



WH₂O

WEST HOLLYWOOD AQUATICS

FALL 2020 NEWSLETTER

www.WH2O.org

EXTENDED FAMILY

By Head Swim Coach Kiley Ames



West Hollywood Aquatics has a long history of hiring former UCLA swimmers. So when a former teammate of mine asked me if I wanted to coach WH2O one practice a week, I said sure, I'll try and see if I like it. That was back in 1999! I had never coached swimming before and the team made it incredibly easy for me to find my way as a coach (with some very vocal and helpful tips and opinions). That one practice I started with went to two and then three practices. I coached WH2O for only a year before I moved back home (Bay Area), then to Italy, then back home again. During the 2-3 years I was away, I kept in touch with friends from the team. And when I returned to LA, I knew I wanted to start coaching again. Over the course of the next seven years, the team where I had made many friendships was a team that had become mostly family (I have to say "mostly" since there are always a number of crushes along the way).

In 2009, I went to New York to interview for grad school. I was told I would get in and get a scholarship. It should have been a relatively easy decision but it wasn't. Fortunately, I had a couple of months to decide. The thoughts that kept coming back were how could I be away from my family in the Bay Area and my extended family at WH2O. I knew I would not find a group of people that were so supporting, accepting and loving with a ton of sassy mixed in. I ended up FedEx'ing my application overnight to make the deadline. During the years after I received my MFA, I did residencies in China and Germany, and received a travel grant to Oslo, Norway. After returning from living abroad, I continued to work in New York for a few more years, but at the beginning of 2019, I returned to LA once again.

I'm about a 50/50 believer in the saying "absence makes the heart grow fonder" kinda girl. I believe that strong friendships, whether you see or talk to friends every day, every month, a few times a year, or even after several years, are the ones where when you eventually see and talk to them, you pick right back up from where you left off. That belief and the fact that WH2O is like family, is one of the biggest things helping get me through this current situation. It is what I hope people on this team continue to remember, that during this time when all of us are not seeing each other on a regular basis or in passing at workouts, this team will always come back together, and those friendships will be there, however long it takes to get through these challenging times.

THE SUMMER OF OPEN WATER SWIMMING

While pools were closed most of summer, and WHO wasn't allowed to hold any sanctioned WHOcean workouts, many WHO athletes took to the ocean waters on their own.



Joe Sharaf: *Starting my day with an early morning ocean swim has been a physical and spiritual practice that has helped me keep calm in today's harsh reality. Waking up at 5:30am, detaching from my phone, jumping into the cold, vast, beautiful ocean and swimming is the perfect combination of intensity and serenity.. like meeting with a therapist and being slapped around by a dominatrix at the same time. The perfect way to start my day :)*



Deb Jourdain: *This summer has been extra special, because the group of swimmers kept me sane. Also a summer to remember because Brittaney, Audrey and I saw a great white shark breach 10 feet from us. 2020 is giving it all.*

Audrey Kim: *The pandemic has definitely required me to make some adjustments, but I'm so glad to have found the ocean swim group within WeHo. It is definitely tough to be out there - between the bouncy waves, cold temps, and even after seeing a shark breach so close to me, but this family has gotten me through it all. It's a refreshing workout during these times!*



Olivia Karlin: *Ocean swimming this year has been a blessing. I can't believe I'm saying this, but swimming in the ocean is what I look forward to every day. Before May, no one could get me in the ocean—it was too dark, too scary, too salty, too cold, too wavy, too fishy, etc.... But when the beaches opened up in May, Liz V. persuaded me to try swimming with Irene's group, assuring me that she and Irene would keep an eye on me. When I arrived the next day at Manhattan Beach and saw my WHO friends, I almost forgot my fear of the ocean because I was so happy to see everyone. I felt somewhat normal again. Liz and Irene helped me through that first swim (warm water, red tide), and when I got home, I was giddy—I couldn't work or sit still for two days. I was so happy to have seen my friends and been a part of a swim group again, and thankful that I was healthy and able to participate. I was also learning something new. I hadn't felt that good since before the pandemic. Over the summer, I've made new friends—to me, swimming in the ocean necessarily fosters friendships because we all have to look out for each other, in more significant ways than in a pool workout (where I mainly looked out for getting slapped by a hand paddle or scarred by a lane line). I still like getting advice from Liz and Irene on the ins and outs, but now I'm more confident and look forward to seeing my Ocean Swim Friends (dolphins too) daily. If you had told me last year that swimming in the ocean would be something that makes me happy in 2020, I would have responded, "No way." But it's true. I might even keep swimming in the ocean after the pandemic ends.*



Rook Campbell: *As I reflect on this past spring and summer and coming to know the ocean, I mostly think of all the people. Irene, Audrey, Deb, Carly, Charles, Brittaney, Geoff, Olivia,,,,,so many more names and I could write many, many words on each.. I could write a book of gratitude on Irene. I think of days we played, shivered, went for it, explored, and looked after one another. I think of certain physical markers: yellow flags, orange buoys, the parking lot. I think of water temps, shore dumbs, dolphins and sharks. I think about thinking about sharks, talking about sharks, touching a shark, the shark being seen breaching, thinking about not thinking about sharks. I loved buoyancy. Visibility. Long stroke glides. Walking on the beach together.*



Self times for USMS Virtual Champs 1mi

Lots of firsts. First wetsuit. First day in the ocean (same day as Audrey's first). First one mile swim. First two mile swim. First time to the pier. First time to the pier and back. Virtual races just because we felt like it.

But the shortcoming of all these (above) notes on ocean swimming is that these are more words rather than body speak. Body speak and knowing is the best thing about the ocean. Noticing and being, swimming without interruption (except when you are are: sharks less great) and returning to the day salty.



Ocean swimming is full of happening. Self happening, life happening, care and striving, being and togetherness.

