

A WELL-ROUNDED LIFE

Finding happiness in everything from kids to traveling and triathlons to classical music

By Stacy Booth



Jim Miles has many different interests, and has done a lot in his 61 years. Although his hobbies range from music to triathlons, each one seems to have two things in common: they got their roots in his childhood and, “I think all of them involve being with interesting, smart, spirited, fun people,” Jim says.

The Love of Music

“I played the piano for seven years when I was 6 through 13 years old. That was something my mom had all four of us kids do—play the

classical piano. And then we each played a second instrument too,” Jim says. And although he doesn’t play the piano regularly anymore, Jim is now involved with three different musical organizations.


The organizations are small, but their missions are something Jim is passionate about. “It’s one little way that I think helps make the society a better, more gentle and wonderful place,” he says about promoting classical music.

He is on the board of the Chopin Council of the Northwest, a group that holds a competition for young

pianists playing Chopin’s music; is president of the board for Gallery Concerts, a group that organizes concerts and recitals on period instruments; and is on the board of Musical Experiences, which supports classical musical education through a series of performances by pianist Fred Kronacher.

In addition to his involvement with classical music, Jim is also an athlete, something that started while he was in junior high school. The two interests give him a nice balance to life, he says.

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school because of illness. I was kind of the 97-pound weakling.”

In 1957, he found swimming, which was a sport he could do well. “Swimming was a way of upping my self-confidence as a kid.” Jim swam throughout high school at Sequoia High School in Redwood City, Calif., and also competed in summer meets. “I kind of hit my niche with swimming,” he says. He made the High School All-American Swimming Team in 1961 in freestyle, and was the first person in the South Peninsula Athletic League to break under

two minutes in the 200-yard freestyle.

The high-school swim team also introduced him to Marty Hull, a man he is still friends with today. “Marty has been an influence in my life because he was a role model when I was just getting into swimming. He was so good athletically, and yet he was a very nice guy and an outstanding student in high school,” Jim says.

After swimming competitively in junior high and high school, Jim went on to play water polo at the University of California, Berkeley for three years, ending his run as a co-captain on the 1965 team ranked fifth in the nation. “I was fortunate enough to play for one of the greatest coaches in Cal Berkeley’s history, water polo Coach Pete Cutino,” Jim says of his time there. “He was a wonderful influence on me. He was a very tough guy but a very gentle guy at the same time, and a very thoughtful man. I had immense respect for Pete.”

Creating a Legacy

Jim graduated in 1966 with a bachelor’s degree in political science. From California, he moved on to law school at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Here, another childhood experience would come back to him.

“My parents, and particularly my mom’s mother, were very publicly service-oriented,” he says. “They felt like we all have an obligation to make our society a little bit better and not just think about money.”

Their belief rubbed off on Jim, because after a trip to New Orleans with two law school friends, he

decided the law school needed to do something to encourage minority students to study law. “I can remember being on the streets of New Orleans early in the morning one day, and all I saw was black people hauling heavy loads, loading trucks, unloading trucks, doing unskilled labor, and I’m thinking to myself, we are losing a lot of talent by keeping these people down in these heavy-labor jobs.” He thought to himself at the time, “I don’t see them in my law school, I don’t see them running corporations, I don’t see them on boards of corporations.

“It dawned on me that what our country needed to do was enhance opportunities for black people and other minorities that had been historically disadvantaged just because of prejudice, to allow them to get into positions where they could influence policy in the corporate world, in government, in all areas in our lives.

“So I came back (to law school) totally driven, in my little area, to try to get it to open opportunities for black students, Asian American students, American Indians, Mexican Americans, to come to the law school and get trained so they could go into positions of influence in our society.”

With the help of the Student Bar Association, the dean of the law school and faculty members, Jim and his fellow students started the Legal Education Opportunities program, which aimed to recruit minority students to the law school. The program also worked to raise money for scholarships. That program, one of the first in the country, is still going strong at UW-Madison.

Jim and others on the Student Bar Association also worked on reforming the school’s curriculum to give more attention to the problems of poverty, and they encouraged the administration to hire minority faculty members.

Continuing Service

Jim continued his efforts to break down racial barriers once he graduated from law school. He moved on to work in the Civil Rights Division of the Office of the General Counsel at the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) in Washington, D.C., before moving to HEW’s Office of the Regional

music training on the piano, and then playing in the orchestra in junior high and high school, balanced off well with swimming and water polo. To be able to appreciate a wide range of interests, I think, is the mark of a civilized society. I feel really lucky that I got all those facets,” Jim says.

Emerging Athlete

Though his musical education started early, Jim’s athleticism didn’t show itself until junior high school.

