

The Hall Of Fame

By: Tom Caccia, Journal Editor

Every once in a while, I start out on an article idea and once I get there, it goes in an entirely different direction. Such is the case with this story. What started out as the research of the History of NISCA turned out to be an eye opening experience at the International Swimming Hall Of Fame.

The experience started off with Arvel McElroy and myself heading off to Florida near the end of July. We had made an appointment to visit the Library of the ISHOF to look through our archives and sort through the information that Bob White, Sr. had so diligently sent over the years.

Upon entering the ISHOF, we met Bruce Wigo, CEO of ISHOF. That's where the story really begins. Bruce began by apologizing for the lack of organization in the library saying, "our funds are not sufficient enough to allow us a librarian anymore." As we were escorted to the library, I was shaken by the amount of priceless artifacts contained there. I've been involved with swimming for more than 40 years and never, and I sincerely mean NEVER, have I been so awestruck by what I witnessed. I never had the feeling of standing in

the midst of history as I did within that room.

As Bruce showed us around, I was amazed at his knowledge, but more on that later. He pointed out magazines and films, Medals, and Olympic programs as he cleared a spot on a table at which Arvel and I would do our elf-like work. After Bruce departed, I couldn't help

but sit there breathless for a couple minutes as I looked at the books and magazines that contained our heritage of swimming, diving, and water polo. Next to me on the table were medals

from the Tokyo Olympics and on the other side of the table was a book showing the proper swimming of the backstroke by Adolf Kiefer.

Vintage Swimming World magazines took up the bulk of table, but films from the 1930's, still in their tins, were also on the table. Literally boxes full of memorabilia were located throughout the library. Bruce explained that there just wasn't the personnel or funds to allow them time to go through the items from the private collections that have been donated. That he hoped that one day, funds will begin to come back into ISHOF so that the artifacts can be cataloged and displayed as they were intended to be.

On the second day, Bruce invited us to take a tour with a group that came through the building. I was excited to go with the tour, but I had no idea at the knowledge that Bruce had over the prized collection which was entrusted to him. Not only was I amazed at his vast knowledge, I saw more than that. I saw and heard an intense love of aquatics. The smiles and gleam in his eye as he told the stories of the origins of aquatics. His pride as he spoke of the sport that we all feel an intense connection to. He's a man who is completely dedicated to his passion of aquatics. I felt informed, but at the same time, I felt a bit embarrassed at the lack of knowledge I really had when it came to swimming.

I remember going to the ISHOF when I attended the College Swim Forum back in the early '70s. But, this was nothing like I remember. Bruce, I believe, has taken this treasure to a new level. He has a vision for what the ISHOF should and, if he has his way, will become. Unfortunately, he told me that very few of the teams that come to the ISHOF over break take him up on the offer to tour the museum. I

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Bruce Wigo, CEO of the International Swimming Hall Of Fame

couldn't imagine that. To come to Ft. Lauderdale and NOT take a tour like he is capable of giving? I would HIGHLY suggest that if you are in Ft. Lauderdale, take the time to go to the ISHOF. You'll be proud of the fact that you are part of such a noble sport and profession.

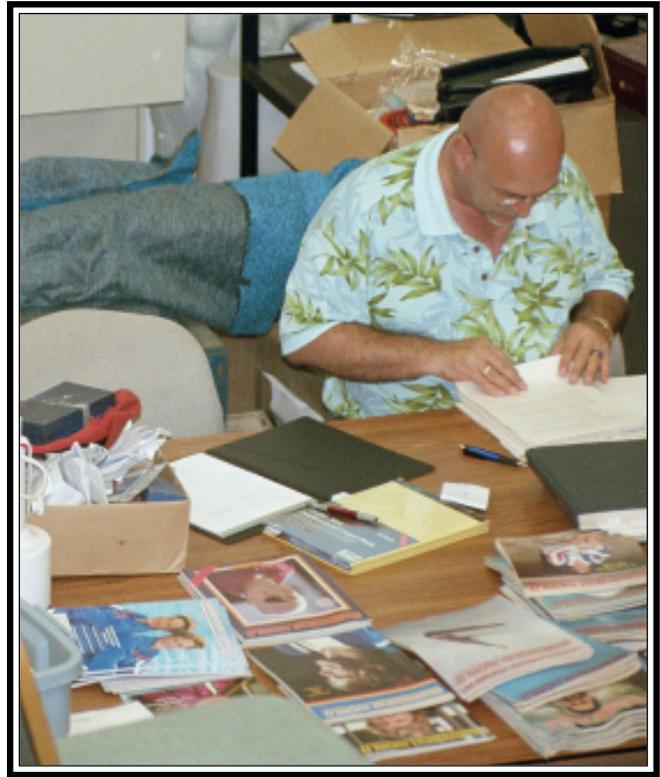
After the tour had left, I asked Bruce about other artifacts that they had. "Oh, I've got a good one for you!" he replied. Then, rummaging through a pile of CD's, he pulled one out and stuck it in the machine. With