It's ongoingness (except when its broken by things like infections) is part of its wisdom. Change and connectedness happening to all your senses, times and spaces as days match and then depart. You and it all are not the same.

Pool swimming means locker rooms, naked bodies and tanlines. Pool reunites me/us in human good and beautiful constantly,,,ocean reunites me/us in reciprocal relation with nature good and beauty constantly. Need both.

Doug Wilson: *The ocean swims were the highlight of my summer. I always had something to look forward to. My favorite day was the day of dolphins.*



Congratulations to Amy Dantzer for breaking the record for the eleven mile circumnavigation of Anacapa Island on Sept. 10th, achieving her goal time at 4 hours, 57 minutes! The previous record was set the morning before, at 5 hours, 33 minutes.

Mauro Bordovsky: *I grew up two blocks from a beach and have always loved swimming body surfing in the ocean, but I never got into long swims in it, or in the pool for that matter. However, I have enjoyed starting my day at the beach and in the ocean while pools have been closed. It awoke my love for the ocean and even made me think about competing in longer events when we can compete in a pool again – no promises, just a thought... :)*

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GOODBYE WEHO POOL



Errol Graham: *Saying goodbye to the West Hollywood pool was a lot harder for me than I thought it would be. I have swum at many pools in the U.S. and around the world but going to this pool always felt to me like going home. As much as I am looking forward to swimming in the brand new West Hollywood pool, I will never forget the place where I found the team and where I always felt welcomed and safe from the world outside. It was my home away from home and I will always hold it dear to my heart.*



Dan Ferguson: *It was a shock to learn the pool was closing and immediately being demolished. I did a rough calculation of the hours spent in that pool, and it came to 3,000! (3 hours per week, 50 weeks per year, 20 years). Nothing else in my life can compare.*



Erik Guzman: *While we all come together with the common interest of getting in the water to swim, it's the bonds of friendship and family that keep us all together whether we are in or out of the water. This team has had a few defining chapters in its history, and the closing and demolition of our "home pool" along with the pandemic is just one more to add to the amazing story of this team. The building is gone, but my memories are not. They will be with me forever and I look forward to making new ones in our new pool when it opens next year. I know it's cliché, but "home is where the heart is" and this team is my heart.*

Mauro Bordovsky: *I started swimming at the West Hollywood pool in the Summer of 1982, with a group of gay men who trained to compete at the first Gay Games that year in San Francisco. The West Hollywood pool has always been our Club's "home" and primary pool since then. Although I understood the West Hollywood City Council's decision to demolish the pool (along with the auditorium and other parts of the park) in an effort to expedite the re-construction of the entire park, I was disheartened by it. That pool had been of vital importance for many WH2O members. It was at that pool where so many of us found solace and comfort in each other during the AIDS epidemic that devastated the gay and WH2O communities, where friendships and partnerships were formed, where we received and gave emotional support, and where we found encouragement and support to achieve our swimming goals, to name a few. WH2O has had many challenges throughout the past 38 years: discrimination, loss of Club members to AIDS, pool closures prior to scheduled competition, etc. However, we always found comfort and support when we showed up to swim practices at our home pool and by seeing our family members there.*

We knew that the pool would be torn down eventually, but after the new one was open. Having the pool suddenly torn down felt like part of my past was being erased. While loss is part of life, the sudden loss of our pool hit me hard. I knew I needed to go visit the pool one last time to bid it my farewell, to thank it for all the years it was available to WH2O, and to have closure. Anticipating that many of my WH2O family members might have felt the same way, I reached out to our Facilities Coordinator, Irene Wong, to ask her to try to coordinate with the pool manager some time for us to bid our farewells. I am very grateful that Irene agreed to it, contacted the pool manager immediately, and secured a few hours for us to have our closures.

I stopped by the site of the old West Hollywood pool recently. It was hard to be there and not see the pool. I even had to look hard through mounds of dirt, equipment, and trash to imagine where the pool used to be. Although the old pool is gone, I have many memories to carry me through this loss, and I look forward to the day when we will be able to swim in the new pools and enjoy the new park.



Construction pics by Mauro

EYES ON THE PRIZE

Coach Carly Miller recently swam the length of Lake Tahoe, completing the CA Triple Crown.

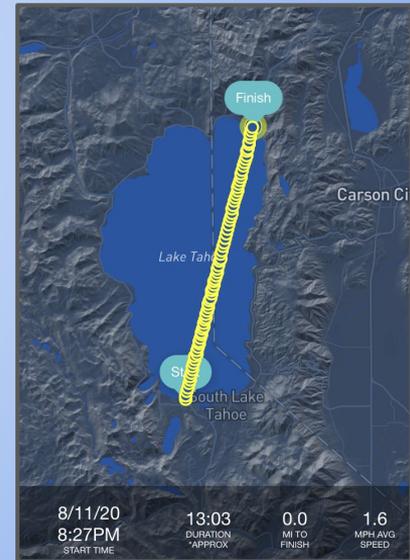
1) Your quarantine has been pretty eventful. Can you tell us about your training and recent accomplishment?

Sure. On August 11-12, I swam the 21.3-mile length of Lake Tahoe overnight. In doing so, I became the 18th person to complete the California Triple Crown of Open Water Swimming (which also includes the Catalina Channel and Anacapa in the Santa Barbara Channel). Because I had this swim on the books (even though I wasn't sure it would happen until literally weeks before), I knew I had to continue to train through quarantine. After pools closed around March 15, and the subsequent LA County beach closures came down, I started driving down to Long Beach and Orange County almost daily. It was cold, but I was determined to make the swim happen no matter what.

2) When did you decide to do the California Triple Crown? When Coronavirus hit, what made you still commit to getting it done this year?

