

A Farewell to Terry Laughlin

Dear MDSA Members:

Below are messages from MDSA Co-coordinators Judy Mage and Stephanie Bludau Tor, plus a message from Dave Barra.

But first, we ask that you please do not reply to this email to the MDSA. The information here is what we know at this point. **Please see information at the end of this email.** As future memorials are set up, details will be posted as a PDF on our web site under Current Member Login (you won't have to log in to read them; just click on the PDF to open it after you click on Current Member Login).

From Judy Mage:

By now most of you probably know that Terry Laughlin died on October 20th, after fighting metastasized prostate cancer for the past two years. Weak as he was, Terry made it to our beach a few times this summer, and it is hard and so sad to realize that we will never again see him gliding through the water like a fish, barely raising a ripple.

Terry Laughlin's involvement with the MDSA goes back to the very beginning, in 2000, when a few of us started to organize to break out from the little 'crib' the park confined us to once NY State took over and banned distance swimming (see MDSA history page). We called ourselves SWIM back then, Swim Without Interference at Minnewaska. As soon as Terry heard about us he wrote a letter to the local paper in support of our goals, referring to his time as a lifeguard at the ocean at Jones Beach. From then on he was part of our struggle. And as many of you who have taken his 'master classes' at our beach over many summers would understand, he was a big part of the heart and soul of the MDSA, of what animates us to keep going as a volunteer organization. He was passionate about swimming and the opportunity to have it become the most joyful of experiences. You can read an accurate account of this in the New York Times obituary, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/27/obituaries/terry-laughlin-dead-taught-swimmers-not-to-struggle-with-total-immersion-method.html?emc=eta1&r=0>

From Stephanie Bludau Tor:

I was so happy to greet Terry this past summer with a big hug as he was walking home from our beach, one of only a few times he was there. He looked good and refreshed by his swim. A wonderful memory I'll always cherish. Recently, on October 7th, I emailed Terry and he graciously responded. I think this says it all for how I feel. I will miss seeing and hearing Terry at our beach, for sure:

Hi Terry,

For a long time I have been meaning to write to you to simply say "Thank you."

I head out this week for another Big Blue Swim Tour, this time along the Minoan Trail in Crete. If not for you and your generously giving talks on your Total Immersion technique at the MDSA beach, I dare say I would not venture out to swim miles and miles.

If not for you, I wouldn't enjoy swimming as much as I do, feeling like I'm one with the water and being totally relaxed. I may not be very fast, but I feel I could swim forever and enjoy every moment. I know I'm not alone in being grateful to you, to your selflessness, and to your expertise.

Recently, I heard through Judy that your health is less than you, or any of your friends, family, and comrades would hope for. I keep hoping I'll hear news to the contrary. When I return from Crete I hope to have a "Greek" brunch (not sure exactly what date) and I sincerely hope you'll be able to come over so I can say thank you in person.

With every stroke, I wish you well and healing,
THANK YOU for being You,
Stephanie Bludau Tor

Terry's response:

Stephanie

Thank you for your heartwarming message.

How I wish I could join you on the Minoan Trail. As Judy has shared my health has been compromised the last two years by a diagnosis of prostate cancer. It has been my lot to have the most virulent and aggressive form of the disease. Typical survival time after diagnosis is 24 to 30 months. Though I'm now at 26 months, my health remains much stronger than that of many others who have this form of PCa. I owe that very much to swimming and to the sense of purpose I continue to draw from my work, as well as to the love and support of family and countless friends, like you, who have sent well wishes.

I'm fortunate to receive many messages like yours and am grateful for every one.
Terry

And this from Dave Barra, close friend and colleague of Terry's:

(Answering queries re a memorial) We are meeting on Monday to discuss details, but it (memorial) will be at High Meadow on November 18 from 10:00 to 12:00.

I have put in an application to host a swim event at Minnewaska on June 9 as well. Terry and I spoke of this when I visited him in the hospital....day after his stroke. He was periodically alert and conversational, and was happy that we were doing this in one of his favorite places. We will announce formally when we receive park approval.

"I miss him.... but still hear his direction with every stroke!"

SOME INFORMATION:

Memorial planned for November 18th at the High Meadow School, Main Street in Stoneridge (right off 209), from 10:00 AM until 12:00 NOON.

Messages of condolence can be left at the **Copeland Funeral Home** on their website www.copelandfhnp.com where you may leave a message for Terry's family. If you wish to write a letter or send a card it should go to Copeland Funeral Home, 162 S. Puttcorners Road, New Paltz, NY 12561, and indicate on the envelope For Terry Laughlin.