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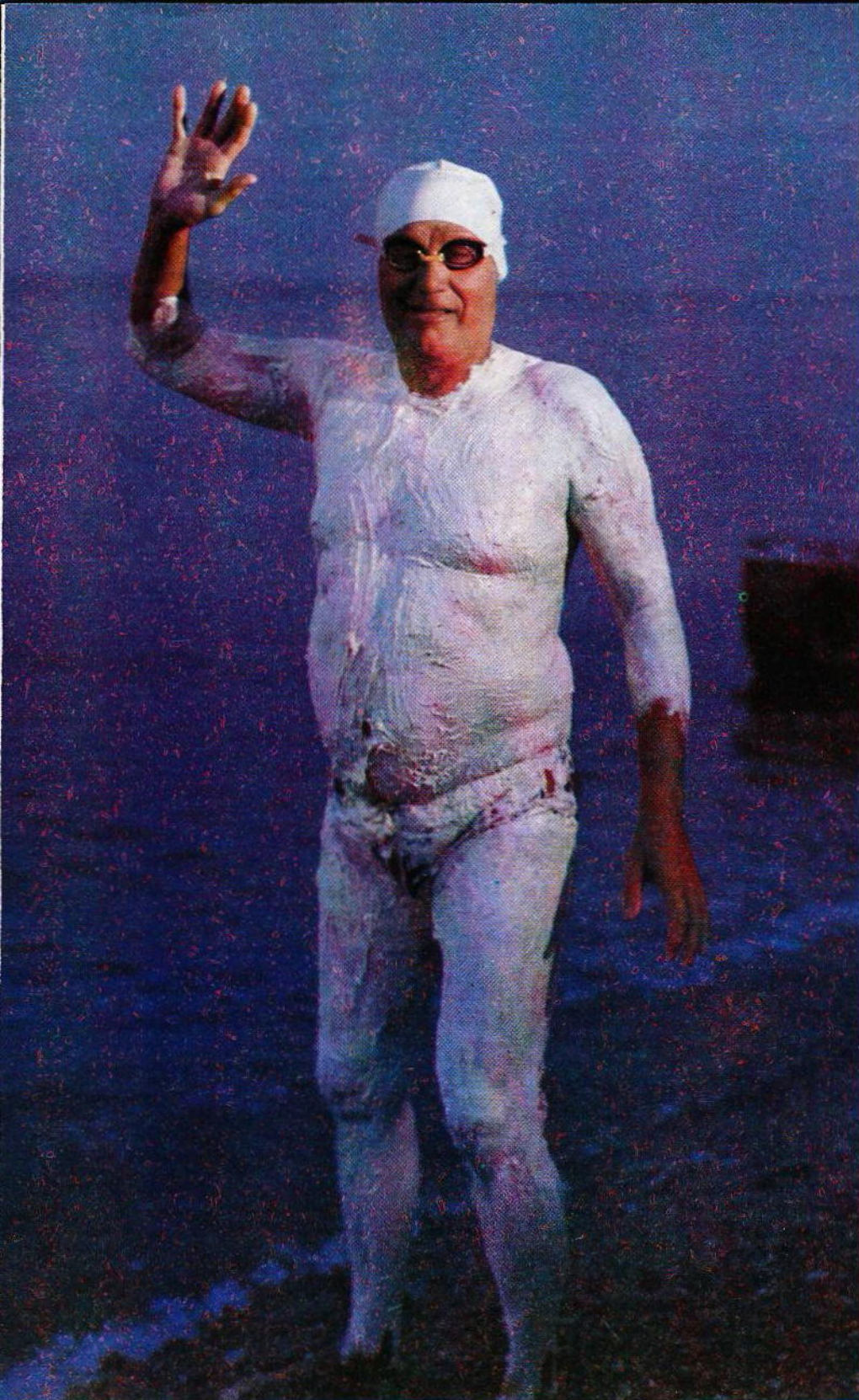
Next Week

A KNOCKOUT of a house, which cost him \$575,000, ducks included, was what Earle Shavers got by kayaking Ken Norton. Now all he has to do is beat WBC heavy-weight champion Larry Holmes and he can pay it all off. William Nack reports.