I think I decided I wanted to do the CA Triple Crown at the end of 2017. I knew I wanted to do Catalina and I had been told that Anacapa would be a good build up so I booked that swim in late 2017 for the following September. I thought the CA Triple Crown would be the perfect way to honor my mother. I'm not a person who gives up easily and for me, swimming is super important. It's a big part of who I am and how I maintain my mental health. So it was clear to me that I was going to find a way to swim regardless of whether or not Tahoe was happening. And that was something I couldn't control and wouldn't know for months. I think one of the reasons I really wanted to get it done this year was because I knew that if I could do it under the most difficult of circumstances, that I could probably do almost anything I set my mind to do. So I think looking toward the future of my marathon swimming career, I knew it would be a confidence boost for me if I could get it done this year. Also, the CA Triple Crown had become very important to me and I wanted to see if I could make it onto the list under #20.

3) For those who might be interested in swimming the length of Lake Tahoe, can you tell us a little about what it takes to get done?



First, let's just say that everyone trains differently for this stuff and people seem to think that I over-prepare. That said, for a swim of that distance, you're obviously going to need to do a lot of swimming. My peak weeks in May and June were 36 and 42 miles (about 70K) in the water, respectively. I was meant to have a peak week in July but then I got COVID so I was just trying to come back from that. For anyone aspiring to a swim of that length, you should be doing at least 4 weeks of 50,000 yds or more. I also like to do back-to-back 6-hour swims and then one or two long swims (about ¼ the full distance of the goal swim). In the most simple terms, it's a lot of hours in the water.

4) What long distance swims do you have your eyes on next?

I'm swimming around Coronado in October, but it's not super long. I'm not sure what the order of my next swims will be, especially because of the current state of the world, but there are many that I would eventually like to do. I've got my eye on 20 Bridges (Manhattan Island Circumnavigation, 28.5 mi) and Santa Monica Bay (Malibu to PV, 27 mi). I'd also love to do the Vikingsholm course at Tahoe (10.5 mi) next year as a fun swim with friends, which would earn me the Tahoe Triple Crown.

5) Which athletes or long distance swimmers specifically do you look up to and why?

I look up to people who are pushing their own limits and who are inspiring me to do the same. There are a ton of marathon swimmers in our pretty small community who are just everyday people that I really look up to because they are attempting crazy things - way too many people to list here. A few more widely known athletes that I look up to are: Lynne Cox because I feel like she's one of the great American open water swimmers, has done way too many amazing things to list here, but has also written about it so eloquently in her books, which I definitely used as a guide when I was first starting out. Rich Roll because his book [Finding Ultra](#) was super inspiring at a pivotal point in my life; he is an endurance athlete, author and host of "The Rich Roll Podcast", of which I am also a fan. Sarah Thomas because of the badass long swims she does. In August 2017, she swam 104.6 miles across Lake Champlain, for which she holds a world record for longest unassisted open water swim. In November of that same year, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent surgery, chemo and radiation. Yet in September 2019, she became the first person to complete an English Channel 4-way, which took over 54 hours. Jaimie Monahan has countless accolades and awards in the open water community, way too many to list. She's done crazy long swims (50+ miles) and is also a prolific ice swimmer. She's the first person to complete an ice mile on all 7 continents. A few weeks ago, she swam around Manhattan 7 days in a row. That's 28.5 miles every day for 7 days. 199.5 miles in 1 week. BYE.

6) What's your favorite thing about being part of WH2O?

I love WH2O for its diversity and attitude of inclusivity. When you show up to a practice, everyone is super friendly and welcoming. I feel like that's a really unique thing in this city, world and time. So it's a special environment. And I'm grateful to be on the coaching staff of a team with such a rich and important history.



CALORIES TO BURN

By James Ballard

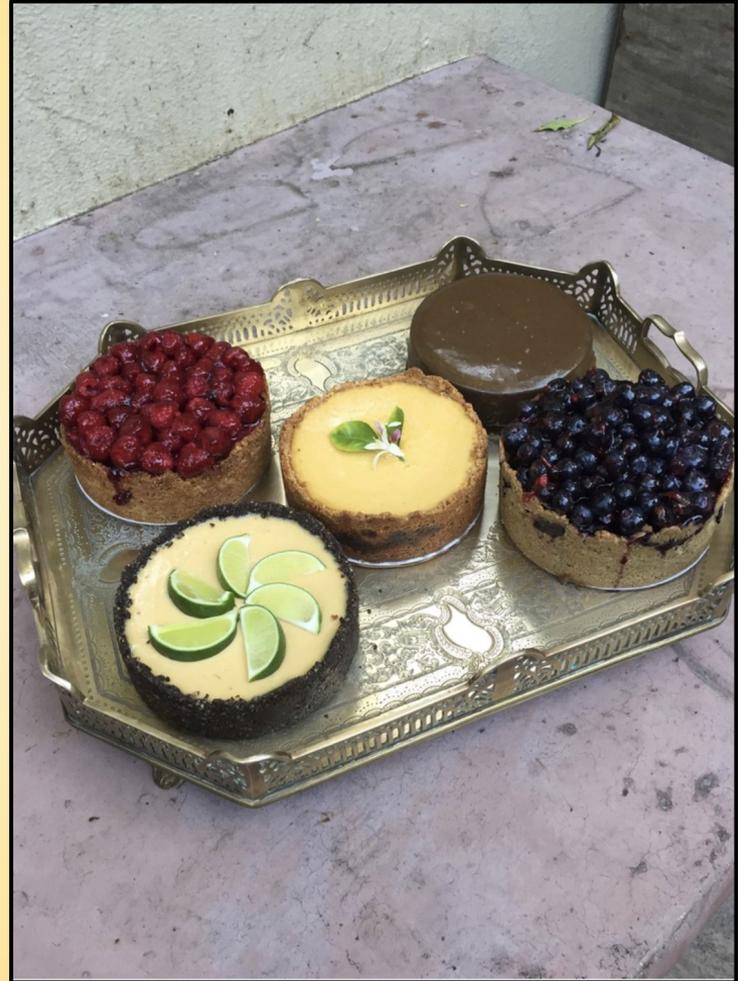
No, I am not talking burnt calories on a massacred reheated product out of a box. No, no, no, no, I am talking energy on a plate that inspires you to spring from the couch and get your fully rested frame to the ocean or back into the pool (reservations required) now that we have options. You see, I don't do cellophane pumped with gas to fuel my semi-sweet tooth (some ingredients excepted for convenience) and neither should you. That to me is just a waste, but what isn't a waste is true flavor that can be found in any number of Make Me Want To Swim Pies and Tarts. You decide. And for those of you who can barely boil water I am starting easy: a **Chocolate Almond Crusted Key Lime Pie** (with a gluten free option). Lower left.

