

GORDON GRIDLEY

Syracuse, Utah

An Interview by

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7 March 2015

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THIS IS AN INTERVIEW WITH GORDON GRIDLEY ON MARCH 7, 2015. THE INTERVIEWER IS BECKY LLOYD. THIS IS THE GREAT SALT LAKE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, TAPE No. U-3287.

BBL: This is an interview with Gordon Gridley at his home in Syracuse, Utah. Today's date is March 7, 2015. This is part of the Great Salt Lake Oral History Project. My name is Becky Lloyd.

Let's start with when and where you were born.

GG: May 26, 1972 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

BBL: What were your parents doing in Salt Lake?

GG: My dad was working as an accountant for the church and my mom was a stay-at-home mom.

BBL: Where did you go to school?

GG: I went to Meadowlark Elementary in Rose Park and went to Northwest Junior High School and then West High School.

BBL: West High School. And that's where you graduated?

GG: Yes.

[brief interruption]

BBL: How many children did your parents have?

GG: Six.

BBL: Where do you fit in that line up?

GG: I'm the oldest.

BBL: All right. So you graduated from West High School. Tell me about your activities. What were your interests while you were going to school?

GG: I swam in high school.

BBL: On the high school team?

GG: On the high school team. Actually, what made me think about joining the team was I was at a scout camp and we were at Flaming Gorge and we could see across the reservoir there, we figured it was about a half a mile across, so I swam across to the other side and back and that was probably one of the toughest swims I've ever done. When I got out of the water, I had to physically get help back to camp because I was so tired. But that was such an exhilarating feeling that it made me consider joining the swim team. So I did that my sophomore year and swam three years with West.

BBL: So you hadn't been a swimmer before high school?

GG: Not really. I mean, I'd had lessons, but I hadn't swam competitively before high school.

BBL: I'm curious, was it actually a half mile across?

GG: We didn't have a map or a GPS, but we estimated it was about a half a mile across.

BBL: That's cool. So you finished at high school, then what happened?

GG: Went to Ricks College for a semester. Through my junior and senior year I had this dream to go to the Olympics, although looking back, there was not a chance, not even...I wasn't fast enough, not even close. Then I went and served a two-year mission. Going through high school I realized that mission was going to be a sacrifice because if there was any chance of going to the Olympics it would be during my mission. I didn't get to swim on my mission, so that was really hard. But, I remember coming back; it was strange. I was a lifeguard at Deseret Gym so I got to start within a week of getting home from my mission. I remember jumping into the pool and time seemed to just stop as I was

going into the water because I was anticipating that moment for years. I worked there for the summer. Then in the fall semester, went back to Ricks and did three more semesters at Ricks College.

While I was there I started a swim club because they didn't have any competitive sports besides football. So I started a swim club up there that we had a group of people get together and we did workouts. We had one intramural meet and that was about it, but that was a lot of fun.

BBL: So that was the start of you organizing swimming events, was at Ricks College?

GG: Yeah.

BBL: How did you do in high school in swimming?

GG: Pretty good. I qualified for State my junior and senior year. My senior year I think I took twelfth place in the 500, but, I mean, it's really not that impressive. There are a lot of good swimmers in Utah and I wasn't very, very fast. I really enjoyed it, but I wasn't anywhere near quality to be Olympics (laughs). It was just a dream.

BBL: What did you swim?

GG: The 500 freestyle. That's the longest distance they have in high school. Now if you do competitive swimming outside of high school, like the USA Swimming, they have the 1650, but I never was in that organization. So, yeah, the 500 free.

BBL: That's interesting.

When you were diving in and time stood still at Deseret Gym, once you hit that water...

GG: It was heaven!

BBL: Was it?

GG: Yeah.

BBL: And it all came back.

So you finished at Ricks. You had the club going. Then what?

GG: My last semester, during spring break, I came home, married Cathi, and we both went back to Ricks for that last semester.

After I graduated from Ricks, I came back down, went to the University of Utah, and then to Weber State. But after I left Ricks, I really, swimming for me pretty much just stopped because I was so busy with school, started having kids, plus I had a full-time job at Deseret Gym again until they tore it down. I just got so busy, I really just didn't have any time for it. Since 1995 through 2007, so twelve years, I didn't really swim much at all. So I picked it back up in 2007 because then I got my master's and things were starting to calm down, my kids were going to school, so my life started to have more open time for me to be able to do that. So 2007 is when I started back up.

