

# The R. Max Ritter Award

Richard Max Ritter (November 7, 1886 – May 24, 1974) was born in Magdeburg, Germany and competed for Germany in the 1908 and 1912 Summer Olympics. He was educated in London from 1906 to 1909 and in 1910 he immigrated to the United States. He was one of the 8 founders of FINA on July 19, 1908 where the group set uniform international rules for swimming, diving, water polo and established world records for swimming.

Ritter was the only person to have served in each of the three officer positions within FINA. Ritter served as FINA Honorary Secretary and FINA Honorary Treasurer. In 1960 he was elected FINA President, the first American to serve in a FINA leadership position. At the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, under Ritter's leadership, FINA membership grew to more than 90 National Federations.

He served as the treasurer of the US Olympic Committee and was active for more than 50 years in the Amateur Athletic Union. In 1965 he was inducted as an Honor Contributor in the International Swimming Hall of Fame.

The R. Max Ritter Award is donated by the Ritter Family and is presented annually by United States Aquatic Sports to the organization or individual of a FINA member country who has contributed the most to the advancement of understanding and good will among nations through international participation in amateur aquatic sports. Past recipients of this award are listed below:



2016	June Krauser	1995	Bill Payne
2015	Rose Cody & Giovana Moreira	1992	Spanish Swim Federation
2014	US Anti-Doping Agency	1991	Ross Wales
2013	Nick Thierry	1990	Mustapha Larfaoui
2012	William "Bill" Matson	1989	William Lippman
2011	Eldon Godfrey	1988	Robert H. Helmick
2010	Francisco Javier López Chaves	1987	Dr. John A Bogert
2009	Bartolo Consolo	1986	Javier Ostos Mora
2007	Coarcy Nunes Filho	1985	David Jay Flood
2006	Tom Gompf	1984	Jan Armburst
2005	Orban Mendoza	1983	Masaji Kiyokawa
2003	Gerald T. Olson	1982	Buck Dawson
2001	Hironoshin Furuhashi	1981	Pat Besfort
2000	Lynn Bates	1980	Dr. James E. Counsilman
1999	Julio Maglione	1979	Deutscher Schwim-Verband
1998	Carol Zaleski	1978	Douglas F. Roby
1997	Allen B. Richardson, MD	1977	Yugoslav Swim Federation
1996	Klaus van de Pol	1976	Dr. Harold W. Henning



## United States Aquatic Sports

Representing these Aquatic Sports to FINA



## Max Ritter's Legacy to FINA and the World: The International Swimming Hall of Fame

The history of the International Swimming Hall of Fame (ISHOF) began in 1961, when R. Max Ritter, the German-born American president of FINA, conceived an idea for establishing an institution that would preserve swimming history, honor the accomplishments of great swimmers and promote swimming with the general public. It was a time when FINA was largely a volunteer organization, with an annual budget of less than \$100,000, and did not have the financial resources to fund a full-time staff or an Executive Director, let alone support a museum.



Ritter, who was born in Magdeburg, Germany in 1886, had represented Germany as a swimmer in two Olympic Games (1908, 1912). While studying in England, he had also represented the German Swimming Association at the International Conference held at the Manchester Hotel, in 1908, that led to the creation of FINA.

Ritter immigrated to America, in 1910 and won several U.S. championships in swimming and water polo and was still competing at a national in 1922, when he was 36 years old.

As a sports legislator and administrator, his accomplishments were worldwide. In 1904 he helped found the famed Hellas Swimming Club of Magdeburg and remained Honorary President until his death in 1974. His founding FINA group set up the first uniform international rules for swimming, diving and water polo and for maintaining and certifying world records. He led the way for the development of modern electronic timing and judging devices with his invention of the "Ritter Machine," first used on an experimental basis at the 1956 Olympic Games. He is the only man to ever represent two major powers on the FINA Bureau (Germany and the U.S.A.). He served President of UANA and as both Secretary and Treasurer of FINA before his unique career reached its summit, when he was elected President of FINA, in 1960.

In 1961, when Ritter first proposed his idea for a Swimming Hall of Fame, there was only one logical place establish it – the United States. Europe and Japan were still recovering from the Second World War and Halls of Fame for sports were a uniquely American idea at the time. The Hall of Fame for Baseball had been established in the 1930's and one for American style football had been launched in 1959. Both were very successful and popular and Ritter believed their model of private philanthropic support would work equally well to preserve the history of swimming.

Under the Auspices of the A.A.U., the governing body for American swimming at the time, Ritter put out a call for proposals from American cities to become the home of the Swimming Hall of Fame. Over ten cities responded, with the three finalists being Louisville, Kentucky; Houston, Texas; and Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Fort Lauderdale had established itself as something of an American swimming Mecca in 1928, when its municipal pool became a popular winter training site for university teams. It had also produced two of the greatest American swimming stars of the 1930's, Ralph Flannigan and Katherine Rawls. With a bid that included a swimming stadium and museum, at the cost of over \$1 million dollars, Fort Lauderdale was selected unanimously.

Ritter's status and prestige within the world of swimming was the key to raising funds and collecting the swimming memorabilia for the museum from around the world. Although the Hall of Fame Pool opened in 1965, it wasn't until 1968 that the Hall of Fame museum opened and FINA recognized it officially as an "International Swimming Hall of Fame," at its Congress preceding the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games. Pictured at right is FINA VP, Dr. Harold Henning, with ISHOF president, Dr. Red Silvia, cutting the ribbon, officially opening ISHOF.



