

Will Power

74-Year-Old Triathlete Thinks Anyone Can Do It



by Craig R. Hersch, Florida Bar Board Certified Wills, Trusts & Estates Attorney; CPA

Regular readers of this column know that I am a “week-end-warrior” triathlete in addition to being a full time estate-planning attorney, husband and father – and

today I would like to introduce you to a very interesting and inspirational man I met this past weekend while competing in the USA Triathlon’s National Age-Group Championships in Burlington, Vermont.

Bill Reese, age 74, counters the stereotype that only young people compete in triathlons – which are widely thought of as extreme human endurance challenges consisting of an open-water swim (typically in a lake, river or ocean), bike race, and then a run. He didn’t pick up the sport until his early 60s, but has qualified for and competed in several national championships as well as world championship races since then, including this year’s world championship that will take place in Beijing, China.

Amateur triathletes are called “Age-Groupers” because they are segregated by gender and five-year age segments

for competition, such as Male Age 70-74. “There are only a few people I have to beat in my age group,” he smiled modestly, “so it’s not that big of a deal that I’m in all of these championships.”

The top finishers in regional qualifiers are invited to the national championship race. Then the top finishers from the national championship move on to compete in the world championship event.

“I was a nerd growing up,” Reese answered when asked whether he’s always been athletic. “I played a few sports as a kid but didn’t do anything particularly well. Then I worked in the federal government and raised a family. So my pedigree is really nothing special to speak of.”

He got into triathlons after he watched one in his hometown near Monterey, California and shortly thereafter decided to compete in a sprint distance event that consists of a 500-yard swim, 13-mile bike, and then a 3.1-mile run. “I was hooked after that,” he says. Reese graduated on to longer triathlons, including this past weekend’s national championship that was an Olympic distance event (.9-mile swim; 24.8-mile bike; and 6.2-mile run). He’s also competed in half iron-man distance races



Bill Reese

(1.2-mile swim; 56-mile bike; and 13.1-mile run) and full iron-man distance races (2.4-mile swim; 112-mile bike; and 26.2-mile run).

His wife Emmy sometimes travels with him, especially to the major competitions held in some of the world’s best vacation spots. “She tolerates it okay,” he chuckled.

And like most triathletes, Reese has suffered through his share of bumps and bruises. “I didn’t know whether I was going to be able to compete in today’s event,” he said, lifting his shirt to reveal a very nasty bruise and fresh scars running under the length of his right arm.

“Bicycling accident from last week when I was training doing hill climbs,” he explained, shrugging his shoulders. “I was reaching back to get something out of my jersey pocket, wasn’t paying attention to what was in front of me, and ran into a parked truck blocking the bike lane. Didn’t know whether my arm would be limber enough to do the mile swim with all this bruising and scar tissue, but I did it!”

When I asked what advice he would give to others of his generation, he simply said, “Anyone can do it. You do have to put the time in to get into shape and then to train. After you get past age 65, your VO2 max (volume of oxygen/time – aka your aerobic capacity) falls off a cliff so you just have to deal with it. I walked part of the run course today and still qualified for worlds!”

I’m so glad that I had the opportunity to race in nationals this past weekend and meet people like Bill Reese. If you are interested in watching a triathlon in person, there’s a Sprint distance event being held right here on Captiva on Sunday, September 18. Get up early as the race starts at 7 a.m. sharp with a 500-yard swim in the Gulf of Mexico at South Seas Island Resort. A good place to watch the event will be along Sanibel-Captiva Road as the triathlon’s bike route loops from South Seas to Blind Pass and then back. The run portion is through and along South Seas’ golf course with a beach run finish.

I am registered to race, as is one of my law partners, Michael Hill. I should

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be easy to spot as I usually wear a University of Florida Gator triathlon singlet – complete with my orange and blue-framed sport sunglasses! So please give me a big Gator chomp as I go by and be sure to cheer all of the competitors on! (It's traditional to ring cowbells to root for the competitors – bring yours if you have one). Maybe you'll be inspired like Bill Reese to try a triathlon for yourself one day – no matter your age!

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U.S. Intelligence

Services. “Many people are concerned about the safety of our nation, should future attacks ever be attempted. We are honored to have Mr. Eastman speak on our campus and offer some additional insight.”

Eastwood began his career with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms before transferring to the Department of

Defense. His career also included conducting and leading counterintelligence and criminal investigations, and he has also served as a senior executive for the IRS.

In this frank and open discussion which moves beyond the rhetoric, political hyperbole, and media hype, Eastwood will discuss why our intelligence failed us on 9/11 and the state of our current preparation. He will also cover the use of torture in the war on terror, terrorist surveillance, and why it took so long to kill Osama.

The Academy at Shell Point is a life-long learning educational initiative for the residents of the retirement community. The academy provides anywhere from 70 to 90 classes each semester, encompassing a well-rounded curriculum of educational opportunities for senior adults. The academy was named as one of 2008's most innovative active aging programs by the International Council on Active Aging (ICAA), an association that supports professionals who develop wellness/fitness facilities and services for age 50-plus adults. ✨

Alzheimer's Caregivers Support Meetings

The Alvin A. Dubin Alzheimer's Resource Center offers monthly support group meetings for caregivers throughout Lee County and neighboring areas. The support group meetings include an opportunity for caregivers to meet others who are facing similar challenges and to learn more about Alzheimer's disease and effective coping strategies. Select meeting locations feature a guest speaker as well as an informal time for sharing.

Fort Myers

- Tuesday, September 13, 2 p.m., Broadway Community Church 3309 Broadway Avenue; 437-3007

- Wednesday, September 14, 9:45 a.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church 9065 Ligon Court; 437-3007

- Wednesday, September 28, 9:45 a.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church, 9065 Ligon Court. Speaker Nancy Zant, gerontologist, on Coping with the Challenges of Sundowning; 437-3007

- Wednesday, September 21, 10 a.m., Fort Myers Congregational United Church of Christ, 8210 College Parkway; 437-3007

- Wednesday, September 21, 2:30 p.m. Mt. Herman Baptist Church, 2856 Douglas Avenue; 437-3007

North Fort Myers

- Thursday, September 22, 2 p.m., Pine Lakes Country Club, 10200 Pine Lakes Boulevard, 3.5 miles north of Shell Factory on U.S. 41; 437-3007

Cape Coral

- Thursday, September 1, 2 p.m., Gulf Coast Village, 1333 Santa Barbara Boulevard; 437-3007

- Thursday, September 15, 2 p.m., Gulf Coast Village, 1333 Santa Barbara Boulevard. Speaker Nancy Zant, gerontologist, on Coping with the Challenges of Sundowning; 437-3007

Pine Island

- Thursday, September 1, 10:30 a.m. Pine Island United Methodist, 5701 Pine Island Road, Bokeelia; 437-3007

Sanibel

- Wednesday, September 28, 1:30 p.m., Sanibel Congregational United Church of Christ, 2050 Periwinkle Way; 437-3007 ✨

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