BBL: Okay. How did you start back up? What did you do?

GG: My sister emailed me and said she was looking to lose weight and, in fact, I coached her. She's my youngest sister; ten years younger than me. So I coached her when she was a teenager. She wanted to get back into it and I thought *great, this is perfect*. So we swam together for a couple of years.

Then I started to get interested in triathlons. So I did triathlons from 2007 through 2010. I realized that the run was just killing me. Half a marathon run was just destroying my knees; my knees were just not liking it at all. So at that point I decided, okay, I'm done with triathlons. It's time for me to do what I like most and just stick with the

swimming portion, especially the open water part. I really loved that part. I still like the biking, but the runs were just not for me.

BBL: Going back to your sister, had you been coaching before? Had you coached at all?

GG: Yes. When I was at Deseret Gym, I believe it was...let's see, it would have been, after my mission I coached her and a group of kids for one summer. Then once I got back from Ricks, I was working back at Deseret Gym and coached some kids. It wasn't very long before they closed it and tore it down. So I was only there for probably a year before they tore Deseret Gym down.

BBL: Then you had that complete gap, no coaching, no nothing until your sister, you got back with her.

GG: Exactly.

BBL: That's interesting.

Where did you go on your mission?

GG: Brisbane, Australia.

BBL: I'm skipping around a bit, but I want to pick up these tails that we left. What did you major in in school?

GG: When I left Ricks, I got my associate's in agricultural systems technology. I wanted to be a farmer. I worked for a fall up in Idaho and I had a girlfriend that was a farmer's daughter, and so I had this vision of being a farmer. But after that season, I realized it wasn't for me. I got my degree, came back down here and went to the University of Utah for a year and eventually got my degree in computer science and criminal justice. I was going to be a police officer at the start and after they tore Deseret Gym down instead of just laying me off completely, they gave me another job or the

church working church security. So I worked for the church security for about a year and realized that law enforcement was not for me either. The pay wasn't there; it was just a lot of trouble. So I doubled majored in computer science and that's what I do for a living now is computer, working on computers.

BBL: Okay, I can understand the interest in the farming; you had a girlfriend. What drew you to police work?

GG: My uncle. He was a federal probation officer and I really admired him all growing up. That's what, mainly his influence.

BBL: I think it's nice that you had these opportunities to try out what you were thinking and then make an adjustment before you got all the way through agriculture or police work or something and felt like you were stuck. So where do you work now?

GG: It's a company called Demandware. Actually, we were just acquired a month ago. It was originally Tomax. So I've been working for Tomax ever since I graduated from Weber State. So I've been with them for fifteen years. They make retail software, point-of-sale, and back office solutions, mainly for stores. Demandware acquired Tomax because they're more of a web e-commerce, they're mainly dealing with websites, so they wanted to join the two and get companies that have websites as well as stores together, have a single solution, so it's a really good fit.

BBL: That's great. You say that acquisition happened just...

GG: A month ago.

BBL: So how's it going? Or can't you tell yet?

GG: Oh, it's going really well. They gave me a big raise and they haven't laid anybody off. They've extended the lease on that building for seven more years, so they're in for the long haul.

BBL: I think you told me your office is in downtown Salt Lake.

GG: Yes.

BBL: Interesting. So you're in computer science. Do you call yourself a computer scientist?

GG: Software developer.

BBL: Okay.

Did you grow up going to Great Salt Lake? Did your family recreate there?

GG: Not at all. I went there once when I was a kid and I went with a neighbor's family. A neighbor down the road went and they invited me and I went. I remember just floating around on our back and at that point I wasn't really swimming at all, even with swimming lessons, but I remember it was very simple. You could float. I even remember they had a beach where they had a place where you could take a shower, which they don't have any more, but I remember that.

BBL: So you went out to the south shore, I guess, and it was maybe Silver Sands Resort or beach at the time?

GG: Uh-huh.

BBL: That was a cool place. So that was the first time you went out there?

