! So I gave her pages of ideas and she prepared them for the AAU National Convention. She did a super job, and that paved the way for Masters Swimming to become part of the AAU."

In addition to writing USMS's first rule book, Krauser also edited and published the organization's primary membership communication vehicle, *SWIM MASTER*, for more than 20 years. She also helped develop USMS's first website in the late 1990s and created a standard of excellence in membership communication. For her extensive efforts in building and growing U.S. Masters Swimming, Krauser was the second recipient of the prestigious Ransom J. Arthur Award, USMS's highest honor. As Spannuth noted, Krauser "literally wrote the book when it came to competitive swimming for adults and for the Special Olympics, and did more to kick start those two programs than anyone will ever know."

While working to build U.S. Masters Swimming on dry land, Krauser simultaneously roared back to prominence in the water, establishing herself as a force to be reckoned with in the pool and on the podium. She never missed a USMS National Championship meet between 1972 and 2000, nor a FINA Masters World Championship through 2006. Along the way, she set an astonishing 154 USMS records and 73 FINA Masters world records.

For this vast body of watery work, Krauser was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame in 1994, the International Masters Swimming Hall of Fame in 2003, and the Broward County Sports Hall of Fame in 2007. In 2005, USMS created the June Krauser Communications Award in her honor, and she was the first recipient of this annual accolade.

Krauser passed away from complications of Parkinson's disease on August 2, 2014, at the age of 88. Shortly after Krauser's death, Debbie Cavanaugh, boy's and girl's swimming, diving, and water polo coach at Fort Lauderdale High School told the *Miami Herald*, "We always called her the 'Mother of Masters Swimming' because if it wasn't for June, there wouldn't be Masters Swimming. She was the backbone of the whole organization."

Krauser was a powerful and talented swimmer with an unparalleled depth of skill, passion, and dedication to the sport of swimming. U.S. Masters Swimming is forever grateful for her lifelong commitment to building a vibrant framework for Masters swimmers to pursue their passion for swimming and share the life-changing gifts our sport has to offer.

Text by Elaine Howley