“I was a sickly kid in elementary school,” he says. “I missed a lot of

Counsel in Seattle. At HEW, Jim was doing legal work in connection with the Civil Rights Enforcement program, specifically laws that ban discrimination by federal contractors, subcontractors and recipients of HEW financial assistance. “I really felt this was an important thing for our country,” Jim says. “It was damaging our country to have prejudice and discrimination, and not attend to it.”

During his career, Jim also handled Medicare and Medicaid fraud and abuse cases and worked with the U.S. Indian Health Service, providing legal advice to the Hospital and Clinic Construction Program.

“One person typically can’t really do an awful lot,” Jim says, “but we can all do something, and I think the civil rights enforcement, working with the U.S. Indian Health Service and trying to reduce fraud and abuse in the Medicare/Medicaid program ... helped to make the country a little bit better than it would have been otherwise.”

“I think I had a sense of fulfillment from my work that is uncommon among attorneys. I know of lawyers that have gotten out of the profession because they just don’t get an awful lot of satisfaction and

doors,” Jim says. “My folks were real conservationists long before it became popular.”

While working in Seattle, Jim and his then-wife Donna spent a lot of time outdoors with their two boys, Nate and Tim. Jim enjoyed taking his sons hiking, camping and rafting. He is proud to have raised two sons that are “very good kids.”

Swimming into Adventure

Thirteen years after high school, swimming returned to Jim’s life, this time as a catalyst to help him see the world. He got into masters swimming in 1975, after he moved to Seattle from Washington, D.C. In 1984, during his time with masters swimming, the world championships were held in Christchurch, New Zealand. Jim and Donna organized a tour for about 20 swimmers from the Seattle area to attend.

“Although Donna didn’t choose to go on that trip, I did, and we had a wonderful time,” Jim says. “It was the first big trip I really had.”

He began to think, “Oh boy, there’s a big world out there that I need to see.”

After competing in New Zealand, Jim and the Seattle group stayed to explore the country’s islands, and he also got his first glimpse of Australia, visiting Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef. Jim fell in love with the



Going All the Way

The year 2005 was a busy time for Jim. In addition to the trip to Australia and Tasmania, he also competed in 13 local, regional and international triathlons, in the World Masters Games and in the Huntsman World Senior Games. In those 13 triathlons, he garnered seven first- and four second-place finishes in the 60-64 age group. At the senior games in St. George, Utah, Jim competed in 10 events in five sports, all in six days. “I think the World Senior Games would be the capstone of my turning 60 because I tried to kind of go for broke,” Jim says of his experience. “I was very happy on Sunday, the ninth of October,” he says. “After that triathlon on Sunday (the final event), which was my first day off in about a week, I was very happy to just rest, hang around the pool at the motel and eat.” All his training paid off. In the Huntsman World Senior Games, Jim placed second in his age group in the triathlon, first in the 20K cycling time-trial event, second in the 10K road run, second in the 3,000-meter track run, third in the 400-meter freestyle swimming event, third in the 50-meter breaststroke and first in a swimming relay.

“I think it’s probably the most significant athletic endeavor I’ve ever accomplished, without a doubt,” Jim says of the 2005 Huntsman World Senior Games. “I want especially to thank Klaas Schenk and Karen Dugan, my swim coaches at the Club, for all the help and encouragement they provided last year as I attempted to reach the athletic goals I’d set for myself at age 60.”



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One step at a time, Jim has worked toward his dream—to see the country as “a stronger, more solid place where people have opportunity regardless of their race, religion, national origin or gender.”

Outdoor Enjoyment

Along with the importance of public service, Jim’s parents also taught him to appreciate nature and the outdoors. When young, he would often go camping with his family.

“My dad was a big camper and hiker. He loved the out-

country, and has returned three more times. “It’s a wonderful, fun place. The people are very nice. It’s not as frenetic and stressful as North America, and I really love the place,” he says.

His last trip took place in 2005, when Jim visited Tasmania and other



parts of Australia. (Jim shares his experiences in a sidebar of this month’s travel article titled “Tales of Tazzie.”)

What's Next?

After seeing Australia and New Zealand, doing public-service work, competing in athletics and helping support classical musical, Jim still has more he'd like to do, including visiting Europe and parts of Africa.

In addition, "I'd like to continue with the classical music organizations and help build them up and make them more influential in the community, and touch more people that way." He is also considering playing the piano again and becoming involved in organizations that are advancing the cause of cleaning up the oceans.

"I'm in very good health," he says. "I feel fortunate that I can do what I do physically." He says he wants to hang on to that for the future so he can continue to travel. "I want to be able to walk all over Sydney or Dublin or Lisbon."

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