GG: And I hadn't been out there since I got back into marathon swimming, so probably twenty years later.

BBL: Okay, so let's pick up after you started swimming with you sister again and continue on with the story there.

GG: Okay. So from 2007 to 2008 I swam with her. We both kind of lost interest for a little bit. I started doing triathlon, which meant I had to do more biking and running, so I quit doing as much swimming. She kind of lost interest as well without me going in there to the pool with her every single time. So, she quit swimming. She's in Salt Lake, I'm up here, so it wasn't very convenient for us to meet together unless it was right before my work.

So in 2010, I did the Boise Half Ironman and that was the nail in the coffin for me. After that half marathon, after the finish of that triathlon, I was like, okay, I'm done. So I had done quite a bit of looking around at other blogs in the area. People who kind of, to see who's in the area that's into open water swimming. I found another blogger, Josh Green. I contacted him and the both of us agreed to get together to swim in the Great Salt Lake at the end of the causeway here on Antelope Island. That was our first swim in the Great Salt Lake and we swam out to, I think it's Egg Island...no. It's the very northwest corner of Antelope where there's a bunch of seagulls. Anyway, we swam out there and back and we had such a fun time we decided we were going to get together more often and swim in the Great Salt Lake. We also just prior to that swam quite a bit in Bountiful Lake. Bountiful Lake and Great Salt Lake were our two.

BBL: Where is Bountiful Lake?

GG: It's just off of Legacy, west of Legacy, and if you're going on Legacy, you take the Fifth South exit and it wraps around and it takes you actually to the Davis County Landfill. But the Bountiful Lake is right south of the landfill there.

BBL: It's a freshwater lake?

GG: It's a freshwater lake. In fact, the landfill, they needed dirt, so they dug all this land out and then filled it with water and it's Bountiful Lake and they stock it with fish and scouts camp there.

BBL: I've never heard of that before.

GG: It's only been around for probably seven, eight years, maybe.

BBL: Oh, okay.

GG: Just right around the same time Legacy was put together.

BBL: How did you get an interest in open water swimming?

GG: Well, I guess my first taste of it was that scout camp right before high school, at Flaming Gorge. I really enjoyed that. But it wasn't until I started doing triathlons, open water swimming is part of triathlon, so that's what got me into it was the triathlon.

BBL: You really enjoyed that part of the triathlons.

Okay, you were swimming with Josh?

GG: Yes, at Bountiful Lake.

BBL: And also Great Salt Lake.

GG: Yes.

BBL: Were you able to keep that up for a while?

GG: We did most of our swims at Bountiful Lake. Great Salt Lake at that point, we had tried it but it wasn't as regular as Bountiful Lake. At the time, I heard a lot about mercury being an issue with the water and that was a concern for me for a while. Then I did some research online about it and I decided to take it a step further and I contacted Dave Shearer and asked him what his opinion was about swimming there. He eased my

concerns saying that I would have to be eating the poultry. Just being in the water, you're not going to absorb the mercury unless you're consuming animals that have mercury in their bodies. So that eased my concern. So I started swimming out there. Over the years, a friend of mine that's a professor at the University of Utah repeatedly warned me, "You've got to be careful out there. You're going to get sick. Mercury's crazy out there." He was constantly harassing me about mercury. I felt fine. I never got sick. So I went to the doctor and explained it and he said, "Oh, we can test your blood for mercury." So I had a mercury blood test, which came completely normal. So it wasn't even elevated; it was fine. So that made me feel a lot better because at that point, I kept hearing all this information from this guy, but, yeah, mercury wasn't a problem for swimmers. Granted, I'm not drinking the water. Now if I was drinking the water or eating the brine shrimp, who knows? But it wasn't a problem just being in the water.

BBL: Do you remember very well the first time you swam in Great Salt Lake with your friend?

GG: Yeah, on Antelope Island.

BBL: That had to have been different than any other open water you'd been swimming.

GG: Yes.

BBL: Tell me what you remember about that.

