

World-Class Athletes Live Well at Casa de Mañana

Swimmer Betsy Jordan and Weightlifter Len Sandberg thrive at community that promotes wellbeing

Friendly and diverse, there's an easy air of camaraderie among the residents. You'll find them in the dining room, by the fountain, tending to the roses, on the hiking trail, in the pool and in the gym. Casa de Mañana is no stranger to interesting folks, some with extraordinary accomplishments, including world-class athletes Betsy Jordan and Len Sandberg.



Betsy is a record-breaking, award-winning, master-level swimmer, who, in her 40-plus years of masters swimming competition, has set more than 40 world records. Many are national and local records, including All-Star and All-American awards. In 2005 she was inducted into the International Masters Swimming Hall of Fame.

Len is an amateur weightlifter who recently set a powerlifting record in the 148-pound-and-under Powerlifting Bench Press World Championship sanctioned by the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU).

Len took home the championship by lifting 110 pounds in the 90 and older age bracket.

"I saw the current record and thought that I could beat it," Len said with a smile. "It was that simple. It's not that I'm so great. I just have lived a long time."

Despite his recent accomplishment, Len describes himself not as an athlete but as a "gym rat" who began regular workouts in his early 40s.



"I got involved in a fitness program designed for business professionals who did not have a lot of time to exercise," said Len, who worked in the steel manufacturing business at the time.

"I needed to do something to keep in shape."

While preparing for his record-setting performance, Len worked out at the Casa fitness center three days a week.

"There is no question that weightlifting has improved my life," Len said, while enjoying the ocean view from his fourth-floor balcony. "I like to stay active and coming to Casa eight years ago gives me a marvelous atmosphere for healthy living."

Betsy's path to greatness began as a child growing up in the Midwest.

"When I was nine and little and scrawny, I wanted desperately to be like my big sister and join the Riviera Club swim team in Indianapolis, my home town," Betsy remembers. "The coach, however, said no, and suggested I go home and grow a while. Incensed, I joined the rival and then fledgling Indianapolis Athletic Club team, where I trained and competed regularly in local, state, and national meets until I left for college. It was a golden era for swimming; no butterfly invention, no pace clocks, no time standards for entries to nationals, but great team spirit."

In the 1950s, women didn't compete much past high school, so while talented, instead, Betsy attended college on the East Coast and graduate school at UC San Diego. She received a master's degree in art history and a Ph.D. in literature. She also taught humanities at UCSD in the 1980s.

"Raising four children became my major focus in the 1960s, but by 1971 I was back in the pool and the ocean, living in California," Betsy said.

These days, the Casa resident enjoys swimming in La Jolla Cove. Her most recent accomplishments were winning two first place and one second place medals in the San Diego Senior Games this summer and being inducted into the Wellesley College Hall of Fame in October.