This takes about 45 minutes to make plus six hours to chill. Patience is everything!

There are three steps: crust, filling, and decoration (slicing limes and adding whipped cream).

Essentials:

- Cake or Tart Pan with a Removable Bottom 8", 9", or 10" if you want it to look like a cheesecake. Otherwise, a Standard Pie Plate (preferably Pyrex glass) will work, though a clean cut of the pie is like dreaming.
- Aluminum Foil if you use the pan with a removable bottom.
- Cookie sheet for baking the pie (optional).
- Food Processor (for convenience and speed of smashing cookies and mixing crust, but not a necessity).



Chocolate Almond Crusted Key Lime Pie

Crust:

The crust is a mix, press into the pan, and bake until golden brown. Not a lot of technique here. Here is the fast version:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Prepare pan: Wrap pans with removable bottoms with foil. Coat inside of pan (of whatever type you use) with oil (spray works too) or with a little melted butter.

Ingredients:

1. Chocolate Graham Crackers – 10 ounces approximately.
2. Almonds (buy pieces if you don't have a food processor) – $\frac{3}{4}$ cup.
3. Almond Flour -1/2 cup
4. Cocoa Powder (optional)
5. Sugar – 1/3 cup.
6. Butter 1½ sticks melted (microwave or on the stove).

Break up the Chocolate Graham Crackers and the almonds into a coarse mixture, not like fine sand or flour, in a food processor or simply smash together. Add the other dry ingredients and mix. Add half of butter and mix and keep adding butter until the ingredients are just damp enough to stick together and press into the pie plate.

*Gluten free option: Omit the graham crackers and substitute gluten free cookies or simply add more almond flour. You can also add a couple of tablespoons of tapioca flour if you want to it to hold together better. Coconut can also be substituted in place of the graham crackers, but remember it is lighter in weight. Be brave. You are just making a mixture that gets pressed into a pie pan.

Allergic to nuts? Leave them out and go with a few more graham crackers. Bake for 15-20 minutes until golden brown. If you are using coconut, start watching earlier as it browns quickly. Let cool.

Filling:

Turn oven down to 350 degrees.

Ingredients:

1. Lime Zest: 1 heaping teaspoon. Can be grated and chopped if you don't have a zester.
2. Lime Juice: 1¼ cups (fresh), which is about 6-10 limes depending on how juicy they are. Err on the side of buying more limes than necessary. I use regular limes as the key limes are hard to find, a pain to juice, and small. You can substitute frozen lime concentrate but results vary. Definitely stay away from canned or bottled lime juice, unless you've tasted it and are satisfied that it doesn't taste artificial.
3. Two 14 oz cans of Sweetened Condensed Milk
4. 2 Large Eggs at room temp and slightly beaten (if you forget to bring to room temp, put them in warm water for about 5 minutes before you crack and beat them lightly and leave for another 5 minutes on counter before you mix).

Mix Lime Zest, Lime Juice, Sweetened Condensed Milk together in a large bowl until smooth. Add eggs and mix together again until batter is smooth and uniform.

Let sit for 5 minutes and then pour into pie shell. Bake on cookie sheet for 20 minutes. Edges should be set and center should have a very slight jiggle like jello, but not liquid. Let rest on counter for an hour or so until room temp and then place in the refrigerator till cold. At least 6 hours and preferably overnight, though you can speed up a little by putting the pie in the freezer for 5 minutes to start and repeat the five minutes twice more or so until cold. Freezing changes the texture so be careful.

Good for about 4 plus days refrigerated.

Slice limes and serve with whipped cream or whipped cream and sour cream mix and dance to the pool.

Can be made with Passion Fruit Juice and Lemon juice as long as you get to 1¼ cups.

Happy Happy

What it Means to be a Team

By President Jon Kelly

On the windy evening of Monday, March 9th, I parallel parked my car and jogged three blocks along Fairfax Avenue in my dress shoes. I stopped at the front door of the restaurant, caught my breath, and checked my phone to confirm that it was indeed 7:03pm – I was late. I opened the door to find Deb, Lis, and Irene wave me over to a leather-tufted, cognac-colored corner booth. By the time our Board meeting began, nine of us were huddled around a table meant for five, eating and laughing and discussing all the normal things a WH2O Board discusses: none of which involved the words Global Pandemic.

By Thursday, the nation went into panic-mode. COVID-19 had arrived in the U.S. Businesses pivoted to WFH, and everyone rushed to buy toilet paper. Friday was spent replying to Board@wh2o.org emails frantically before another member *Replied All* to the 20+ response email threads. News of cancellations trickled in by the hour, and by end of day we sent a note out suspending all practices until further notice, something that this team has never had to do before.

