

# The 1997 Joseph G. Rogers Award

for Dedication, Accomplishments and Excellence in YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving



*John Higgins' life is a fascinating chapter of history. For the many people that know him, it is a privilege and honor to call him friend. Encouraged to swim by his doctor as a remedy for whooping cough, John's active participation as a YMCA and AAU swimmer during his youth, led him to Mike Peppe's pool at Ohio State University in 1934. A three-time All-American while swimming for the Buckeyes, Higgins won three Big Ten Championship and the 1940 NCAA 200-yard breaststroke championship title.*

*With Peppe, John's international career blossomed. At the U.S. Olympic Trials, Higgins set an American Record of 2:41.1 in the 200-meter breaststroke, which lasted 12 years. He is one of the first men to set the world record using the over-arm recovery method of the breaststroke - a technique which led to the creation of the modern butterfly.*

*Upon his college graduation and the cancellation of the 1940 Olympic Games, Higgins joined the Navy where he used his swimming talent to teach sea survival skills to pilots. In 1942, Ensign Higgins finished the war years on an air-craft carrier in the Pacific as an instructor of swimming and other sports he learned as a youth at the YMCA in Providence.*

*John was assigned to the U.S. Naval Academy in 1950 where he served as the Head Swim Coach for 23 years and the USNA Aquatics Director for 33 years. As the driving force behind the construction of Lejeune Hall Pool at the Academy in 1981, the locker room is named in his honor. In addition to his duties at the USNA, Higgins served in numerous volunteer roles including starter, timer, and referee at the YMCA National Swimming & Diving Championships for 15 years with his beloved wife Betts.*

*John is one of few individuals who has proudly "done it all" in the swimming arena. He is not only honored for his impressive career as an athlete and coach, but for his commitment and service to the YMCA and the sport of swimming.*

## **His many accomplishments include:**

- \* President, College Swim Coaches Association
- \* President, International Swimming Hall of Fame
- \* Member, U.S. National Olympic Swimming Committee
- \* Member, National YMCA Competitive Swim & Dive Committee
- \* Retired Commander, U.S. Navy
- \* Retired Professor, U.S. Navy
- \* Professor Emeritus, U.S. Navy
- \* Coach, U.S. Naval Academy (1950-73)
- \* Aquatic Director, U.S. Naval Academy (1950-83)
- \* 1936 U.S. Olympic Team (4th, 200m butterfly)
- \* 1940 U.S. Olympic Team (cancelled due to war)
- \* 12 National AAU Championship titles
- \* 5 FINA Recognized World Records
- \* 5 World Best Times
- \* 20 American Records
- \* 3 Big Ten Conference Championship titles
- \* 1940 NCAA Division I Champion - Ohio State University
- \* NCAA-All American (1938-39-40)

This award was established in 1974 as recognition of long and exceptional leadership, insight, dedication and friendship by a man whose YMCA career has touched and enriched the lives of countless young people. In his lifetime, Joe Rogers was the first recipient of the National Distinguished Service to Aquatics Award, was the organizer of the National Operating Council on Aquatics, represented the YMCA on the U.S. Olympic Men's Swimming Committee, and was the founder of the National YMCA Women's Swimming and Diving Championships established in 1966.

The Joseph G. Rogers Award statue is permanently located in the International Swimming Hall of Fame Museum, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with each Honoree's name affixed in bronze on the base. A replica of the statue is presented to each Honoree at the YMCA of the USA National Swimming and Diving Championships.

The creator of the statue is Daniel Gluck, whose abstract religious and sports sculptures (including the Brian Piccolo Award) are on view in many public places around the United States. The beautifully sculptured award of bronze and marble stands over four feet in height, weighs nearly 1,000 pounds and has a mounted swimming figure that stretches nearly four feet in length.