HIS GIG IS THE BIG RIGS. That's Tyrone Malone, who is making a living promoting drag races between trucks after having gotten the inspiration for them from observing the crowds at his dead whale exhibit. Frank Deford explains the whole thing.

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Clad in a ghostly coat of lanolin and Vaseline, Counsilman set out to strike a blow for "old buggers."

'GO FOR THE GOLD, DOC'

That was the cry as Doc Counsilman, 58, wavered en route to becoming the oldest English Channel swimmer. He went for it—and he got it **by RAY KENNEDY**

For Reg Brickell, captain of the 50-foot trawler *Helen Ann Marie* out of Folkestone, the moment was all too familiar. "It's dodgy," he said, casting a worried eye at Jim (Doc) Counsilman, the Indiana swimming coach who was stroking through the water in the 10th hour of his attempt to swim the English Channel. "Right now is when they go a little scatty," Brickell is a 30-year veteran of piloting swimmers through the Channel's treacherous tides. "They start imaginin' they're birds or bloomin' elephants," he went on. "This is when some of 'em take to screamin' at you, beggin' you to haul 'em out of the water."

Indeed, Counsilman seemed to be in trouble. His crawl, which had been holding steady at 64 strokes a minute, had slipped to 57 and his fingers were rigidly spread apart—a sure sign that the dread "channel freeze" was setting in. Worse yet, slapped by a mounting chop and nauseated from swallowing salt water, he seemed disoriented. As dusk descended, he inexplicably veered away from the wind-shield protection of the boat and, caught in a fast-running flood tide, was oblivious to the cries of his supporters aboard the trawler to alter his course.

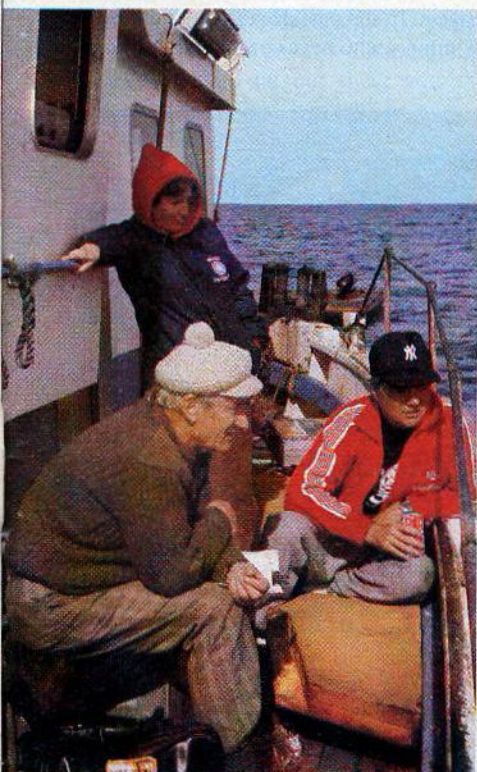
At that point Ray Scott, the salty 62-year-old chairman of the Channel Swimming Association and the official observer for the Counsilman swim, stood up on the heaving deck, placed his fingers in his mouth and let loose with a keening whistle that all but rattled the church bells in Wissant, a French coastal village still miles away.

Counsilman looked up and stroked back to within 10 yards of the boat. "C'mon, Doc," Scott roared above the grind of the ship's engines. "Tuck it in, mate, and go. Strike a blow for all us old buggers."

Staring wide-eyed through his goggles and grimacing in pain, Counsilman seemed not to understand. Then, like a man on some mad mission slowly recall-



Counsilman, who saw his swim as a way to promote a "gray revolution to adult fitness," crawled up to 70 strokes a minute to finish in 13 hours 7 minutes.