On the surface, things probably seemed calm after that week. Team emails were infrequent because, well, there were no practices, no fundraisers, no meets, and no social gatherings. Underneath the surface though, the Board was furiously eggbeating through COVID safety protocols, PPP loans, monthly profit/loss projections, insurance, remote coaching strategies, open water swims, projected outcomes, and correspondence with various facilities. Weekly Zoom meetings coupled with daily email updates. Month by month we changed our strategies and our foci, and finally, by late August, we began to see some light at the end of the tunnel as Irene relayed to the Board that Santa Monica is allowing limited practices to resume. Time to get the team back on track!

I wanted to write to you to let you know that there are some people who won't ever be asking for a 'Thank You' but definitely deserve one. Jessica Seaton went above and beyond her role as Swim Rep, managing not only a coaching task force that had to strategize against a seemingly impossible budget but also taking the helm with Errol Graham at revising and refreshing our team's Policies & Procedures. Adam Larson submitted and tracked our PPP Loan from start to finish, getting WH2O the money we needed for our coaches. Lis Bartlett, Erik Guzman, Deb Jordain, Tim Kline, and Jordan Harris led the charge through our sometimes tense (and always long) Zoom meetings, providing extremely valuable insight and thought into the team's short term and long term futures. Past Board members offered advice on how to proceed amidst this unprecedented time. And Irene Wong kept close correspondence with every facility she could get on the phone, and as you've seen in recent days, has been on deck these past two weeks making sure everything goes, once again, swimmingly.

But, most importantly, there's you – the team member who sacrificed doing what you loved for a few months with some of your closest friends in the name of health and safety. Thank you for being patient. Thank you for donating to keep our coaches paid. Thank you for hopping on those Zoom meetings, workouts, and discussions. Thank you for sticking with WH2O. And thank you for coming back, when you deem it's safe, and practicing with us once again. Battling together through adversity is what makes this more than just a group of people sharing a couple of lanes. It makes us a team. I'm proud to be a part of this WH2O community. Together we are strong.



A VERY CAMPY CAMPING TRIP

By Jordan Harris

Recently I went on a two week camping trip with four friends to Yellowstone, The Grand Tetons, Bryce Canyon, and Zion National Parks and it was AMAZING! The crowds were minimal, weather was perfect, and the few people I encountered were very friendly. We rented a motorhome starting in Las Vegas, traveled north to Yellowstone with a stopover in Salt Lake City before we arrived in Yellowstone. Yellowstone National Park was beautiful in every way possible. The national park is so big that it spreads out through Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana leaving you with many different climates and terrain changes.



After Yellowstone we headed two hours south to the Grand Tetons (my favorite place of them all) and stayed for four days. This national park is definitely a hikers' paradise given that there are tons of trails for all different levels. I decided to challenge myself with a 15-mile hike one day to Cascade Canyon where I was able to swim and basque in the sun. The second day I hiked to Holly Lake (about 14 miles) and we were hit with a SNOW storm! We gained about 2,000 feet in elevation and by the time we got half way, the winds picked up, the snow started, and the fight or flight response kicked in. Clearly I chose fight, made it to the top, and hurried my way back down to the campground for warmth.

Bryce Canyon was great because we stayed at Kodachrome Campground which is encapsulated by amazing rock formations called hoodoos. Many of the hoodoos look like pee-pees which made it even more interesting to wake up to. We did the traditional Navajo Loop at Bryce Canyon and left after one day because there wasn't much else to see.



Our last stop was Zion National Park and it was the perfect way to end our two week journey. This is also a very diverse hiking spot giving you many different levels of difficulty. I hiked the Narrows where most of the hike you are hiking through water and different size boulders. At one point, I was hiking through water up to my neck with my backpack on top of my head. This was definitely fun and my speedos came in handy. My favorite hike was the Watchman Trail because we went at sunset and ended the hike seeing the perfectly clear night sky. I haven't seen the sky this clear since I was a kid so I spent hours stargazing.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you would like any recommendations about any of the four National Parks I visited!

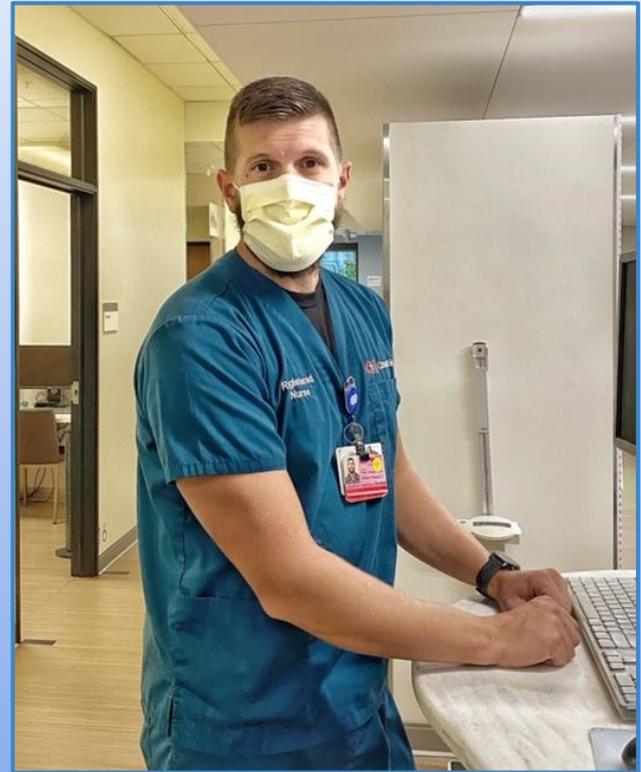
Nursing in COVID Times

By Jon Garrison

Working in healthcare during a global pandemic has been...interesting. I work as a nurse coordinator who manages a pediatric kidney transplant program. And though I've been spared from much of the insanity of COVID-19 because I work with kids in an outpatient clinic, the current situation has completely changed my practice, increased my responsibilities, and has left me physically and mentally exhausted most days.

