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Spotlight Stories



Our Compliments... *from the Chef?*

Bob Langkammerer is one serious fan of the Musselman Triathlon. Many participants return for a second year, or even a third; Langkammerer, of Syracuse, has competed in the Musselman half-Iron triathlon every year since its inception in 2004.

And Langkammerer has high praise for the Mussel.

"I find it to be my favorite race of the year. Geneva is a beautiful town and the people are so incredibly friendly," he says, echoing a sentiment race organizers have been hearing since 2004. "The race is extremely safe, well run and organized," he says, "and Jeff Henderson keeps it lively and entertaining, before during and after."

Langkammerer, like many participants, find Henderson's monthly email updates and his pre-race meetings to be entertaining – a part of the 'Musselman spirit' many refer to when they mention what brings them back to the Mussel.

His endorsement is regional Executive Chef for Wegmans Food Markets, one of the race's sponsors – a company that has, like Langkammerer, been

"As a triathlete, and as an exercising. I am extremely living well," he says.



significant; Langkammerer is not just any ordinary participant, he's also Wegmans Food Markets, one of the race's sponsors – a company that with the Musselman since its very beginning.

executive chef, I am very aware of the benefits of healthy eating and proud of my company's direction concerning health, sustainability, and

"The Musselman's focus on sustainability – bamboo shirts, limiting carbon footprints, environment superstructure, and a lot of other things – those are all concerns paralleled by my company."

Langkammerer does other races besides the Musselman; last year he completed his second Chesapeake, an Ironman-distance race – with his 103 year-old father in attendance.

No matter where he travels, his heart always returns to the Mussel. "I try very hard to do well in this race," he says. "I am extremely proud during the last half-mile when my wife, daughters, and dog are cheering me on."

"I truly enjoy the Musselman," Langkammerer says, "and I hope to be in Geneva in the middle of July for the rest of my triathlon days. My sincerest gratitude goes to all that make the Musselman my best race of the year."

An Apple A Day?

This year Roger Morse and Jenn Brownell will spend their wedding anniversary racing in the mini-Mussel. It's how they spent their anniversary last year, and how they hope to spend many anniversaries to come. Why? Because of how they spent their wedding anniversary in 2006: in the hospital, the result of Morse's dehydration from chemotherapy. You see, in April of 2006 Roger Morse was diagnosed with testicular cancer.



"We're fortunate in that the disease has an extremely high cure rate," says Brownell of her husband of eleven years. "The downside is that the treatment requires that the recommended chemotherapy regimen is a particularly harsh one." Roger received chemotherapy five days a week every three weeks for four months.

"I watched my seemingly healthy husband get so weak that he needed help standing. I shaved his head when his hair started falling out," Brownell remembers. "Our three-year old asked me why daddy was getting sicker if he was going to the doctor to get better... none if it made sense to me, let alone trying to explain it to our son."

"Through all of this," she says, "Roger displayed nothing but courage and strength."

That character, perhaps, is part of the reason that Morse's employer and coworkers rallied behind him, both during his sickness and after. Morse is employed by Red Jacket Orchards, the primary sponsor of the Musselman Triathlon.

"Last Spring Roger came to me and asked if I wanted to do the mini-Mussel with him," says Brownell, referring to the short course version of the race. "Brian Nicholson, the owner of Red Jacket, wanted to put together a team to race in the mini-Mussel, and he wanted to do it to raise money for cancer," she says. She remembers being unsure, at first. "When Roger told me this, my first thought was "I don't have time to train." But my next thought was, "How can I *not* find the time to put in a little sweat to raise money so that maybe others might not go through what we did?"

The two raced in the mini-Mussel.

"Brian Nicholson, Roger and I raised \$4800," she says. "We donated it to Interlakes Oncology Associates." The physicians have started a patient needs fund with the money. "Cancer is extremely expensive," says Brownell. "Even for us, with very good insurance and both having extremely supportive jobs with steady income, it still was a huge financial burden to us. This fund, helps families with various needs, such as paying for medication which insurance won't cover or transportation to and from chemo."



"This year we seemed to have even less time to train and had thoughts of not doing it," says Brownell. "Just as we were about to give up, a co-worker of mine told me of her friend, who is 34 with two small children and just diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. As she fights for her life now, enduring chemo, we knew we had to do it, for her and for all the others."