Although FINA was not in a position to help ISHOF financially, FINA's leaders contributed as individuals in many ways. For example, twice FINA president Javier Ostos Mora (1968 – 1972, 1976 – 1980) not only donated money, but also a silver "Cabeza de Palenque" (at right) to recognize the achievements of Central and South American swimmers. At the time of this donation, the silver sculpture was valued at \$10,000.

FINA president and IOC member Mario Negri, of Argentina, was another individual who gave enthusiastic support to the Hall of Fame. In 1959 he had commissioned the Kalos Kagathos Foundation to create the Trofeo Confederation Sudamericana de Natation, also known as the Negri Award. Its purpose was to recognize the person or organization distinguishing the disciplines of competitive swimming in South America. The award came to the ISHOF and was administered by Peru's Sebastian Salinas, of Peru, who himself was a FINA Bureau Member, lifetime member of ISHOF and Honor Contributor.

FINA started to receive IOC Broadcast money after the 1968 Olympics, but it wasn't until after the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics that FINA became financially sound and was able to afford a full-time, salaried administrator. By that time, ISHOF had achieved its own financial stability and independence, with an unrestricted reserve fund in excess of \$1.5 million dollars. In addition to a world-wide membership base, ISHOF's founding Executive Director, Buck Dawson, had developed a fundraising program called "Swim-a-thon". The "Swim-a-thon" program helped mostly US swim clubs raise money, with 15% of the proceeds flowing to ISHOF, 5% to the US Olympic swimming team and 80% to the club. ISHOF's financial success stemmed from its share of the successful "Swim-a-thon" program. But that was about to change.



In 1978, the USA organization of swimming had moved from the A.A.U., which governed all aquatic disciplines, to four separate federations – one for each discipline of swimming, diving, synchronized swimming and water polo. In 1984, ten years after Ritter's death, the leadership within USA Swimming decided it would no longer support the "Swim-a-thon" program as a fundraising vehicle for ISHOF. It wanted to use the program to raise money for its own purposes and began to view ISHOF as an "International" Hall of Fame. As more than 80% of ISHOF's annual revenue support came from the "Swim-a-thon" program, this change in attitude had disastrous consequences

for ISHOF. By 2004, the unrestricted reserve fund had been spent, the museum was viewed by many honorees as an embarrassment and ISHOF was on the verge of insolvency and closure.

Under new leadership since 2005, ISHOF has regained a great deal of its lost credibility but only a small measure of short-term financial stability and the future existence of the ISHOF is not assured.

Seventy years ago, at a time when FINA could barely afford to pay for secretarial help, Max Ritter and the volunteer leaders of FINA and world swimming privately created an organization that has preserved the history of swimming for future generations. The commitment of FINA's leadership can be seen in the endowments they have left behind to support the Max Ritter Rare Book Room, the Jean and Harold Henning Library and in the sculptures and other memorabilia on display throughout the museum. It can be found in the papers of FINA presidents Leo Donath, Max Ritter, Javier Ostos Mora, Harold Henning and Bob Helmick that are part of ISHOF's FINA Archive. Without the foresight of FINA's volunteer leadership, most of the incredible one-of-a-kind collection of aquatic memorabilia on display and in storage at the ISHOF might have been lost forever in the scrapheap of forgotten history.

It is the hope of ISHOF's current Board of Directors that the FINA Bureau and staff will work with ISHOF to explore every possibility to ensure that the legacy of what FINA's great leaders left us all will not be lost to future generations.

In grateful acknowledgement for his lifetime of devoted and outstanding services to amateur swimming throughout the world, R. Max Ritter was inducted into ISHOF's inaugural class of Honorees, in 1965. In 1966, the FINA presented him with the highest decoration of the federation, the "Gold Plaque." As an honorary member of the FINA Bureau, Ritter remained active and served as a mentor to his close friends, Javier Ostos Mora (MEX) and Dr. Harold Henning (USA), who both served as presidents of UANA and combined, held the presidency of FINA from 1968 to 1980. All three served swimming well through FINA, but their greatest legacy to FINA and the world of swimming - and where they are remembered best - is through the ISHOF.

### **FINA LEADERS WHO HAVE BEEN INDUCTED INTO THE HALL OF FAME**

LEO DONATH (HUN) – Founder of LEN, Honorable secretary of FINA from 1928 - 1941

EMILE GEORGES DRIGNY (FRA) - President of FINA 1928-1932

HAROLD FERN (GBR) – President of FINA, 1934 – 1948

ELDON GODFREY (CAN) – FINA Bureau Member, 1996 - 2009

GEORGE HEARN (GBR) - Secretary/Treasurer of FINA 1908 1928 Honorary President until 1949.

BOB HELMICK (USA) - FINA President, 1984-1988

DR. HAROLD HENNING (USA) – FINA President, 1972 – 1976

MUSTAPHA LARFAOUI (ALG) – FINA President, 1988 – 2009

CORNEL MARCULESCU (ROM) – FINA Executive Director 1988 - present

DR. JULIO MAGLIONE (URG) – FINA President, 2009 - present

JAVIER OSTOS MORA - FINA President, 1968-1972 and 1976-1980

WILLIAM BERGE PHILLIPS (AUS) – FINA President 1964 – 1968

BERNARDO PICORNELL (ESP) – FINA Bureau Member, 1952 – 1970

BELA RAJKI (HUN) – FINA Bureau Member, 1952 – 1964

SEBASTIAN SALINAS ABRIL (PER) – FINA Bureau Member, 1968-80

BARTOLO CONSOLO (ITA/CH) – FINA Honorary Secretary 2000-2009

