

Feeling Lucky?

By Andrea Packard

On a recent family vacation to Orlando, I had the pleasure of completing Lucky's Lake Swim. While swimming laps at the YMCA Aquatic Center in Orlando last year, I met a lifeguard who mentioned the swim to me and suggested I try it out. Unfortunately, the reported water temperatures that week were a bit cool for my taste (I am admittedly a wimp when it comes to cold water), and I didn't have my wetsuit, so I chickened out. When my family decided to return to Orlando for spring break this year, I packed my wetsuit and vowed to do the swim this time. I'm certainly glad I did. I have participated in many an open water swim workout in my life, but this one was an experience like no other.

The swim is an over-and-back crossing of Lake Cane, covering the distance of 1 Kilometer, starting and ending at the dock behind Lucky Meisenheimer's home.



It takes place every morning except Sunday (weather permitting), anyone is welcome (as long as they sign the liability waiver), and there is no fee. (After shelling out lots of dough for hefty amusement park tickets all week, it was refreshing to do something FREE for a change!) When I arrived at Lucky's home for the swim, I must admit it felt a little like I was invading his privacy. I thought it was astonishing that someone would regularly welcome perfect strangers onto their property in the wee hours of the morning. But then I realized that it was simply a remarkable reflection on the types of individuals in the swimming community: Lucky evidently views his guests as swimmers he can trust, not strangers.



Sure enough, I was quickly welcomed and introduced to the regulars (including a duck who joined us for the swim!), and felt very much at home. Lucky questioned me briefly about my swimming background, and despite my extensive open water experience, I was urged to wear a safety swimmer buoy in addition to my wetsuit. I did so without hesitation: I have the utmost respect for the fact that Lucky takes all participants' safety very seriously. There were plenty of swimmers at a variety of speeds, so it wasn't difficult for me to find a group that matched my pace. I was able to do not 1, but 3 crossings, the first one being in the dark, which was a fun new sensation for me. The water and air temperature were perfect, and there was little to no wind, so overall the swim was extremely pleasant.

Upon completing the swim, I was treated to a dip in the hot tub, received a bumper sticker and patch, and had the privilege of signing my name on the wall next to thousands of others. (Anyone who completes at least one crossing gets to sign their name on the wall). Although a 1K open water swim doesn't constitute much of a challenge for me, it did feel like quite a special moment when I signed that wall. For me, the significance didn't come from the physical accomplishment of crossing the lake. It came from being a part of a wonderful tradition that represents so much of what is great about our sport. I left the lake that morning truly feeling lucky!



If you are ever in the Orlando area, I highly recommend doing this swim.

For complete details, visit the website www.luckyslakeswim.com.

