

## **Billy Koczyk: Past is Prologue**

By MacKenzie Kearney

*And by that destiny to perform an act  
Whereof what's past is prologue, what to come  
In yours and my discharge."*

"The Tempest", William Shakespeare

"What is past is prologue", or "Your past will be your future." As Overlee wins the 2006 Division I Championship title outright it brings to the mind the 1973 Championship Overlee Swim Team coached by Bill Koczyk. As an Overlee competitive swimmer, I swam with five coaches: the legendary Joe Adams, Sally Watson, Doug Adams, Bill Koczyk, and Amy Howe. Mr. Adams molded me into a competitive swimmer, shaping my strokes, teaching me my turns and starts. Mr. Adams will always have a special place in my heart. But it was Billy Koczyk, who inspired me to achieve my best as a teen swimmer.

It was the first week of swim practice for the 2006 swim team, when my husband called my office, As he spoke the words, "I am sorry to tell you this but ... Mentally I am transported back to "Old Meter pool" deck before morning practice. In 1973, Overlee swimmers knew the "Old Pool" is colder than the "New Pool" and can feel downright brutal in the morning, so I am teasing my coach about getting into the cold water while he is standing on deck in his shirt and jeans, with a cup of hot coffee. This is a game we played knowing full well I would dive in and swim hard for the next hour and a half. Why did I do this when I hated cold water? Well, I wanted the best for Overlee, myself, and like all the "A: team swimmers we were determined to win the sole Division I Championship Title. Even better was the fact, I had a coach that inspired me to excel in the sport I love.

In 1961, at age 7, Bill joined the swim team. His first Overlee coaches were Howard Pennifill and Bob Wrigley. As a 9 & 10 swimmer his went to "All Stars" in Breaststroke. Unlike today's All Stars competitors, only 6 swimmers from the entire league were allowed to qualify for the event. This would be the first of many honors bestowed on Bill as a competitive swimmer.

At 15, he became an Overlee Lifeguard. He performed these duties in addition to his coaching responsibilities until his departure in 1974. ( Word final delete before departure) His mild manner and affable personality served him well. He was beloved by the parents and children alike. One of the highlights of his "lifeguard" years was performing in the annual Synchro show as "Tarzan". Years before Luke Merkel would saunter up into the lifeguard chair or Andrew Kane would perform a handstand water entry, Bill would perform a memorable "Tarzan" role in the synchro show that was spoken about for years. Bill had the looks of a Greek God and was according to many a better Tarzan than Johnny Weissmuller.

Overlee loved Billy and Billy loved Overlee, especially the swim team. Memories of the fierce competition between Bill and Tuckahoe's Bob Rachner are still recalled by many. Bill

and Bob, would rock the house. They always swam their hardest and would bring both teams to their feet with loud cheering during their race. The cheering would elevate mad frenzy as he would touch Bob out and win for Overlee.

In 1970 at age 17, he swam his last race as an Overlee swimmer. Due to age limitations at the time at age 18 you could no longer compete After aging out, he served as an assistant coach for several years before becoming Head Coach in 1973. In those years the "A" team had a head and an assistant coach, with Mr. Adams heading the Developmental program.

Overlee was hungry for the Division I title. The 1970 championship title had been a three way split, and we were forced to share it with bitter rivals, Tuckahoe and Sleepy Hollow Recreation Association (SHRA). In 1973 we wanted it for us only. Bill's insightful knowledge as a collegiate swimmer served the team well in placing swimmers to create winning events. Sweeps often happened. He worked to strengthen all his swimmers and inspired us to better ourselves. When losses happened, we were encouraged not to concentrate on the negative but gain knowledge and prepare for the race. Bill was loyal to his swimmers and on several occasions had to "creatively negotiate" with officials on bad call. By season's end, the hard work was rewarded and Coach Bill Koczyk and the 1973 Swim Team earned the Division 1 Championship Title. The day brought a great celebration beginning with hugs and cheers, a well-earned afternoon of fun and games in the "Old Pool" after the meet. Bill coached through 1974.

In 1975 Bill graduated from University of North Carolina where he roomed with Overlee alumnus Derek Galvin. Upon graduation he traveled to Europe on the Queen Elizabeth and visited the Kress Family in Greece for 2 weeks before moving on to Bangkok to visit relatives. He held a variety of jobs until going to law school at the University of Richmond with another Overlee alumnus swimmer, Gary Hershner ( correct spelling) . These two men would continue with a life long friendship.

Bill worked for the West Publishing Company as an attorney, and aided in the development of a computer system would allow attorneys to search for legal information without having to leave the office to go to a law library.

Bill instilled his love of competitive swimming into his 3 children, Peter 12, Charlie 10, and Molly 8, who all swim for Ravensworth Farms, and like their Dad are all breastrokers. In addition he leaves behind his mother and sister, longtime Overlee members Gertrude and Kathy Koczyk, and his widow Barbara..

He was an active member at St. Albans Episcopal Church in Annandale, Va. where he served as an usher and participated as a volunteer in the AACA charity program.

Last summer Bill returned to Overlee. As old friends we reflected on our glory days and the twists and turns our lives had taken. We discussed Overlee past, present, and future. Bill

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wanted to coach a Masters swim team, and even thought of coaching a developmental group like Mr. Adams.

His greatest joy upon returning to Overlee was watching his children swim in the pool that had brought him such joy and happiness.

Bill was known for an outstanding smile and flashing pearly white teeth. He was one of those special people who touched many lives. On May 9th at age 53 William "Bill" Koczyk Jr, known to us a Bill or Billy, died unexpectedly from a brain aneurysm. Again thanks Bill, for being you and coaching us to a championship like the 2006 Division 1 "We Are Back" championship.

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mer. It's a hang-loose, let-loose, down time in the midst of what can be an overscheduled life.

Bobby joined a team that has grown remarkably. From a group of 38 divers when Coach John came on board three years ago, the team has grown to about 70—roughly 40 of whom are competitive.

"We've got kids that could really do something with this sport. And kids that just want to have fun for the summer. And we cater to that.", says Coach John. "We definitely want to be competitive. But not at the risk of turning people off to the sport."



Among those who could "really do something:" Coach John's own daughter, Haley Barry, who, at 15, is looking back on an undefeated season.

Haley won the girls highpoint total and Danny Yeatman won for the boys.

The dive team is saying a fond farewell to graduating seniors Matt Merkel and Christina Jeffers, with thanks for their terrific contributions across the years.

We're also grateful to:

- all the parents who helped in so many ways to make the season work, and in particular dive team reps Sharon Kress and Susan Scharf; and Bullhorn writer Katherine Adair
- Christine Williams and her valiant volunteers who kept us so well-fed and watered at meets
- Jeff Erickson, our loyal team photographer, who was at every meet, with a smile on his face, whether or not his daughters were diving
- Mouse Barry, Coach John's wife and behind-the-scenes-meet-impresario extraordinaire. From pre-printing meet sheets to judging and refereeing, she made sure that every diver was taken care of.
- Last, but never least, our tremendous thanks go to our stalwart, patient, brilliant, selfless and fun-loving coaches: assistant coaches Carrie Tucker and Jeff Turner; and, of course, Coach John.

Can't get diving out of your system now? Be on the lookout for an e-mail from Coach John that will go out soon to all dive team families, outlining his winter program, which runs on Sundays at Wakefield Park. (8100 Braddock Road in Annandale.)

Till then, happy diving!