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that familiar twinkle in his eye, he said, "Watch this..." I sat for the next 20 minutes watching George Haines talk to Mark Spitz about tapering in preparation for the State Meet his junior year.

What history! What an experience.

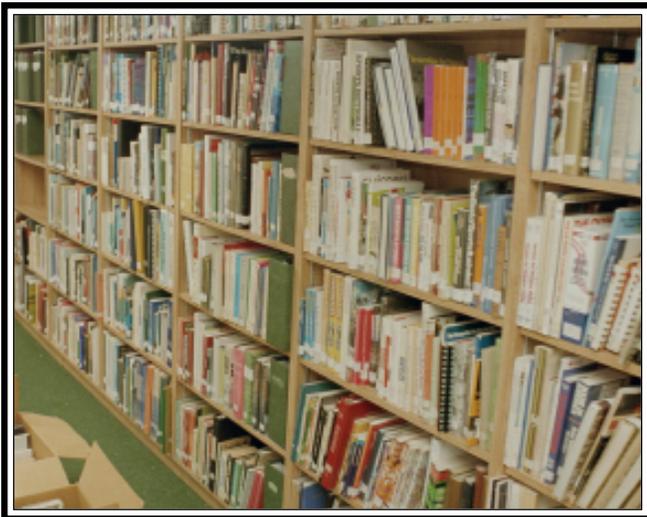
Many of us have been around for a long time. We can remember when the ISHOF was in it's infancy. We can remember Johnny Weismuller at the opening. What great expectations we had for OUR Hall of Fame! But, ISHOF needs our help. I would urge you to join, if you aren't a member. Send some help, if you can. Take a trip and see what's down there. We have to preserve our heritage and protect it for the future. I truly believe that everyone who has ever competed or coached should make the pilgrimage to the ISHOF. What's there will simply



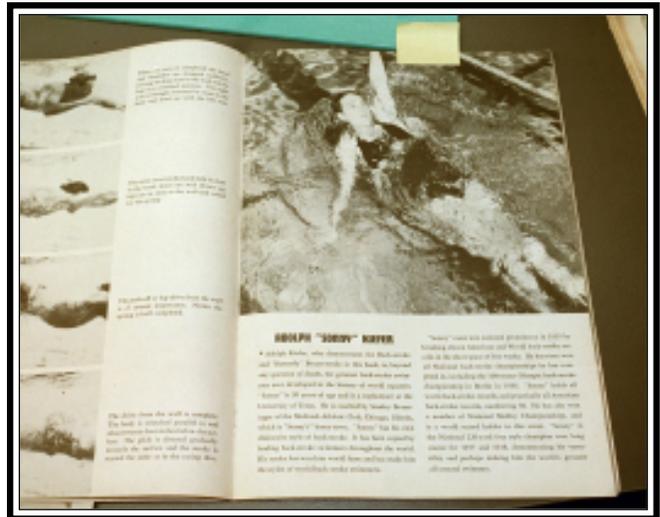
Arvel McElroy Working On The NISCA Files In The Library Of The ISHOF

amaze and energize you. We can't let ISHOF go on without our help.

As someone who has been blessed to be in the right spot at the right time, I can't begin to tell you of the treasures contained within the walls of ISHOF. It would be a shame if some of those artifacts never are seen by the public. Let's all chip in and help out an old friend.



A Small Part Of the Collection Currently Closed To The Public At The ISHOF



Adolf "Sonny" Kiefer Demonstrating The Proper Form For Backstroke