

# 2004 Joseph G. Rogers Award

For dedication, accomplishment, and excellence in  
YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving



## Buck Dawson

There are locations that are inexorably connected with sports that, when mentioned, conjure up indelible images. Augusta, Churchill Downs, and Daytona, for example, have special meaning to golfers, horse racing and auto racing enthusiasts, respectively. And for anyone involved in YMCA competitive swimming, Fort Lauderdale has a special meaning. For over thirty years, the YMCA National Swimming and Diving Championship has been held in Fort Lauderdale at the International Swimming Hall of Fame. This connection, which has grown in stature over the years, is the result of the dedication and foresight of one man, Buck Dawson. The Joseph G. Rogers Award for 2004 is awarded to William F. "Buck" Dawson for his contributions to the YMCA Swimming Program specifically, and to competitive swimming, in general.

Following his graduation from Blair Academy in New Jersey in 1939, Buck entered the University of Michigan, where he was a member of the Varsity Track team that set a world best time in the 880 relay. His education was interrupted by WW II and, in 1941 he enlisted in the U.S. Army as a Private. He rose to the rank of Captain and served in the European

Theater of Operations as a Combat Platoon Leader. In the course of his service he was awarded nineteen decorations. Following the War, he returned to Michigan, graduating in 1948. Following a stint in business, Buck re-enlisted in the Army and served in Europe during the Korean Conflict and was involved in the establishment of NATO.

Buck's full time relationship with swimming began in 1955 with his marriage to RoseMary Mann, whose father, Matt Mann, was the 1952 Head U.S. Olympic Swimming Coach and founder of the world's first competitive swimming camps, Chikopi (1920) and Ak-o-Mak (1928). In 1964, Buck founded the International Swimming Hall of Fame, where the first combined YMCA men's and women's national championship was held in 1972. He served on the U.S. Olympic Swimming Committee for twelve years; as Special Advisor to the Peace Corps; USS Coach of the Year in Long Distance Swimming in 1981; an International Swimming Hall of Fame Honoree in 1986; Fort Lauderdale Distinguished Citizen of the Year in 1987; a recipient of the Commodore and Golden Whale from the American Red Cross; received the R. Max Ritter Award, the highest honor bestowed by US Swimming; and the W.R. Bill Schroeder Award from the Association of Sports Museums and Halls of Fame, an association he founded in 1971.

Looking back on a career included friendships with the modern legends of swimming, including Johnny Weissmuller, Buster Crabbe, Esther Williams, Eleanor Holm, as well as William E. Simon, Art Linkletter, Gerald Ford and Ronald Regan, and an appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show and in an AMC special on Marlene Dietrich, Buck is most proud of his wife, RoseMary, who passed away on May 3, 2003, and who took the first U.S. age group swimming team abroad, and of his daughter, Marilyn, who won a Bronze Medal in Swimming in the 1968 Olympic Games.

In recognition of a lifetime of notable accomplishments too numerous to list here, for his unwavering support and dedication to the sport of Swimming, and for his contributions to the YMCA Swimming Program, the Joseph G. Rogers Award for 2004 is gratefully given.