Seemingly overnight, I had to shift all of my work to that of virtual video visits and home blood draws. I have helped to create new policies and teach parents how to use new technology. I have had to personally process through this collective trauma with my patients and their families - some of them multiple times - oftentimes about the same fears and anxieties. I've had to help devise creative solutions for parents who are essential workers, allowing them to continue to provide for their families while also not putting them in danger. I've had to write letters for my teenage patients' unemployment benefits. I've had to learn the most up-to-date information about COVID and its treatments. And I've had to help quarantine those patients and parents who tested positive from their families and siblings.

Out of all of this, the biggest struggle during this pandemic has been managing my patients at the intersection of their healthcare and their mental health. My patients are immunosuppressed children, and therefore at a particularly high risk for getting sick. We've always taught them to be hyper vigilant about protecting themselves. They often wear masks in public (before it was fashionable). They take great care to keep their immunosuppressed selves free from illness. Now there's a worldwide pandemic (even though there is some early and reassuring data that shows immunosuppressed kids aren't as susceptible to getting sick from COVID-19), it doesn't do much to alleviate the fears from both my patients and my medical team. Because of that, some of my patients haven't left their homes since mid-March. Some of their parents quit work and are now struggling with finances. Some resist even going to the pharmacy to refill their medications (the doses they cannot ever miss for fear of organ rejection). Now, six months in, some of them are contemplating going back to school. Some of my patients or their parents are going back to work. Some are resuming some form of normal life. Some by choice - others by necessity. Whatever the situation, this resumption of life has led to increased anxiety and fear, and many of them turn to me to help them cope with that.



There is a term called “sin eating”. In its literal translation, it’s a ritual performed in some cultures to take away the sins of people who have died so they can ascend to the afterlife cleansed. Some people have called those of us in the service profession “sin eaters”. We show up for our patients/clients and listen to them, have empathy for them, and then allow them to pass along their fears and anxieties and trauma to us. We take it on because that’s part of our job. We welcome it, and we’re good at it. These people are able to unload all of the difficult baggage of the moment and walk away from us feeling lighter. Nurses, hairdressers, bartenders, massage therapists, talk therapists, flight attendants, real estate agents (and many more professions - don’t get angry if your profession wasn’t listed...) - we are all sin eaters - we take in the dark parts of those we service. I have been taking on a large amount of baggage in my job, but this entire time that I was helping my patients process through their anxieties, I was also working through my own trauma and loneliness, missing friends and family and the pool, and struggling to find effective coping strategies for myself. This has been a challenge for me, and some days I am able to manage better than others. I have spent many early mornings running and cycling around the city, clearing my head and reframing my mental health. I have spent hours on the couch with Netflix just checking out. My therapist has also gotten her money’s worth the last six months.

I don’t need to teach anyone what shelter-in-place was like. We all lived it. Even though each one probably looked a little bit different, we all had to work through similar struggles. And even though my job has become even more difficult and all-encompassing, I do appreciate the distraction. I can appreciate the opportunity to focus on someone other than myself, even if that focus hasn’t been easy. My work gives me purpose, even if sometimes it frustrates me. Educating people about confusing medical topics is what I do best, even though sometimes it can be tiresome. And managing my loneliness and anxiety have allowed me to dive deep into those feelings and begin to make structural changes in myself. It hasn’t been pleasant, but I’m better because of it.

In many ways quarantine has made me into a better nurse - more confident, more knowledgeable, and much more patient. It’s taught me to show up for my patients however they need me to. It’s taught me better ways to approach trauma and mental health. It’s taught me how important it is to take care of myself. I know that I will take these lessons with me for years to come, even after the world returns to normal.



Eat the Rainbow

By Jessica Seaton, D.C.



Phytonutrients, or phytochemicals, are chemicals found in plants that protect them from pests and disease. They are responsible for the plant's color and taste, and do not provide calories like carbohydrates, protein, and fats. In humans, phytochemicals are important for good health. They stimulate enzymes that help rid the body of toxins, optimize the immune system, improve cardiovascular health, and promote the death of cancer cells. Numerous studies have shown that a plant-based diet promotes optimal health. Even “low carb” diets should include lots of colorful vegetables and some fruits. The different colors represent different phytonutrients. I encourage my patients to eat every color of the rainbow every day. If you find your diet tends toward brown and beige, it could use some work.

How to get more color in your diet:

- Replace white potatoes with sweet potatoes or purple potatoes.
- Instead of white rice, have brown, black, or purple rice.
- Aim for 9 to 13 servings of vegetables and fruits a day. A serving of vegetables is 1/2 cup, or one cup of raw leafy vegetable, or a medium-sized piece of fruit. Fresh and frozen fruit is preferred over dried fruit and fruit juices, as they contain less sugar. Aim to have half of your lunch or dinner plate be vegetables.
- Variety is very important. There are thousands of phytonutrients so if you're eating the same foods over and over, you're not taking advantage of these different nutrients. Try getting your blue/purple foods not only from blueberries but try purple cabbage or purple potatoes. Try to eat a new food every week.
- Cook your vegetables to the point at which they're tender but not soft and mushy and the color becomes vivid. Steaming or waterless cooking of vegetables is preferable to boiling them.
- Carotenoids are absorbed better when cooked and eaten with some fat or oil. They are found in red, orange, yellow, and green foods, such as carrots, squash, tomatoes, sweet red peppers, sweet corn, and sweet potatoes.
- Seeds, nuts, and legumes can be cooked, soaked, germinated, or fermented to increase the availability of phytonutrients and decrease less beneficial compounds found in these foods.
- The antioxidant content is increased up to 400% in the following foods when cooked: carrots, spinach, mushrooms, asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, red cabbage, green and red peppers, potatoes, and tomatoes.

In this and subsequent articles I'll focus on the value of phytonutrients found in the different colored foods: Blue/purple/black, red, orange, yellow, green, and white/brown.