The crew aboard: Marge, Scott and Hetzel.

ing the meaning of it all, he broke into a twisted grin and sputtered, "Oh ... yeah ... O.K."

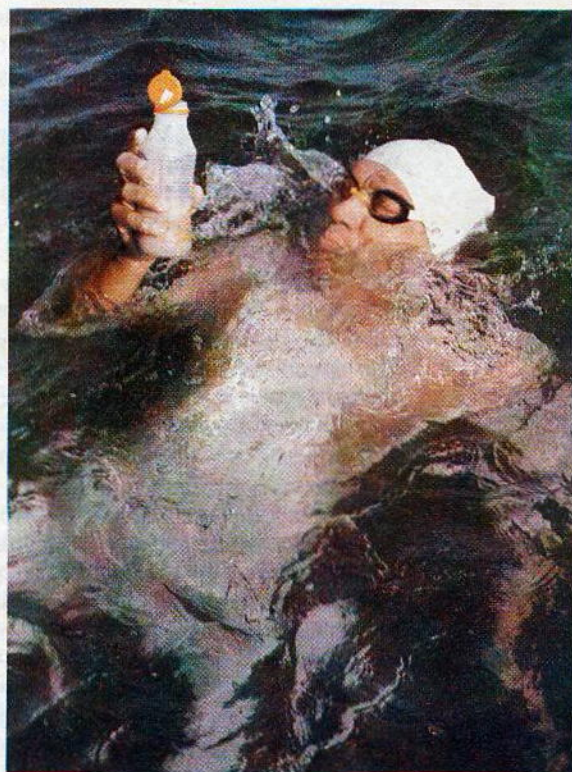
Digging in, Counsilman, who has preached a credo of "hurt, pain, agony" to Hoosiers for 23 years, increased his stroke to 60, then 62, 64, 66 and, incredibly, leveled off at a resolute 70.

"My God!" Scott boomed. "The man has a heart big as a pumpkin. He's scud-ding along like a bloody Hovercraft!"

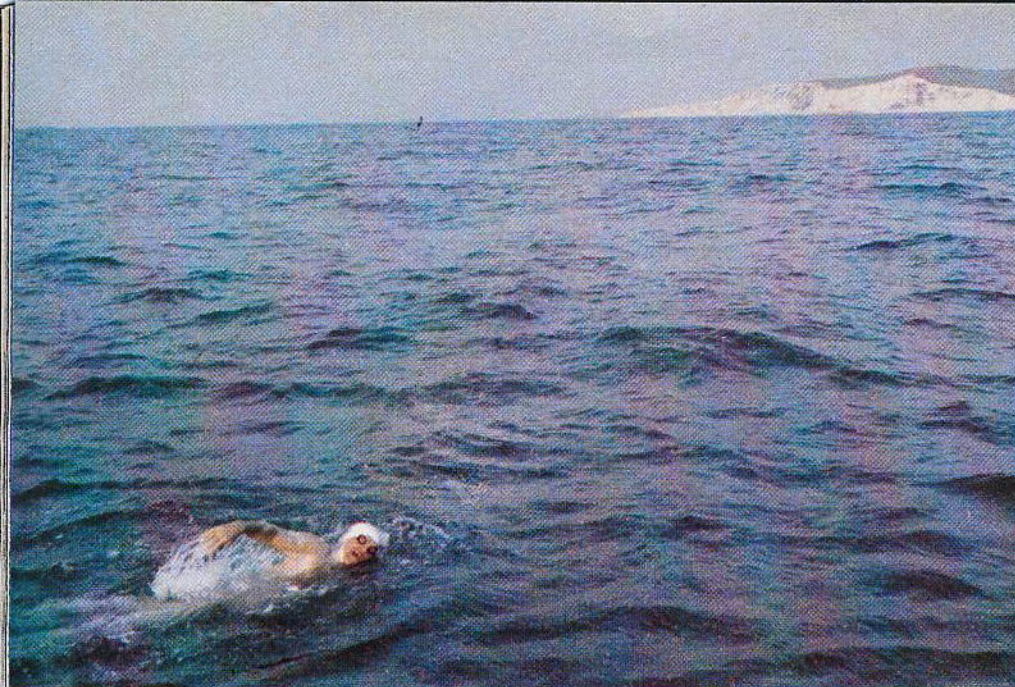
There were more trying moments ahead, but the rallying cry for old buggers everywhere seemed to renew Counsilman's will. And when he crashed through the rollers and stumbled ashore on a rocky, desolate beach near Calais last Friday, after an excruciating 13 hours and seven minutes in the water, he had indeed struck a blow for the geriatric set. At the venerable age of 58, Doc Counsilman became the oldest person to ever swim the English Channel.