GG: I remember that my goggles, thankfully, had a really good seal and my mouth, I remember, just the water getting in my mouth, no matter if I kept my mouth completely sealed, there was always a little bit getting in and by the time I'd gotten out, out to the island and back was a mile swim, and by the time I got back, my lips had swollen up and my tongue had swollen up. But we had a fun time. The water felt great. So it didn't deter

me that much. I knew that over time I would get used to it, and that's what happened is over time of getting used to the water, it wasn't a big deal.

BBL: Really? Is it that you don't swell up anymore? Or you get used to swelling?

GG: You get used to it. You do swell up. It just doesn't bother you as much and you come to expect it.

BBL: Interesting. How long does it take before the swelling goes down and you get back to normal.

GG: A full day. If you do back-to-back swims day after day, you need at least one day off to allow that to heal. By the second day after, you're fine to go back again.

BBL: What about your ears? Did you have plugs in?

GG: Yes. I had an inner ear infection prior to that and we don't really know if it was because of saltwater getting in there, but after that infection, I always wore earplugs and I never swim without earplugs, even in the pool.

BBL: So you got the infection after you swam?

GG: Yes. In fact, okay, the ear infection happened for my English Channel qualifier, which was in 2011, fall of 2011...sorry, no, no. It was May 2011. I swam from Black Rock out to White Rock Bay, which is in the north end of Antelope, a distance of twenty miles. To qualify for the English Channel you have to swim at least six hours in water that's sixty-one degrees or colder and I determined that was going to be my swim. Nobody had ever swam that far in the Great Salt Lake as far as I'd seen and that was the perfect time of year. The end of May the water was cold enough to be able to do that. I remember after that swim, that actually, to this day is the hardest swim I've ever done in my life, that swim. Twenty miles in the Great Salt Lake. When I got out, there's a picture

that the Friends of Great Salt Lake has where I'm sticking my tongue out and it's like a balloon; it's just massive. My fear was that about halfway through that the swelling would continue to get worse and worse throughout the swim, but it seemed to taper off and plateau at a certain point.

But I had, for about a week afterwards, I had this sore on the very back of my throat, because of the saltwater, that I went to go see a throat and nose specialist and he looked back there with a scope and said, "What have you done?" I told him what I did and shortly after that I developed this ear infection, which it really messed up my whole throat and inner ear. After that ear infection, that's what got me to start using earplugs. So at that point, on that big, long swim, I didn't have ear plugs, but that was the last swim I ever did where I didn't wear earplugs.

BBL: That's interesting. I used to go out and float on the Great Salt Lake and we'd take my grandma, but my grandma always swore that the salt was curative and that if you had any injuries or sores that the salt would cure them.

GG: I've heard that.

BBL: I always thought that was interesting. So if you were out there and a wave crashed over you and you got water up your nose and everywhere, that was an extra blessing, because you were really going to be healed now (laughs). But it sounds like you didn't have the same experience that she had.

GG: (laughs)

BBL: Okay. I'm jumping around a little bit, but let me go back again. So you were swimming with Josh, your friend, doing these open water swims, and this was about 2010 that you started doing that?

GG: Yes.

BBL: So when did your interest in the English Channel come about?

GG: So it happened while I was doing triathlons. I wanted to do baby steps on open water swimming. So there's a race out at Deer Creek Reservoir. They have a 5K race, so I did that, I believe, in 2009 or 2010, I can't remember exactly. Then they have a 10K race. So my goal was to do 5K one year, 10K the next year, then they have a ten mile there. So ten mile. Then I thought, well, I keep doubling it, 5K, 10K, ten mile. I thought, double after that's the English Channel. So that's what got me to, all the goal setting and the addiction to goal setting made me eventually lead to the English Channel.

BBL: Am I skipping anything along the way? Because I want to catch the progression of how you got to where you are today. So tell me what, you talked a little bit about how you had to have the six twenty-mile swims as a qualifier.

GG: You had to have one six-hour swim in water that's sixty-one degrees or colder.

BBL: Okay. That's the qualifier. And you just have the one.

GG: You just have to have one. But anyone in their right mind doing the swim will easily do that anyway in their training.

BBL: Okay. So you have to sign up for this or you register your intention to swim the Channel? Tell me about that.