Blue/purple/black foods: berries, eggplant, kale, potatoes, rice, cabbage, figs, olives, prunes, cauliflower, grapes, plums, raisins

Resveratrol is one of the phytonutrients found in purple foods. It helps reduce inflammation and blood sugar and is good for your cardiovascular system. Pterostilbene, found in particular in blueberries and grapes, is another phytonutrient found in this group. It may help ward off cancer, control blood fats and blood sugar, and help preserve brain function.

Jessica Seaton, D.C., is a Chiropractic Orthopedist and Functional Medicine doctor in private practice in Culver City. She has been a member of West Hollywood Aquatics since 1990.



ARCHIVES UPDATE

The WH2O Archives Committee is looking for a diverse group of WH2O members as volunteers to be photographed wearing WH2O merchandise from years past (e.g., T-shirts, swim and water polo suits, caps, etc.). The intent is to store those photographs in a WH2O Archives website (to be determined) accessible to WH2O members only and, with your permission, possibly share them with the ONE Archives Foundation for historical purposes. Please contact me, Mauro Bordovsky (mbswim@yahoo.com) with any questions or to arrange a time for the photo session(s).

Thank you,
Mauro Bordovsky

COMING SOON to the Merch Store

PARKAS and ROBES! Designed by WH2O's very own water polo player Sammy Binkow

1) How did you come up with the design for this? What was the inspiration?

I came up with the design by first thinking of all the objects to incorporate that people might associate with WH2O: rainbow, Weho, water polo ball, etc. Then I knew I was going to do some sort of pool scene because that just made sense so I added the ripples in the water. Lastly, I knew I wanted to include swimmers in the design and the old neon sign of the woman diving that's outside the Museum of Neon Art in Glendale popped into my head, so I riffed off that.

2) Is design what you do for work in your life outside the pool? Where can people see your other work?

I am an artist outside of the pool. I mostly do sculpture, but also have a lot of experience in designing custom clothing (mainly for musicians). People can see my work at www.sammybinkow.com or on instagram @sammybinkow.

3) How long have you been a member of WH2O?

About 2 years.





After a 7-month hiatus, we are BACK IN THE POOL at Santa Monica Swim Center. Many thanks to our fearless Facilities Coordinator Irene Wong for making it happen. See you there! (Bring a mask! Sign up online first! Two to a lane!) Check the calendar for the most up-to-date schedule.



CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

By Brittany Talbot

Raise your hand if your plans for 2020 were derailed. Oh everyone? Great. So I don't have to tell you that my plans for this year saw a seismic shift circa mid-March and continued to feel the aftershocks well into the summer. I don't have to tell you about navigating the uncertainty, the at times overwhelming anxiety and worries about my friends and loved ones and my own health. I don't have to tell you about screaming into a towel because I was tired and frustrated by the news and the numbers and never ending list of cancellations. Because you were there too.

Hi, I'm Brittany. If we've never met it's probably because I'm primarily a morning swim practice person and then spent 9 months on a nationally touring show, that has since been indefinitely postponed. I'm a triathlete so things like diving off the blocks or swimming butterfly intimidate me. I've never placed first in a swim meet, been moved into the fast lane, or even attempted to throw a water polo ball. But I do have a fair number of triathlon titles and accomplishments and passion for the multisport life.

When the gravity of the pandemic truly set in, it became more and more apparent that race season was going to be different. I watched as competitions were postponed, then canceled, races dwindling away week by week. Ironman events, local races and series, USAT Nationals until eventually my A-race, ITU World Championships, was gone.

I have been asked again and again, what are you training for if you aren't racing? For a while I didn't really know. I was just training because that's my habit. It became clear this wasn't going to be about maintenance, that this wasn't about keeping it up until things return to normal. While current COVID life is not normal, we would have to find ways to move past feeling like we are in a holding pattern.

In May, I reached out to Irene Wong. I had been doing a few solo ocean swims and knew that it was way more fun and way more safe to have a swim buddy. She was, like, 30 steps ahead. Within minutes of emailing her asking if she would want to meet up and swim she sent an incredibly organized and comprehensive email about a group of ocean swimmers. She invited me and, when I showed up, greeted me with the biggest air hug and warmest smile before putting on her mask. After getting home from that swim, I didn't need to scream into a towel.

The spring and summer of 2020 became all about Ocean Swim with Friends. Having a Garmin watch enabled me to track distances and share via their online platforms. The text message chain we had become peppered with images Irene sent of our group's progress. Apps like Strava, a program that tracks your distance and routes over various disciplines and compares them against past efforts of yourself and others, became a collective training journal. I found Deb Jourdain on the site and we started following each other. Rook Campbell got a Garmin and signed up for Strava. The effect rippled out. Soon we were giving kudos and naming routes after one another.

Without racing as a metric, I made a list of challenges I wanted to complete before summer became autumn. I quietly checked some off and added new ones to the bottom. It was satisfying. It was motivating. I was alone but those little orange thumbs up on Strava made me smile.

It would be inaccurate to say this was enough. The truth is, I missed racing. I missed the thrill, the challenge, I missed the 4am alarm. (I'm lying...about the alarm.) I missed having a chance to see just how fast I could go in the water, on the road, on my feet. Going out on my own and working on a personal goal was one thing, something else happens when you go out in front of a crowd and put it all on the line. I missed crossing that line.

I wasn't alone. There was a small contingent of athletes hanging on to an ever tenuous hope that the Los Angeles Herbalife Triathlon would still go off, albeit postponed, in late October. I obsessively checked the

website, my cursor hovering over the register button. One morning, the register button disappeared and a new date for the race was plastered all along the heading: May 2021.

I wasn't devastated. There were, and still are, much bigger things in the world that warranted heartbreak. But I did think, *Nope. It's not going down like that.* There had to be a way to safely and inclusively create a way to capture the essence of triathlon race.

