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A Life Force
Meet Fitness Enthusiast
David J. Miller



Best Version Media

Cover photo
by Gary Schatan

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Meet Fitness Enthusiast David J. Miller

By Lisa Carlson

Photos by Gary Schatan and with Courtesy of David J. Miller



Photo by Gary Schatan

“**T**he question isn’t Why? but rather Why not? If you have the resources – whether they be financial, physical, mental or emotional – to do something you are passionate about, you have the obligation to yourself to pursue that goal or interest,” said fitness industry specialist David J. Miller, a Montclair resident.

At age 49 he was an avid cyclist and triathlete living in Mexico City. After running a consulting and publishing business for 12 years, he was thinking about how to celebrate his upcoming 50th birthday. He was playing with the number 50 when he came up with the idea of doing a 50-state cycling adventure with his Weimaraner, Max. “This breed has tremendous energy and

loves to run,” David said. Fun fact: the dogs were named after the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, Karl August, whose court, in the city of Weimar, enjoyed hunting.

Bike 50 at 50

David named the adventure Bike 50 at 50 and mapped out the journey, mainly based on weather patterns. He celebrated his 50th birthday in San Diego with friends, family and supporters and then set off for Sarasota, Florida. From there, he pedaled on to the Outer Banks of South Carolina, then back to Los Angeles, up the coast to San Francisco, Portland, Seattle and finally Bellingham, Washington, where he caught the ferry

to Homer, Alaska. Returning to Seattle, he headed to the Central states, up to Portland, Maine and finally down to Washington, D.C. where he boarded a plane to Hawaii.

He enlisted sponsors, raised money for charities and posted seven-day calendars of his journey so people could follow him online. Max ran alongside the bike for part of each day, but also had a special bike trailer to rest, which drew in the curious, and started many a conversation.

Every few days, David would post updates on social media about his journey and the people he met. It's notable that David posted in Spanish, as well as English, and his initial sponsors included businesses he had worked with in Mexico. For more details, see the website here: www.bike50at50.com

David finished his journey in fifty-four weeks after having traveled more than 15,000 miles.

The Swimmer

Now he's all about swimming at Soda Aquatic Center, "with the kids." The kids are elite high-school swimmers. Many of them will go on to compete at the collegiate and even international levels. For David, they serve as motivation to make him a better swimmer. He's dedicated and strong, although admits that "my stroke technique could definitely use some improvement." And fortunately, as a long-distance swimmer, it's not all about speed, but also endurance, he explained.



Photo by Gary Schatan



Photo provided by David Miller

David's latest challenge comes as he nears his 60th birthday. His current project is Swim a Million. "I'm swimming a million yards in 2020 and working to raise funds for the Cancer Research Institute (CRI)," he said. (We featured an article about David's swimming fundraiser in the December issue of *Montclair Living*. Also see: www.swimamillion.org)

On Motivation

"I seem to be surrounded by those who have been afflicted by cancer," he explained. His father died in 2014 "after battling valiantly to overcome lung cancer." Over the past 30 years, his mother, who was raised in Niagara Falls, has

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had bouts of the disease, and his sister as well. “Thanks to early diagnosis, fast and effective treatments, and a little bit of luck, both are cancer-free and living well,” said David.

David found that not only family, but many friends had been impacted by cancer. That’s how he chose to swim to benefit CRI. He suggested that if we think about it, most of us know someone, or possibly many people, who have been touched by the disease. “The numbers are bewildering,” he noted.

Raised in Buffalo

A native of Buffalo, New York, David is a devoted Bills and Sabres fan. “And obviously, anything that’s played in a Michigan Wolverines uniform,” he said.



He graduated from the University of Michigan in 1984. Studying economics, which he thinks of as the basis for any good education, he also took Spanish, French and Russian. “After traveling abroad and working a few seasons with Club Med, I returned to the States and ultimately California to work in Diagnostic Sales for Abbott Laboratories. In 1989, I moved to San Francisco and started my career in the Health and Fitness Club Industry with Western Athletic Clubs. With fluency in French and Spanish, I moved to and

worked in Paris, Nairobi and ultimately 17 years in Mexico City managing and developing club projects,” he said. In Nairobi, he worked at the Safari Park Hotel to help design the fitness center.

Travels with David

Recalling other travels, David tells of two memorable trips: “San Diego to La Paz by land, Puerto Vallarta by ferry and Mexico City by air. Although I had lived in Mexico for years, I had never seen most of Baja. It was amazing!” Then, “after working in Nairobi for seven months, I took two different safaris, waterskied with a hippo in Lake Nakuru and hiked Mt. Kenya – it was an extraordinary way to see more of the country.”



Photo by Gary Schatan

Weathering the Lockdown

So how has a fine-looking, enterprising athlete like David remained single so long? He does have a girlfriend, Kelley. “We first met in San Francisco and dated briefly in 1990. After living different life stories, we ran into each other in front of Peet’s in Lafayette in early December of 2018. We’ve been together ever since.”

It’s all because of their friend Cath’s Great Pyrenees. As a dog lover, David just had to stop and pet Stella, and it was then that they recognized each other. Over the past 10 months, with restrictions and quarantines, David, Kelley and Cath have created their own little pod and call themselves “a COVID family.”

David is extremely grateful for “that special family” as they have helped him “weather the COVID lockdown, the California fires and smoke, and the rest of the 2020 craziness” as he has progressed on his quest to swim a million yards.

As our phone interview came to a close, David related that he had been sitting outside most of the time as we talked, and that Cath and Stella had just come out for a walk and to greet him in the driveway. It was time to go, but not before he invited me to attend the completion event – the day he swims his last 2,000 yards to reach one million. Let’s cheer him on!

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