

# Member in Motion: Deb Dotters

By Elissa Gavette

Deb Dotters made her first escape from Alcatraz Island eight years ago. DAC swim instructor Rick Rodriguez and some others members of the F.A.S.T. DAC Masters Swim group invited her to join them in the Alcatraz Sharkfest Swim and her initial reaction — one that most people can probably relate to — was that it sounded terrible. But she made the trip down to California and had a great time.

A year ago, Deb's son Ben, also a DAC member, declared his interest in joining his mom for the swim, so she said, "Ok, I'll do it again."

In August, they traveled down with a group of DAC swimmers to compete in the 24th annual Alcatraz Sharkfest Swim.

The 1.5-mile open water swim across the San Francisco Bay was modeled after the notorious escape route from historic Alcatraz Island — and mirrors the swim the Anglin Brothers and Frank Lee Morris made in their attempted escape in the 1960s. They were never found and the famous escape route has continued to be the subject of films and intrigue for decades.

Deb and Ben spent the entire year preparing for the swim. "Robin and all the coaches were really encouraging, especially to Ben who hadn't been swimming," Deb shares. Deb has been a part of the Masters Swim group at the DAC since she joined in 1995, but Ben was starting from zero. Deb recalls, "He would come swim with the Masters and Robin helped him get in shape. He's young and healthy so his endurance built up quickly."

As the ferry took Deb, Ben and the rest of the swimmers out across the bay on race day, the famous San Francisco fog lifted and Deb took in the view of the city while reflecting on the time she got to spend with her son. "It was great to swim with him. The best part was having a goal together. We would swim every Saturday morning and then go out to breakfast. That was by far the best part, sharing it with him."

They both finished the race, Deb notes that Ben even beat her by 10 minutes. Though Ben beat her, Deb still finished second in her age group, which she mentions humbly.

For Deb, being a member at the DAC and being a part of the Masters Swim group has given her a community of swimmers and friends. "The camaraderie is something I really enjoy about the DAC. It's so much better to exercise with other people and it's so much easier to do the workout."

Not to mention she attributes her favorite DAC memory to swim instructor Rick — meeting Barack Obama on the fitness floor. As she tells it, she was down in the pool area on a Saturday morning for the Masters Swim with just a swimsuit and towel when Rick came in and insisting she go upstairs to the fitness area. "I said, Rick, I don't have any clothes on, I'm here to swim. But he insisted I go right then." When she went upstairs she found the future president, then

on the campaign trail for the first time, and introduced herself. "He was very gracious to stop his workout and shake my hand. I have that special memory all because of Rick."

Over her 20 year membership, she has swam with the early morning Masters, the noon Masters and the Saturday Masters. Every group that she has joined, Deb was warmly welcomed by the swimmers and found the coaches to be helpful and supportive. "That's the best thing about this place, the coaches are great and the members are wonderful."