"We are blessed. We *know* we are blessed. We wanted to do something, and this is a way we can give back."



Charting a Course...

When the Musselman Triathlon was first conceived in 2004, founder Jeff Henderson had no trouble picturing the swim. After all, he'd chosen the race site for a reason: Seneca Lake.

What was a little trickier, however, was picturing what the athletes would do when they got *out* of the water: the bike, and then the run.



In stepped Geneva residents Jim Hogan and Jan Regan.



Jim Hogan, owner of race sponsor Geneva Bicycle Center, became the race's Bike Coordinator. Tasked with designing a course which would provide a challenge – and safety – and also be *exactly* regulation distance, Hogan had a challenge *himself* – getting hundreds of speeding cyclists across fifty-six miles of roadway without encountering dangerous intersections, tire-eating potholes, or ferocious bike-chasing farm dogs.

This involved a whole lot of driving and, later, cycling, as Hogan worked to get it right.

In the end, a course was chosen which incorporates most of Seneca County. It's since become known for its beautiful scenery as much as for its challenge, and is raved about in magazine articles, blogs, and participant feedback year after year.

Hogan is as known to some race participants for the bike course he designed as he is for his actions during the race: every year, while athletes are in the water, Hogan and his crew perform a last-minute check of the bikes – all 1,300 of them – ensuring that nobody's hopes of victory are flattened by a punctured tire or a technical issue that can be easily fixed. Anything fixable is repaired before the athlete even exits the water – sometimes the triathlete may never even know how close he or she may have come to a disappointing start to the bike leg of the race.

"What Jim does is somewhat unique," says race director Jeff Henderson. "He brings a lot of dedication to this event throughout the year, and that only intensifies on race day."



Run Coordinator Jan Regan, owner of Jan Regan Photography – also a Musselman sponsor – selected Ontario County for the run course. The run portion of the race – a half marathon – would wind through downtown streets, along row houses and frat houses on Pulteney Street, and even through a winery, before making its way back into Seneca Lake State Park.

Regan decided, early on, that the run course would be more than just 13.1 miles of roads. She set out to create an "event" in itself, recruiting community groups to man aid stations – the locations along the course where runners are given liquids, gels, and even animal crackers – and holding contests to encourage those with the 'most spirit'.

Regan recruited musicians to play at locations along the course. In 2004, a bongo drummer provided the soundtrack as runners made their way through a tunnel underneath the Hamilton Street Bridge. A drum act, DrumPlay, provided rhythmic encouragement on a grueling hill in the Town of Geneva. And participants in the first year noted a small boy with a violin who played for them as they ran up the hill past his house.

"Our race is as known for the eclecticism of the run course as it is for anything else," says race director Jeff Henderson. "Jan Regan designed a top-notch course that immerses our athletes in the community, and the community into our event."

Regan stepped down as Run Coordinator in 2008, but stays on as an official sponsor and race photographer.

Trade a Tango for a Triathlon?

When race director Jeff Henderson walked into a Musselman Triathlon organizational committee meeting in early 2004, he brought with him the usual list of concerns to be dealt with and decided on: race course improvements... schedule adjustments... new volunteers...

And then there was something new.

"I received an email from someone who recently registered," Henderson said. "She wants to know if – and I'm not joking here – she can wear 'floaties' during the swim."

That participant was Geneva resident Cindy Devore. She'd registered for the mini-Mussel as part of an agreement with her husband, Carl: she wanted to ballroom dance; he wanted to do triathlon. "He did, so I did," she says. "I think he had the easier conquest, personally."

Devore's difficulty was a fear of the water that she obtained as a four year-old, following a near-drowning experience. She'd gone years without facing that fear; when her husband agreed to do the hustle if she'd Mussel, she knew she had to do something she'd put off a long time: learn to swim. And, be comfortable swimming in open water. Quickly.

She began by writing her initial email to Henderson; he replied by informing her that USA Triathlon prohibits the use of personal floatation devices – or "floaties" – in sanctioned races. She was undeterred, and sent off a second email.