It was more than a personal triumph, and that fact gave Counsilman a ready answer to the question that dogs all who test the Channel: Why? He explained,

continued



Doc paused hourly for liquid nourishment.



A wind shift forced Counsilman to land near Calais, five miles farther than his goal, Cap Gris-Nez.

DOC COUNSILMAN *continued*

"I think we have greatly underestimated the physical potential of older people. Who says people my age are over the hill? God, we've got to realize how many productive years we have left after 50, and I'd like to prove that by swimming the Channel and helping to lead a gray revolution to adult fitness."

Counsilman's version of the old man and the sea had its roots in his youth, when he was a national AAU breaststroke champion at Ohio State. In amassing a library on swimming, he was fascinated by the saga of Captain Matthew Webb, the 27-year-old master of a British sailing vessel who in 1875 coated his body with porpoise grease and, quaffing ale and breaststroking for nearly 22 hours—the crawl was then unknown—became the first person to swim the Channel. Though Webb subsequently perished in an ill-advised attempt to brave the rapids below Niagara Falls, his daring imbued Counsilman with a "lifetime goal" of emulating Webb's Channel feat.

But Counsilman, engrossed in teaching, lecturing, writing, inventing training aids and coaching the 1964 and 1976 U.S. men's Olympic swimming teams, barely had time to come up for air, much less test his doctoral thesis, "An Analysis of Propulsion in Two Types of the Crawl Stroke," in the Channel. In fact, while directing Indiana to six straight NCAA championships and authoring such works as *The Science of Swimming*, a widely

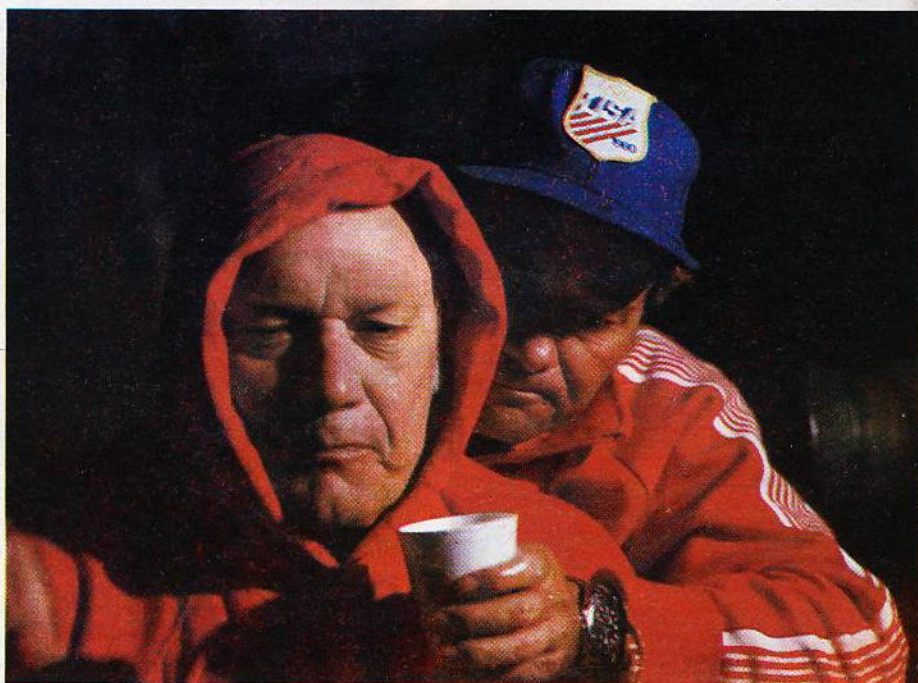
translated book that has made him as much a celebrity in Moscow as in Bloomington, he let his health ebb to a dangerously low level.

