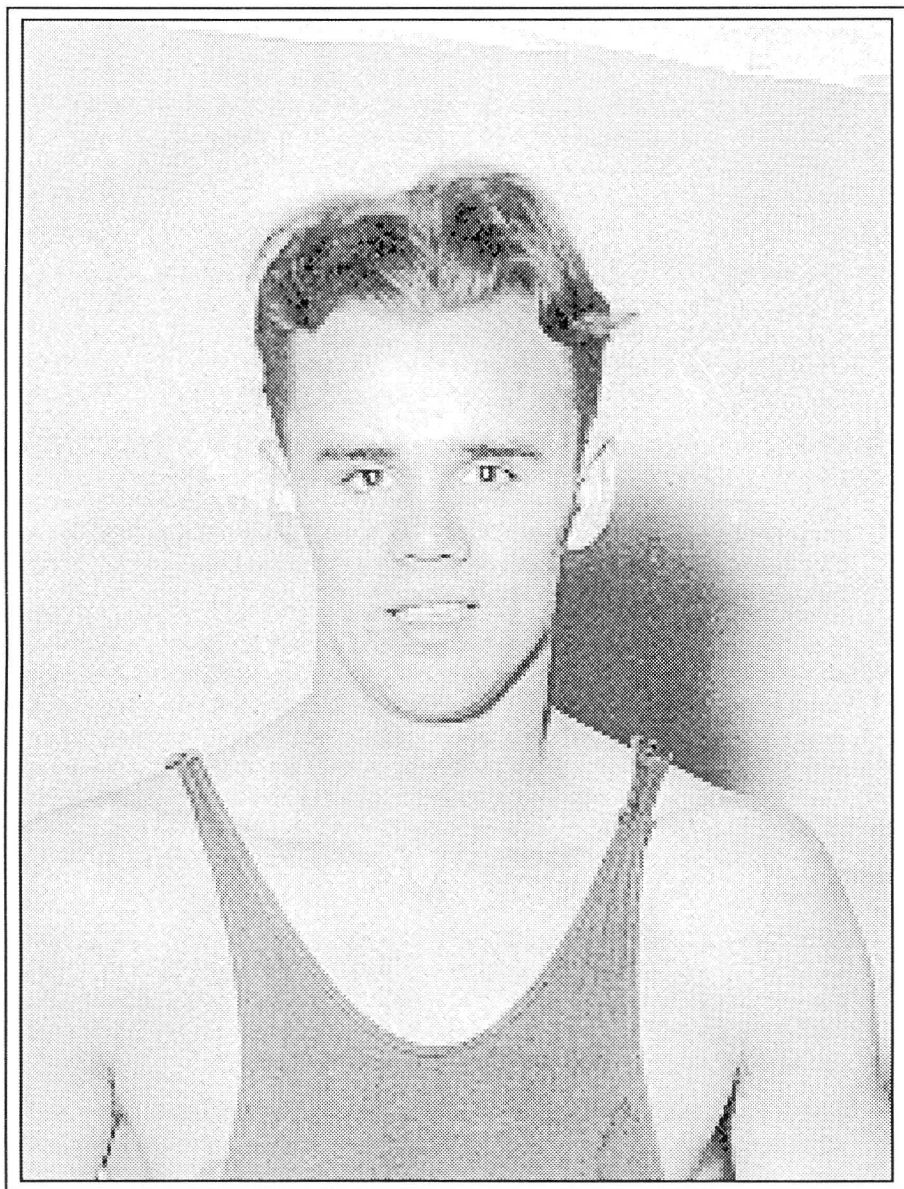


Ben Gazel



Ontario Aquatic Hall of Fame
Inducted as Pioneer Swimmer in 2001

Ben Gazel

Inducted as Pioneer Swimmer in 2001

Ben Gazel's swimming accomplishments were varied and numerous.

Born in Kincardine on March 13, 1911, Ben moved to Toronto as a child. Already 18 before he began swimming competitively for Jimmy Thompson's Canadian Swimming Club, he quickly rose to the top echelon of freestyle sprinters.

In 1932 and 1933, Ben won all of his races except for a second place to rival Bob Pirie in one 200 yard Freestyle event. He held the Ontario championships for 50, 100 and 200 yard Freestyle and was the Canadian 100 yard Freestyle champion in a time of 55 seconds flat. He also claimed the United States outdoor 100 yard Freestyle Championship at Detroit in 1933.

Ben qualified for the 1930 British Empire Games and 1932 and 1936 Olympics, and was the 100-yard Backstroke Canadian Champion, setting a National and Empire record at the Olympic Trials in Montreal. At the 1934 British Empire Games in London, England, Ben reached the pinnacle of his sprint success when he earned Gold in the Medley Relay and Bronze in the 100 yard Backstroke.

In November, 1936, Ben joined the American based National Swimming Tours to perform in its "Aquatic Show," and a fourth place finish in the Canadian National Exhibition's 10-mile Marathon in 1937 completed his transition to professional status, and signalled a shift towards distance racing.

While serving in the Royal Canadian Air Force, Ben joined its swim team and competed regularly against the Army and Navy teams. After World War II, he resumed marathon swimming. In 1947 he won the CNE 10-mile Marathon - the first held since 1937. A few weeks after his second place finish in the 1949 CNE Marathon, he entered the 20-mile Lake George Marathon and in the chilly September 24 waters, he won the race by a mile and a half in just under 6 hours. He placed third in the 1950 CNE Marathon and at age 43 was a member of the Canadian Relay Team that won in the 1954 CNE 30-mile Cross The Lake Swim, his last professional swim.

Ben was also a highly skilled swimming instructor who taught thousands of youngsters to swim during the 1940's, 50's and 60's while operating the Glenview Terrace with trainer and partner, Tommy Walker.

Ben passed away in 1981 and his beloved wife Anne in 1982. He is survived by his son, Norman, daughter-in-law, Mary and grandchildren, David and Lindsey.

The Ontario Aquatic Hall of Fame is pleased to induct Ben Gazel as a Pioneer Swimmer.