

Ron Crawford Obituary

Ron Crawford grew up in Downey where he attended grade school and high school. His passion for swimming and water polo developed at an early age. Ron took advantage of the opportunity to be on the water polo team at Downey High School. Jim Schultz, his high school coach recognized Ron's swimming talent and water polo skills at an early age. Ron played on the Downey team for the 1954, 1955 and 1956 seasons. Upon graduation from High School, Ron was recruited by Coach Monte Nitzkowski -to be a part of the water polo team at Long Beach City College. Coach Nitzkowski was not only an outstanding competitive swimmer, having represented the US in the 200-meter butterfly at the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki, but also a five-time United States Olympic water polo coach. While at Long Beach City College, Ron was honored as the Southern California MVP for 1957 and 1958 as well as a member of their Championship water polo team. In 2003, Ron was inducted in the Long Beach City College Hall of Champions.

After his first Olympic Games in Rome, Ron enrolled at Long Beach State, playing once again for his High School Coach, Jim Schultz. While at Long Beach State, Ron was a two-time All-American in 1962 and 1963, leading the team to a California State Championship in 1963 with a 23-1 record. In 1977, Ron was inducted into the Long Beach State Hall of Fame in its' inaugural class.

Ron was a member of the U.S. Olympic Water Polo teams at the 1960 Rome games, the 1964 Tokyo games and the 1968 Mexico City games. The 1960 team finished seventh; he played six matches and scored five goals. At the 1964 Olympic games, the US team¹ was eliminated in the first round. During those games, Ron played in three matches and scored four goals. At the 1968 Olympic games, which he attended while teaching at BHHS, the American team finished 5th, once again under the coaching of

Monte Nitzkowski. Ron played in all eight matches but did not score a goal.

In addition to All-America and Olympic honors, Ron was a nine-time AAU All-America and a three-time Pan American Games Participant including a gold medal at the 1959 Pan American Games in Chicago, a silver medal at the 1963 Pan American games in Sao Paulo, Brazil and a gold medal winner at the 1967 Pan American games in Winnipeg, Canada. Ron also coached the Silver medal winning team at the Maccabiah Games. In 1977, Ron was inducted into the USA Water Polo Hall of Fame, and in 1983 became the first American water polo player to be inducted into the International Water Polo Hall of Fame.

Ron's love of the water extended all the way to the ocean. In 1962, he became a Los Angeles County Re-Current Lifeguard and served in that capacity until 2003. During those years as a lifeguard, Ron spent over 20 years as Coordinator of the Junior Lifeguard Program and Director of the International Surf Festival. He also served in the army from 1964-1965.

In 1966, Ron was hired as a teacher and water polo coach at Beverly. He remained at Beverly as both a teacher and a water polo coach until he retired in 2001. Over those years he coached teams to numerous league championships and impacted the lives of countless athletes.

Ron passed away at the age of 76 on December 20, 2016.

Ron is survived by his wife Lynn, son Matt (Stacie), daughter Kelli Grant (Doug), step-children Catherine Weaver-Lee (Terry), Caryn Orrell (Jeffrey), Terry Weaver (Shawna), sister Judy

Thompson, niece Heidi White (Steve), seven grandchildren: Kyle, Chelsea, Savannah, Karlie, Kelsie, Courtney and Allison and two grandnieces: Skylar and Taylor.

Ron Crawford

(December 6, 1939 – December 20, 2015)

- 1957 Graduate from Downey High School
- 1957-1959 Long Beach City College (Monte Nitzkowski)
(So. Calif. MVP – 1957 & 1958; 2003 – LBCC Hall of
Champions)
- 1959 Pan American Games - Chicago(Gold)
- 1960 Olympic Games – Rome(Uhro Saari - Severa, Chick, Tissue,
Volmer, Horn, Gordie Hall, Marvin Ace Burns, Chuck Bittick, Jim
Kelsey, Wally Wolf, & Ron (20 years old)
- 1961 – 1963 Long Beach State College (Jim Schultz)
(All American – 1962 & 1963;1977– Long Beach State Hall
of Fame – Inaugural Class)
- 1962 - 2003 Los Angeles County Lifeguards
(Co-Junior Lifeguard Coordinator - 1982-1990)
(Director International Surf Festival - 1982 - 2002+ ???)
- 1963 Pan American Games – Sao Paulo, Brazil (Silver)
- 1964 – 1965 United States Army
- 1964 Olympic Games – Tokyo (Uhro Saari - Chick, Ned, Paul, Danny,
Ralph, Bobby, Van Dorp, Stan Cole, Dave Ashleigh, George
Stransky, & Ron)
- 1966 - 2001 Beverly Hills Unified School District
- 1967 Pam American Games – Winnipeg, Canada (Gold)
- 1968 Olympic Games – Mexico City (Monte Nitzkowski – Tony Van Dorp,
Barry Weitzenberg, Bruce Bradley, Dave Ashleigh, Dean Wileford,
Gary Sheerer, John Parker, Russ Webb, Stan Cole, Steve Barnett,
Ron
- ???? Coach – Maccabiah Games (Silver Medal)
- 1977 Inducted into the USA Water Polo Hall of Fame
- 1983 The 1st American inducted into the International Hall of Fame