"My doctor issued an ultimatum: exercise or I'd be dead," Counsilman says. "I was 50 then and really in bad shape. I weighed 243 pounds. I was suffering from asthma, arthritis, chronic bronchitis and high blood pressure. Let me tell you, I was scared."

Counsilman began working out for two hours every morning in the Indiana pool. After nine months, he was down to 183 pounds and pronounced himself "beautiful, never healthier." Though he became a national sprint champion in the AAU Masters' swim program, he soon began to promote long-distance swimming as the ideal conditioner for the aging. "There's less chance of precipitating a heart attack," he says, "and it avoids the aching joints that many older people get when they jog."

By taking on the Channel, Counsilman also hoped to help plot a truer course for a sport that he feels is being exploited by "phony-baloney promoters." He cites the example of Diana Nyad, "a very mediocre swimmer with a very good publicist. Most of her swims have been failures. For instance, she has attempted to swim the Channel three times and has never finished. Still, when she gets into the tide off the Bahamas and rides it to Florida, a swim that truly great marathoners like John Kinsella could do with one arm tied behind their backs, she gets all the attention. The result is that more deserving marathoners like Loreen Passfield, the current women's world champion, go begging."

The Channel is not wanting for challengers. In the past decade the number of swimmers who have completed the cross-



Hetzel comforted Counsilman, who said, "It only hurt once—from the beginning to the end."

ing has doubled. Counsilman was the 214th. During the same period, the ratio of successful attempts has risen from one in 10 to about one in five. On one weekend last month, no fewer than 17 swimmers embarked on crossings, and 11 emerged triumphant, including Cindy Nichols, a Canadian law student who set a two-way record when she swam from Dover to the French coast and back in 19 hours and 12 minutes. Nichols also holds the women's one-way France-to-England record of nine hours and 46 minutes.

That same weekend, 12-year-old Kevin Anderson of South Africa became the youngest Channel swimmer ever, only to be dethroned the very next day by another 12-year-old, Marcus Hooper of London, who is three months younger. Ned Barnie, a Scottish schoolmaster, was more fortunate. His reign as the oldest Channel swimmer, which began in 1951 when he was 55, endured until the coming of Counsilman.

Though an anonymous donor contributed \$5,000 to cover his expenses, Counsilman became reluctant to take the plunge when someone told him he had to pack on 35 pounds of insulating fat to withstand the cold Channel waters. But that myth was quickly dispelled by Tom Hetzel, a former New York City policeman who has swum the Channel eight times. "It's not fat but sheer guts that gets you across the Channel," he says.

Enlisted as Counsilman's coach, Hetzel spent weeks training and acquainting him with the vagaries of the Channel. July, August and September, when the water temperatures rise from a numbing 57° all the way to a chilling 62°, are the only months when man can survive along with mackerel. While neap tides favorable for England-to-France crossings occur about five days every two weeks, winds that can kick up to Force 8 in a matter of minutes often leave swimmers waiting weeks for a good day. And those who do make it into the water must contend with fog, debris, jellyfish, seaweed, oil slicks, diesel fumes and seasickness. Not to mention the hazard of the 700 ships that pass through and across the Channel each day.

"The Channel will give you a million excuses for getting out," Hetzel warned Counsilman, "and you must not accept any of them. If you make it—and you will—you will experience the agony of victory."