GG: Yes. You have to fill out an application. At the time that you fill out the application, you don't have to have already completed your qualifier, but they do require you to submit an affidavit with an observer that has observed your swim and that it has met all of the same rules that exist for a proper crossing of the English Channel, which means you can't wear a wetsuit, you only get one cap, you can't have any kind of suit

that provides any kind of buoyancy or heat protection, one pair of goggles, and you can wear earplugs and a nose plug if you like, but that's about it. So they do expect you to submit that proof of qualification prior to your swim.

There are about a dozen pilots that what they do for a living is pilot swimmers across the English Channel. There are two organizations that oversee this. There's the Channel Swimming Association, which was one organization until about, I want to say in the 1980s, they fell apart and now there's two different federations that oversee all of the Channel swimming. The rules are basically the same, so you can go with either federation and still have it be considered a Channel swim. But you can't just show up and hire somebody and just swim across it and have it really count, and recognized, and put down into the books for history. You have to go through one of these two federations.

BBL: Right. So when you're doing the qualifying and preparing for this, do you also have to hire qualified guide?

GG: For the qualifier, all they expect is somebody that's aware of the rules. In my case, it was my two boys, my two teenage boys. They knew. They'd taken me on training swims before. I have a kayak, a two-person kayak. They knew of the rules so they were my observers and they just signed the document and sent that in.

BBL: Okay, so it doesn't have to be a professional somebody; just somebody who will verify that you did what you said you did.

GG: Exactly.

BBL: That's interesting. Tell me more about your training for this.

GG: So, when I decided to really train for it, it was in 2011 is when I did the qualifier. I realized I needed more ocean experience and here in Utah we don't have an ocean,

except for the Great Salt Lake. So I figured as much exposure as I could get to the Great Salt Lake, especially when it's windy out there and the waves are...if it's glass, that's not really going to help me for ocean swimming. Maybe the salt. So I'd go out there and swim, even if it was on a windy day or when it got cold, when it started to get cold in the fall I'd stay with it and swim there.

In 2011, I had heard about this race. I read this book by Dale Morgan called something about the Great Salt Lake. I'd read this portion about a guy that on a dare in 1919 swam from Antelope Island, Unicorn Point, out to Saltair and then eventually seven years later, in 1926, they started this race and read about this guy named Orson Spencer who seemed to dominate that race every year when they had it. So he was a big inspiration for me. So I did a lot of research. In fact, I got in touch with his wife—he'd passed away at that point—but I talked to his wife, Phyllis Spencer, and she was really old. She barely could understand anything I said, but I got in touch with her children as well and they started sending me newspaper articles and I scanned all those and put those in and read them and just a fascinating history.

But that's what really got me excited about swimming in Great Salt Lake. I'd go out there and swim and think about all of the past events where people would swim out there for races and that was kind of fun to think about while I was swimming. Yeah. Did that in 2011. My swim in the English Channel was scheduled for August 2012. So kept that going through the spring and then went over there.

BBL: Did you train in the winter, too, during December, January?

GG: Yes. So Josh, in, I think it was over the winter, February 2011, he had heard about a polar bear dip for, it was a charity. It was just a dip. It was just a charity event for Utah

Special Olympics. So we went up to Bountiful Lake in February and that was my first cold water swim was in Bountiful Lake. We had such a fun time—we did just a twenty-five yard swim—we thought, well, great, we'll just do this. And we kept doing that. We eventually went over to the Great Salt Lake—I can't remember, it was probably March or April—but that's when we started to do cold water swims in Great Salt Lake was right before I went in 2012.

BBL: I think I read somewhere, also when you swim in Great Salt Lake you have to lube up, right?

GG: Yes. So it's weird how even a part of your body where it doesn't feel like it's rough, if a part of your body rubs another part of your body, in my case, if my chin or my cheek rubs up against my shoulder when I reach forward to breathe, even a slight contact will cause rubbing. I've taken friends out there where we've only swam for a mile, by the time we get out, no kidding, there's blood dripping down from an open sore that's been caused from the chafing that's been going on. So I take a combination of Vaseline and lanolin, 100% lanolin. I take a fifty/fifty mix of it, combine it together, squish it all up, put it into a Ziploc bag. Then right before my swim I'll open a Ziploc bag, kind of turn it inside out like a glove and just smear it all over my shoulder, The trouble spots where they get really bad. That protects me for my swim, is the grease. It doesn't really...there's a myth that—it's called channel grease, channel swimmers have been using it for years—some people say that it protects you from the cold. It doesn't. If it does, it's psychological. But it mainly is there to protect any kind of rubbing from building up and making it turn to an open wound.

