

William "Bill" Matson Recipient of the 2012 R. Max Ritter Award Presented by United States Aquatic Sports

William "Bill" Matson is the 2012 recipient of the R. Max Ritter Award presented by United States Aquatic Sports in recognition of his 40 years of service to aquatics. "Today United States Aquatic Sports honors the memory of a man whose unselfish contributions were sometimes behind the scenes, but always for the benefit of athletes and their coaches across each of FINA's aquatic disciplines" said USAS President Jim Wood.

Bill with his wife Joan often at his side, became involved in swimming administration in New Zealand shortly after their children Susan and Paul were drawn to the sport. Bill retired from the New Zealand Public Service in 1999 following a distinguished military career. At the time of his retirement he held the position of Deputy Secretary of Defense. In 2010 he was honored by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II who appointed him an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for his services to swimming.

Bill was first the President and later a Life Member of Swimming New Zealand after holding similar positions in the Wellington Swimming Association. He was President of Oceania Swimming Association from its inception in 1991 until 2008 overseeing the first 7 editions of competition in swimming, open water swimming and synchronized swimming. In 1992 he was appointed to the FINA Technical Open Water Swimming Committee. Four years later he was elected a member of the FINA Bureau and was appointed as the FINA Bureau's Liaison to the Open Water Swimming Committee.

Bill was re-elected to the FINA Bureau in 2000 and in that year he was appointed to serve as the Liaison to the FINA Masters Committee. In this capacity he and Joan traveled to Riccione, Italy to visit the aquatic venues and to oversee the organization of the 14th edition of the FINA World Masters Championships, the most successful edition recently contested last month.

Many will recall Bill's dedication as the FINA Protocol Officer from 1997 to 2009, a responsibility which included the coordination of presenters for every swimming, diving, synchronised swimming and water polo medal presented to athletes at the World Swimming Championships and at the Olympic Games. He was elected FINA Vice President in 2005. During his volunteer tenure he served on the board of the New Zealand Olympic committee.

Among the many tributes to Bill is that of FINA President Julio Maglione "Bill's example and devotion for the aquatic sports will remain a reference in our mind and heart. His untimely death represents a great loss not only for FINA but also for the entire continent of Oceania, where he has been one of its most distinguished and appreciated officials."

"I had the opportunity to travel to the 4th edition of the Oceania Swimming Championships and was warmly greeted by Bill during my visit to in 2002 in Nouméa, New Caledonia." said USAS President Wood. "We recall Bill's message of encouragement to the youth of Oceania at the opening ceremonies:

"This Championship event is an important milestone for all our competitors, but particularly for the swimmers as it is a qualifying meet for the Olympic Games in Athens. For many competitors this will be your first opportunity to experience international competition. I hope that your efforts are successful and the next door of international competition opens up for you."

Bill and Joan were inseparable and a lovely couple, traveling extensively between FINA events visiting extraordinary sights and ordinary shops along their journey. At the next event they would catch us up on their most recent excursions. During their last Christmas together they stayed in a snowy cottage in England arriving during the "Snowstorm of the Century". Their battle to get to a nearly paralyzed London following the FINA World Short Course Swimming Championships in Dubai made their time together all the more memorable.

The couple lived at Waikanāe on the Kapiti Coast where they enjoyed a long association with Raumati Swimming Club. Bill is survived by Joan, his children Susan and Paul and their four grandchildren. A cruise on the Nile River was in the planning stages for November 2012, intended as a celebration of the couple's 50 years of marriage.