Beginning in November, Hetzel directed Counsilman's training program by telephone from his home in Corpus Christi, Texas, where he is an instructor in criminal justice and police science at Del Mar College. After logging 1,200 miles in the pools and lakes of greater Bloomington, Counsilman flew to England a month ago and stroked another 100 miles in Dover Harbour as Hetzel looked on from the pier.

While staying at the Hubert House, a small Victorian haven that has been headquarters for Channel swimmers for 30 years, Counsilman and his wife Marge frequented Wren's Teahouse down the road for tea and scones and liberal servings of advice. "When you can see France from Dover Castle, don't dare go," said one regular. "The wind's too brisk." Another well-wisher counseled, "Remember, when you feel as if you're really finished and absolutely ready to die, you've still got 10 more miles in you." Mike Read, a British nutritionist prepping for his 15th successful crossing, was more succinct. "Just keep going 'til you get there," he said.

Finally, with the neap tide running, the winds light and the water temperature at 60.2°, Counsilman slipped into the lapping surf on Shakespeare Beach at 6:13 a.m. last Friday and, with the white cliffs of Dover rising behind him, headed south for France. Slathered with five pounds of a ghostly white mixture of lanolin and Vaseline, he looked like something out of *Creatures of the Deep*. Using a two-beat kick to minimize the strain on his lower back and heart, he plowed on rhythmically for four uneventful hours. "When he is finished swimming," says Scott, "he could hire out as a metronome."

Hetzel devised a system of signals to communicate with Counsilman. If he wore a New York Yankees cap it meant that all was going well. He'd don a Texas A&I hat when it was time for Doc to stop for a minute or so to gulp down his hourly container of hot chocolate or coffee laced with fructose. A cap with an Olympic insignia was reserved for the final run to the French coast. In the wheelhouse, a reporter for the Indiana campus radio station used the ship-to-shore radio to relay periodic progress reports back to Bloomington. "Everything is going nicely," she said after Counsilman had been swimming for two hours.

She spoke too soon. Twenty minutes later, Brickell spotted a Russian freighter heading straight at Counsilman and the boat. And when the ship failed to respond to the blasting hoots of the trawler's horn, Brickell radioed the British coast guard for assistance and hastily prepared to pull Counsilman out of the water. But at the last moment the freighter veered off and passed within 50 yards of the *Helen Ann Marie*, close enough to see the threatening gestures of Brickell and his two crewmen.

When peace was restored, Brickell chatted on the radio with another pilot who was leading a relay team of six young swimmers across the Channel. "We got a good one here," he said. "We got the trainer of Mark Spitz, the bloke that won all them Olympic gold medals."

During the ninth hour, the wind, which had been blowing from the northwest, changed to a stiff southwester, driving Counsilman off his Z-shaped course and past his intended landing point on Cap Gris-Nez. Required by the wind shift to pump for an additional five miles, Counsilman began to slacken. Hetzel, donning the Olympic cap, kept up a steady line of encouragement: "Go for the gold, Doc—two more hours and you swim into history."

Marge Counsilman, white with *mal de mer* but still watching Doc's every stroke, said, "It reminds me of labor. I was shocked when he told me that he was going to do this, but after 36 years I knew I couldn't stop him. What a guy."

Provisionally the wind changed again in the final hours, driving Doc toward the shore in heaving swells. In celebration, Scott broke out his harmonica and played a sea chanty while Captain Brickell danced a jig in the wheelhouse. When Doc touched ashore, everyone cheered, and Brickell let loose with a salute on the ship's horn.

Later, shivering in his sweat suit on the three-hour ride back to England, Counsilman had recovered enough to observe, "It only hurt once—from the beginning to the end. It's like marriage. You should only do it once."

Ray Scott had a different reaction: "As Sir Walter Scott said, 'One crowded hour of glorious life is worth an age without a name.' This swim today will make everyone who is on the seamy side of 55 walk six inches taller. We should all chuck out our chests."

END