BBL: So when the surfaces touch it abrades it?

GG: Exactly.

BBL: Creates an abrasion and then the salt irritates it.

GG: Yes.

BBL: And then it starts to weep or bleed or get much worse.

GG: Yes.

BBL: You find out quickly what those trouble spots are.

GG: Yes. It's like the first time someone comes up, "Oh, I don't have any grease," we're like, that's fine. Because everybody's different and you have to find out where those troubles spots are, and then you know the next time where to put it.

BBL: That's interesting. So you were still training, you were still going on. You were scheduled, you said, for August of 2012.

GG: Yes. Okay, so when I'd done that, I read about Orson's swim, and in 2011, I think it was Labor Day of 2011 is when I did that swim. I got permission from Dave Shearer as well as the rangers up at Antelope Island and they let me past the gate at Garr Ranch. We drove down to the very tip, at Unicorn Point on the south end of Antelope, and I had built this little trolley system because I knew that, back then the water was so far receded that it was at least 200 yards from Black Rock to the water's edge. So even on the walk, at the start, I had at least half a mile of walking. I had this two-man kayak and my son was paddling for me, he was only probably twelve or thirteen at the time, so I built this little trolley to pull the kayak along the beach until I got to the water's edge, and then just stowed the trolley in the back of the kayak. But swam that on Labor Day of 2011. I remember I'd read that Orson Spencer had swum that and he set the record at 3:20, 3:40-something. Anyway, it's on my...I had this vision of beating that time. So I remember

swimming like crazy. I think I only took three stops to feed during that time and beat it by fifteen minutes. I remember Dave coming out in his boat for a little portion of it just to see how I was doing, because that was the first time anyone had ever swam that in sixty-nine years.

But after that, I was talking with Josh and we were like, “Maybe we should turn that into an event.” So in June of 2012, we actually organized an event, took registration fees and everything, got insurance, and turned it into an event and got onto the marathon swimming. Facebook at the time was really the way we could communicate with other marathon swimmers in the world. So we got swimmers from Boston, California, we got swimmers from all over the country. We had to cap it because we were concerned about having all these swimmers out in the Great Salt Lake, so we had to cap it at twelve swimmers for that distance and put that race together. We thought, well, eight miles, we still want to get a lot of the locals involved and there’s not many locals that can swim that far, let alone in the Great Salt Lake, especially with the misperceptions that a lot of the locals have, so we put together a one mile event as well. So we had the eight-mile event and the one-mile that started out in the marina, swim out to Black Rock, and we got about thirty swimmers for that one. But that was a fun event. We got that together in 2012 and have been doing it every year since.

BBL: So have your numbers been increasing?

GG: Not for the Great Salt Lake. We started, I think it was 2013, we did a race out at Bear Lake. We keep seeing more numbers for Bear Lake, but it’s pretty much staying the same for Great Salt Lake.

BBL: You did that too while you were preparing for your swim. That’s a lot going on.

GG: Yeah. So where I was going was about mid-June was when personally I quit swimming out at Great Salt Lake because the brine flies start to come out, the carpet algae comes up from the bottom. The brine flies love that stuff and when swimming along, the brine flies, when you're taking a breath, they have a tendency to swim right down your throat. And the water starts to get too warm for my liking, so mid-June is about when I quit swimming there and then I go up to Pineview. So when I was training for the English Channel, I'd go up to Pineview and swim. A lot of my friends go up to Jordanelle. But you hardly see any swimmers out there in the middle of the summer just because it's just too hot and the brine flies. But then we'll pick it back up in September, October.

BBL: Did you get good training out there? Did you get waves? Did you feel like your training at Great Salt Lake was representative of what you faced when you finally swam the Channel?

GG: More so. I mean, the week that I was in England was beautiful. In fact, there was a really famous coach, English Channel swimming coach, that would call his swimmers in Ireland: "You've got to get out here. The conditions are never this good." You know, last minute, "Come on out here and swim it. This is perfect." So I got really lucky.