I have been using Will Rogers Beach Lot 3 as base camp for most of my training. It's a great intersection of open water, road cycling, and miles of beach path for running. I had effectively been doing my own triathlons from here all summer. It was easy to see this was the perfect spot to encourage others to do the same. I know triathlon has a high barrier of entry so I wanted to make sure those who might not relish open water swimming, cycling, or running could still find a way to celebrate their fitness. After brainstorming, I landed on the Choose Your Own Adventure Triathlon and to sweeten the deal, I decided I would lead a beach yoga session after all our respective sports were finished. I invited anyone who wanted to participate to choose the sports they wanted to challenge, and if triathlon was one of them, great!

I set out a triathlon course as closely based on standard regulations as possible. It felt oddly serendipitous that there were perfect landmarks (or in the swim case watermarks) for turnaround points. Everything would be self-timed with masks and social distancing required. I couldn't shut down PCH for the morning (maybe one day) so anyone cycling knew they would be following traffic laws and to adjust their watches accordingly.

The response was overwhelmingly positive. The morning of the "race" I arrived at the parking lot at 6am to set up. It just so happened I had picked the same date as another group of endurance athletes embarking on a 6-mile roundtrip swim. I'll never forget zipping up Olivia Karlin's wetsuit, something I've done dozens of times and feeling in awe of her humble prowess as a swimmer. This is the first year she has taken up open water swimming and she's outstanding, but you all knew that. She and the other swimmers entered the water and began the trip to Santa Monica. Our triathlon would be fishing around the same time they'd be coming in. Strava was about to explode.



I was definitely impressed by the speed and creativity of everyone who challenged themselves on the Choose Your Own Adventure race. We had swimmers, like Audrey, David, Tyler, and Doug who went longer than the set 1700 yards, Matt Nahrstedt, who swam and then dominated a 10k, Sully and his brother who are conquering open water bit by bit and then hit the pavement for an inline skate and bike session, and a finishline committee that cheered and celebrated everyone, even a few strangers and a collegiate cross country team. We had a first time triathlete, Jordan Hunter, who is just breaking into the sport but has big dreams and goals when it comes to including unrepresented athletes in multisport.

The indefatigable Irene Wong got to race. After everything she has done for the team this year, she deserved a podium ceremony.

I get shy when talking about my race, but I will say that I threw down some personally impressive numbers. Thanks to Liz and Carlo, I swam one of my best ocean swim times at that distance. Despite the traffic on PCH, I averaged over 20mph on the bike, and was less than 2 minutes off my all-time personal best 10k run time.

It was surreal teaching yoga on the beach. Probably the most Los Angeles thing I'll ever do. And I'd do it again in a heartbeat. Looking out on the water and then back at all these trusting athletes, I was overwhelmed with gratitude. I had typed out a few directions and invited people to be there and whether it was for me or for themselves or both, they showed up with open hearts and minds. Would I love to get on a podium and spray champagne everywhere? Of course, but until all of you are there with me, it won't feel as special as that moment.

I could not be more thankful to everyone who participated in every capacity. From the athletes to the parking lot support crew, I was so impressed. My husband isn't on the team, but he is now considering it (maybe, kinda) because of the joyful energy you all brought to the day. He won't get the newsletter, but I thank him for looking up across the kitchen table and saying, "Anything you need, I'll do it."

So now, raise your hand if you found a way to show up for yourself this year. That despite the cancelations and postponed plans, the evaporating events, the fear and the anxiety, you navigated yourself through uncharted waters. While we are not yet done finding ways to survive this, you are making it through each day (even if you're still screaming into a towel sometimes, and that's okay) and remaining curious about how you can challenge the next. I don't have to tell you how good it feels to show up, for whatever it is you need this year. I don't have to tell you because when I did, you were there too.





Watch the movies on your own time and then join the Zoom discussions on Wednesday nights at 8pm. Zoom links are on the team calendar.

Are you passionate about a particular film and want to talk about why? Have you worked on a film that you love? Do you know someone who did? Let us know and you can “host” a movie discussion. Email secretary@wh2o.org.

September 16th

[Olympic Pride, American Prejudice](#) (2016) is a documentary about the 17 other American Black athletes who competed alongside Jesse Owens at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin who are often forgotten by history. The movie is available on Amazon Prime, Roku, fubo, hoopla, and directv, and can also be rented on YouTube and iTunes.

September 23rd

[Love & Basketball](#) (2000) tells the story of two childhood friends who both aspire to be professional basketball players. Over the years, the two begin to fall for each other but their separate paths to basketball stardom threaten to pull them apart. You can rent the movie on Amazon Prime, YouTube, or iTunes.

September 30th

[The Weight of Gold](#) (2020) is a documentary on HBO about the mental health challenges of Olympic athletes while training and competing and also in retirement. It features accounts from many Olympians, including Michael Phelps, who share their own struggles with mental health issues. If you don't have HBO, you can borrow a password from a friend for that week or do a trial for one week.

CALENDAR

- **Sunday 10/18:** WH2O Anniversary Celebration on Zoom (with fun awards and back-to-pool promo)
- **Sunday 11/15:** Annual Meeting & WH2O Board Elections (new board will start January 1, 2021).

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Check out the [September / October](#) issue of SWIMMER magazine for a writeup on the history of our team and legacy of LGBTQ aquatics along with a great interview with Mauro Bordovsky.
- Practices are up and running at Santa Monica Swim Center! Check out WH2O.org for the most up-do-date schedule.



Mike Wallace: I am sorry to report that we have lost a former member of WH2O. Patrick Casey swam for the team and went to the Gay Games in Vancouver in 1990. He was a psychiatrist and took a job at Kaiser Long Beach where he moved after those Games. He passed from pancreatic cancer.