"I explained that the word triathlon and the name Cindy Devore would never be used in the same sentence, were it not that I was married to Carl Devore. What I do for love!" she remembers. "I told Jeff that I do not like to swim. I do not like the thought of swimmy things nibbling at my legs. I was fearful of being out in a lake alone and unable to put my feet down on solid earth. I told Jeff normally I swim to avoid drowning, run to evade danger, and bike best on the back of my tandem with my husband hauling my butt across town."

In short, Devore was apprehensive.

Henderson, she recalls, was not.

"He said he knew I could do the triathlon, and encouraged me to buy a good quality wetsuit. He assured me if I did, I would "bob like a cork" in the water," she says. "He told me there would be people in kayaks and on jet skis looking out for anyone in trouble, and confidently told me, again, that I could do this."

It was Henderson's words that helped Devore make her decision. "I realized that a young man – young enough to be my son – who had never met me, had more confidence in me than I had in myself. I was long overdue for a belief-in-myself-check," she says. "So, I began the process of training for my first triathlon."

Devore began by reading. A lot.

"Many books on training for marathons and triathlons sat on my nightstand," she says. "I read each one, picturing myself floating effortlessly in the water, riding with strong shoulders on a bike, running fast and strong. Copies of *Triathlon Magazine* and *Inside Triathlon* began to pile on the floor by my bed. I am a good reader and a greater positive thinker, able to envision myself alongside professionals."

But first, she'd have to start with the basics; she hadn't yet even gotten into the water.

"The simple act of learning to swim was a terrifying experience," recalls Devore. "It began with me simply standing in the shallow end, holding on to the edge of the pool, trying to put my face in the water. I had to adjust to tolerating the bubbles. They were killers."

"I felt sick each time I swallowed dirty, chlorinated water, from my efforts to try and figure out how to breathe in synchrony with a stroke like the picture of the lady in the book," she remember.

Devore had help from local triathlete and Musselman champion '04 Mary Eggers. Eggers provided the coaching Devore needed to gain confidence – little by little.



TRADE... CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

"I looked ridiculous swimming in my wetsuit in an 83 degree room with 80 degree water, but it was the only way I could ultimately get over my fear of going into the deep end without a floatie," Devore says. "Kids would come up and ask me why I was dressed like I was, and then swim off like fish. I just kept my focus that at least I was in the water swimming."

It would take Devore several years to forgo the wetsuit.

"I had trouble learning to coordinate my breathing and finally followed Mary's suggestion to breathe to one side on every stroke, because I never felt like I was getting enough air. I forced myself to let go of the side of the pool and head into the deep end using a kick board."

She'd done it... almost.

Recognizing that triathlon is a *multi*sport event – a swim, a bike, and a run – Devore had to simultaneously train for the other two portions of the race, as well. "The biking training was a little easier, but only because I was able to breathe oxygen without getting a mouthful of water," Devore jokes. "Uphills resulted in amazing quadriceps burning... downhill scared me to death... wet roads made me uneasy... and zooming traffic that came too close for comfort? Terrifying." Devore remembers finding motivation in the triumphs of the Tour de France champion that year. "I loved the flats where I felt like Lance Armstrong whizzing past the mountains in the background," she says. "But in reality, most of the time, biking felt uphill in both directions."

The run wasn't a cakewalk, either. Following surgery for a foot injury earlier, Devore had become an avid walker. "My doctor told me what everyone hears following surgery: walking is better than running, swimming is better than walking," she says. "We all know why swimming wasn't my first choice, so I became a fairly fast walker." Running, however, was a different story. Devore had to balance her training with care, making sure that nothing exacerbated her injury and prevented her from accompanying her husband as he held up his part of the bargain: ballroom dance.

Carl Devore stood by his wife – or, more accurately, swam by, cycled by, and ran by her – every step of the way. "I dreaded each time my husband cheerfully asked, "So, how would you like to do a swim today?" "Like?" I would respond incredulously? "Like?" For Devore, there was no *like* – it was a necessity. Her husband understood.

During bike training, she remembers her husband dutifully riding behind her. "There I was, gasping for air, while my husband pedaled effortlessly behind me, whistling Beethoven, asking me between movements, "How's it going?" "Going?" I would think? Am I actually moving? It felt like a standstill." Her husband understood.

