

In 1968, Marnie Tatham was a very busy mother driving her 6 children, then aged 6 to 14, to the local Lions' Pool in Woodstock for their daily swim lessons and competitive swim workouts. At that time, the aquatics director and swim coach in Woodstock was Mr. Rick Coad, Rick was aware that, before children, Marnie had been a physical education teacher. He approached her with the idea that, as long as she was spending so much time at the pool with her kids, why not make use of her teaching experience by starting a diving club at the pool. It was a volunteer position.

Her husband, Sid, encouraged her to try it, and thus began the Woodstock Diving Club.

At that time, Woodstock had very limited facilities for diving and it was just a summer sport. The Lion's outdoor pool was a facility that had only a 1-metre board. And the brand new Woodstock YMCA indoor pool also only sported a 1-metre board. Marnie tackled the project with enthusiasm. She was successful in encouraging some of the children on the swim team to try their luck at diving. She was also approached by some divers from the nearby town of Ingersoll who wanted to join her team for the winter program. They, too, had only been able to dive during the summer months.

The lack of facilities did not deter Marnie. She knew that, in order to be successful, the kids also needed to train on a 3-metre board. Kitchener Waterloo was the closest city that had such an indoor diving board. So, she approached the University of Waterloo to use their facility to train in the winter. The swim coach at Waterloo, Bob Graham, made a deal with Marnie. She could use his facility in exchange for coaching his University of Waterloo Warrior diving team. She accepted the challenge.

Within the first year she had at least three of her divers become Provincial Age Group Champions. Over the years, she developed many children into Provincial Champions. She also coached some 10 National Champions. The University of Waterloo Warriors became a powerhouse in swimming and diving. Marnie and her divers were a huge part of that. The diving became such a big part of contributing to the overall championship that the CIAU was lobbied by a couple of Universities who didn't have a good diving program to exclude diving from the swimming part of the Championships. The diving was dropped. But before it was dropped, Marnie had coached four CIAU champions; Valerie Quirk, Steve Brooks, Claude Cormier, and Lester Newby. Her roster of provincial and national champions included Susie Palmer, Joanne Parker, Jennifer McArton, Ken Armstrong, Randy Sageman, Bill Tatham, Steve Brooks, Steve Wilks, Steve McGaw, Claude Cormier, Mark Foris, Graham Foris, Tammy McLeod, and David McDonald. There is no doubt that her crowning achievement was the fact that she had two divers represent Canada at Olympic Games: Ken Armstrong (1972, 1976, 1980 – boycotted by Canada) and Randy Sageman (1988). And Armstrong, using many of the skills learned from Marnie, has gone on to coach both Canadian and U.S. Olympic diving teams.

Marnie's position as coach remained unpaid even though she travelled to diving meets across the country.

But, there is more to Marnie's legacy. And this is where her husband Sid enters the diving picture.

She recognized that in order to develop the kids and maximize their potential, they also needed to practice tower diving. The closest 10-metre facility was in Sudbury, a 7-hour drive from Woodstock. So, she arranged weekend trips to train her divers in Sudbury. This created some stress for the Tatham family. Marnie was travelling a lot and was still a wife to Sid and the mother to 6 young children. Only one of her children was a diver on the team.

By the early 1970's, Marnie was well entrenched as a diving coach. She and Sid and the family lived on a beautiful piece of property on the outskirts of Woodstock. A few years earlier, Sid had formed a pond by digging out an area in a small stream that ran through the back of their property. Marnie and Sid and a few of the divers' parents were brainstorming about the possibility of making the pond larger and deeper to accommodate a diving facility in their backyard. Huck Armstrong, the father of one of the divers, was a lineman for Ontario Hydro. He suggested that he would try to arrange the purchase of an old Hydro tower that was just going to be sold off for scrap metal. At the same time, the Ontario government offered Local Incentives Program (LIP) grants. On behalf of the Woodstock Diving Club, Sid applied for just such a grant to erect the diving tower. Sid must have been quite the negotiator because a grant for \$17,000 was approved. In 1972 the steel hydro tower, which was lying in a field near London, was purchased for \$50. The divers' parents dismantled and labeled the metal so that it could be reconstructed by the pond at the Tathams'. Sid arranged for a local Woodstock Engineering firm, POW Engineering, to re-design the Hydro tower into a diving tower. POW basically donated their time. And with much donated help from other local contractors who could weld and erect the tower, they started to build the new diving facility. It became a total success.

Construction was begun in the early spring and completed in the early summer of 1973. It was so successful that the Woodstock Diving Club hosted their first of two back-to-back Provincial Diving Championships in Marnie and Sid's backyard facility that same summer. The divers who competed, including Canadian Olympic and Ontario Hall of Fame Diver Beverly Boys, indicated that it was one of the finest facilities at which they had ever competed. Unlike the concrete towers, this tower had a little give as divers left the tower.

During the construction of the project, Sid had also contacted CN Railroad and arranged to buy an old caboose to convert into a sort of bunkhouse. This would give divers, who came to train, a place to live. Coaches and divers from across Canada were welcomed to use the facility. They set up tents in the Tathams' backyard which became not only the diving facility for the Woodstock Diving Club but also the

summer training facility for Canada's National Diving Team. In 1974, Sid added another railway car that was converted into a second bunkhouse. A trampoline was installed for the divers' to train. They loved the place. They would train up to 6 hours a day in a pond with clean, natural water - no chlorine! The members of the National Team back then who trained at the Tathams' were Beverly Boys, Pat McGregor, Terri York, Linda Cuthbert, Cindy Shatto, Scott Cranham, Ken Armstrong, and Rick Friesen,

For years, everyone was welcomed by the Tathams. There were no pool fees and no housing fees. It was free.

In the summer of 1983, leading up to the Olympic Games of Los Angeles, Marnie welcomed Sylvie Bernier into her backyard to train this extremely talented diver. Sylvie went on to capture Canada's first Olympic gold medal in diving at the L.A. Olympics.

In 1976 Marnie had turned the facility into the business of a Summer Diving Camp where she coached kids from all across Canada. Even after she retired as a club coach in 1978, she continued to operate and coach at the Diving Camp. Marnie also became an International Diving Judge where she travelled all over the world, judging diving from the early 1980's until into the late 1990's.

Their youngest son, Ian, took over the family home, and Marnie and Sid built a new house on the property next door to where they raised their family and welcomed so many of Canada's divers. The tower is still in the backyard and Sid reports that it is as good and as strong as the day it was built. There are great memories to recall of the many challenges met and conquered, and remember all the Champions and wannabe Champions who twisted and somersaulted into Sid and Marnie's lives. There were countless youngsters in the Canadian diving community who were touched by their generosity and knowledge.

Unfortunately, Marnie passed away in July of this year. She was happily looking forward to the induction ceremony. Marnie will be missed not only by family and friends but also by the entire diving community.

We are proud and pleased to induct as builders Marnie and Sid Tatham into the Ontario Aquatic Hall of Fame.