But, yeah, it gets really bad out there some days. In fact I remember being out there and getting rescued by a sailboat because my boater just couldn't stay with me. I mean, swimming out there's easier for...swimming in crazy waves is easier for me than it is for a boater, a kayaker. So he was getting so far away and driven off course that he was in danger more than I was, so we had a sailboat come out and tie him up and take him back to the marina. I ended up going with them. But it gets pretty crazy out there.

Another thing is my mouth had gotten so used to the salt with the Great Salt Lake, thankfully, that when I got out there, I was like, this ocean water, it's like lemonade. This is nothing! It was a great...that's the best place to prepare for it because it's worse conditions than what your actual event is going to be.

BBL: Right. So extreme.

Go ahead and tell us about your Channel swim.

GG: So get there in August. So whenever you book with your pilot, you want to time your swim with the tides. So your tide window is anywhere between eight and twelve days, something like that. And your tide windows are, they call them the spring tide and a neap tide. The neap tide is when the moon has the least amount of influence on the tide and the spring tide is when it has the most influence. So on a spring tide you're either going to get help from the tide by really swinging you out and back in, or the neap tide where it's not going to deviate that much. The thing with the English Channel, the way it's positioned, you have France and you have England and the water pushes you east and west, so you're getting now pushed towards shore either way. You're getting pushed back and forth and it goes six hours one way, stops, and then pushes you back six hours. So if you ever look at the course of someone who has swum the English Channel, you'll never, ever see anyone swim in a straight line, because you're getting pushed sideways six hours, sideways the other. Right now the record for the English Channel is five hours and fifty-five minutes and the guy who swam it, you could see a slight arch, but it's never a straight line. So he got, he was swimming so fast he was able to get away with a small arch, but mine is almost a complete "s".

So, anyway, when you book with a pilot, because of that window, he only books four swimmers per tide. I booked clear back in 2010. In fact, I wanted to swim it in 2011, but when I booked it, when I was looking into it, he said, “Well, you’ll be in a third or fourth position.” And I didn’t want to risk being so far back, because in that window, if there’s bad weather, you’re reduced to one or two days maybe, and there’s been some cases where all four swimmers have to wait that entire window because the weather’s so bad. They don’t lose their money; they still get their deposit, but they have to wait an entire year or another tide. It’s such an expense to get out there that I didn’t want to risk not swimming. If I’m going to get out there, I want to swim. So I put it off for a whole entire year to 2012 so that I could get a first or second position.

So I get there and I was watching, I took my laptop, I was watching the weather forecasts like crazy. I was watching both France and England, trying to estimate when would be the best time to go. I was approached by the pilot, maybe the first or second day after I’d been there, and he said, “Okay, it looks like...” I think it was Tuesday; I can’t remember, but he said, “Tuesday, this is the best day to go. This is the next available spot to go.” I always had this impression that he would kind of educate me on the weather. No. He basically said, “Here’s an opportunity to go. Do you want to go?” He didn’t say, “This is what the weather’s going to be like...” So I was like, it’s a good thing I was watching, because he didn’t tell me anything about the weather. So I was watching and I noticed that the first day, Tuesday, was okay, but Wednesday was forecasted to be even better. The thing I was looking for was both wind direction and precipitation and the wind speed. Tuesday looked okay, but the wind direction didn’t look as great. Wednesday looked to be ideal. So I was like, well, I would hate to pass up a Tuesday and

have a Wednesday be just as good or worse. It was kind of a gamble. So I thought about it, prayed about it, and I actually passed up the first day.

So he approached the second person and said, “Okay, here you go. Do you want to take it?” And they took it. The thing that was the most heartbreaking was the morning in Dover, you wake up and you go outside and it’s really foggy. The fog, it is just crazy some days and that Tuesday, I heard that that swimmer had swam like three-quarters of a mile from France and the fog had come in so bad that the pilot could no longer see the swimmer and they had to call her off the boat. So they had to abort the swim. I was like, oh, my goodness. I am so glad I didn’t take that first day or that fog would have pulled me. It wasn’t her fault; you’re at the mercy at Mother Nature.