Carl was so understanding that he decided to drop out of the half-Iron he'd signed up for, exchanging his registration for one in the mini-Mussel, so that he could race next to his wife.

Devore remembers her reliance on Jeff Henderson, as well. He, also, understood what she was going through.

"I would drop Jeff a note as I did the first time and, for some inexplicable reason, he would write me back amidst all the other things he had to do, and he would encourage me to keep plugging." Devore remembers growing more and more apprehensive as her first race grew near. "I needed Jeff," she says. "I wrote Jeff and told him I was still plugging, but barely, and sought his reassurance."

"Pluggers become finishers and finishers will someday rule the world," Henderson would tell Devore in one of his many emails.

And that would become her mantra.

And on – the first mini-Mussel ever – Devore became a finisher. She had a little help from Carl – and no help from "floaties."

Carl, in fact, raced in the 'novice', or beginner, heat, staying with his wife during the swim, even dropping back a bit to swim next to her when a tinge of self-doubt set in. Staying close during the bike, the two finished the run as a pair, crossing the finish line side by side, to the call of the announcer: "And here come Carl and Cindy Devore. This is Cindy's first triathlon, and she is now a Musselman!"

Not bad for a woman who, not very much earlier, was afraid to do a dance with the water.

Get Me To The Church On Time!

Andrew Bourne grew up swimming in Geneva. He learned to swim at the YMCA, and grew up swimming at Seneca Lake State Park – the same park where the Musselman Triathlon is held.

He went away for college, returning to attend med school at Upstate Medical University in Syracuse – the former Geneva Medical College.

Bourne, now a general and vascular surgeon in Mammoth Lakes, California, first learned about the Musselman when he returned to Geneva last July for his mother's funeral; she'd succumbed to cancer after a four-year bout with the disease.

"My mother's passing was difficult for everyone," says Bourne. "After eight months of grief, my father asked Janice Robinson, pastor at the First Baptist Church, to be his wife."

Robinson said yes, and the date was set: July 13, 2008 at 3 p.m. at the First Baptist Church on North Main.

Coincidentally, the wedding date happened to fall on the same day as Musselman '08.

"After speaking with my father and his bride, they encouraged me to register for the Musselman," says Bourne. "I have to finish in under six hours to make it to my dad's wedding. That's a real motivation to keep going." We agree.

If you see someone putting on a tuxedo as he crosses the finish line, there's a good chance it may be Andrew Bourne.

Will he leave them waiting at the altar? Or be waiting *for* them to arrive?

Time will tell.



And So Much More...

With more than 1,600 athletes participating in the Musselman, it's no surprise that there are almost as many 'stories' as there are participants.

We don't have the time, or the toner, to include them all. But if you're a member of the media seeking a story idea, we encourage you to contact us. Chances are someone from your area wants to make their story known.

Contact C. D. Henderson if you'd like more information on any of the following Spotlight Stories...

- Phoebe Ingraham, returning home from Washington. Ingraham is meeting up with her two best friends from college and her mother, a Geneva resident – and all four are racing in the Musselman. "Each year the three of us meet up somewhere for a girls weekend. This year we decided to add a challenge for ourselves. Why not get physical!" The mini-Mussel will be the first triathlon for her friends, and all four are excited.
- Alison Currie has been to hell and back. And she's almost touched the Heavens, as well. In 2006, Currie, of Rochester, was diagnosed with breast cancer. "I spent nearly all of 2006 fighting that disease with a mastectomy, installation of a medi-port, chemo, emergency surgery and one week in the hospital with an infection due to a medi-port gone bad, and then radiation," she says. "I ran a half marathon one week after ringing the bell at the Pluta center to celebrate my final radiation treatment at the end of August. In December, I had a prophylactic mastectomy and have tried to just keep moving forward since then." Despite all of these setbacks, Currie continues to be active – and then some. She ran three marathons in 2007. And this past February/March she climbed Mount Kilimanjaro through an American Cancer Society/Journeys of Inspiration fundraiser. Currie now serves as an example to other women with breast cancer, through the Breast Cancer Coalition of Rochester.

EVEN MORE TO COME... VISIT [HTTP://MUSSELMANTRI.COM/MEDIA/SPOTLIGHT.HTML](http://musselmantri.com/media/spotlight.html) FOR DETAILS.