So that had me worried, but I had committed to go Wednesday. The weather still looked great so he said, “Okay, we’re going to start at two o’clock in the afternoon, we’ll swim at tide.” So tried to sleep that evening. It was hard because my nerves were going crazy.

We get there and get on the boat at the Dover marina and they boat you only about half a mile away from the marina to the shoreline. It’s called Samphire Hoe. It was a beach that was created when they were creating the channel between, the underground railroad. So he stops you there, you swim about a hundred yards from the boat back to the beach so you officially start your swim while you’re on land in England. So you swim to the beach, get completely out of the water and as soon as you step back in the water that’s when they start the clock. They have an official observer that’s not associated with the pilot that represents the federation. He starts the clock and he just makes sure that when you swim across that you’re not touching the boat, that you’re not wearing a wet suit, that

you're not getting any kind of assistance. So you just swim from England and you just keep swimming until you get to France.

Given that the tides are a six-hour push one way, six-hour the other way, I was aiming for a twelve-hour swim, that way I would get a complete tide one way and a complete tide the other way. It was smooth as glass. It was really smooth when I first started. The temperature was about sixty-five. It had kicked up a little bit, just teeny little chop, but that's about it.

That was two in the afternoon. When the sun went down, that's when I started to really, really enjoy it, because my favorite part of marathon swimming is the night swims because then there's even less stimuli. You can't even see, really. You can see the side of the boat with the lights, but there's really...so it's really a mental thing. I call it zombie swimming, where you just, you're just kind of alpha waves, your brain's in alpha wave mode and you're just kind of zoned, you're in a zone, and you keep your arms moving. You could fall asleep, except you need to see where you're going.

So got to, I could see the lighthouse. There's a point Cap Gris Nez, there's a lighthouse right there, and I kept seeing it right at my two o'clock and I could tell I was getting close because a very short time after it was now at my twelve o'clock, then it was soon going to my eleven and I could start to see the shade from the cliffs, so I knew I was really close. Cathi was on the boat with my son and she stopped me and said, "You're only about a half a mile." So that's when I started to really kick it into gear.

Then the pilot even approached me shortly after and said, "Okay, you're only about 200 yards from shore. I need you to sprint like crazy to that shore," because that's the hardest part, the last 200 yards. So I swim as fast as I could and I could see rocks

ahead of me, huge boulders, the size of a car, big rocks, and he said, “Be careful because there’s going to be barnacles on those things.” So I got up close and I started swimming breaststroke and I started to touch them, and I got caught up a little bit, but I didn’t want to swim very fast into those things. But got out of the water. They had a big spotlight, shined it on me to make sure I was completely out of the water, and then they honked the horn and I did it in eleven and a half hours. A lot of fun. That was the same time that the Olympics was going on in London. That was a lot of fun because we were watching the Olympics and the excitement was there.

BBL: Oh, that’s cool. When you came out of the water, was it euphoric for you? Or were you just pretty beat?

GG: You know, even thinking about that moment prior to the swim I would remember getting teary eyed, but at that point I didn’t. But I was really excited and happy, but I never got to the point where I was overcome with emotion.

One tradition that they do is when you get out, you collect some rocks from France. So I collected some rocks, put them in a Ziploc bag and took them back and I have those. But I remember getting out of the boat.

Because of the Olympics, Channel 5 was there covering the Olympics and they sent a cameraman down, so he was on the boat. I remember him asking me, “You just swam the English Channel. What are you going to do now?” (laughs). I was like, “I’d like some chicken nuggets.” And to this day, everyone bugs me after I get out of a big swim, and they give you a plate of chicken nuggets. It’s a tradition. So that was funny.

BBL: That’s really funny. So you told me there’s always a tradition once you’re finished of going to a pub. Tell us about that.

GG: So the White Horse Pub is, I don't know much about the history of it, but I do know that whenever someone swims the English Channel they're supposed to go to this pub and write their name on the wall. So you go in there and I remember going in there and reading about all of these people that I'd researched about, these legendary swimmers, and it was surreal seeing all these swimmers' names on one spot where they had signed. There was a place where, there was a wall that was open so we found a place and just signed our name and the time and was able to leave our signature on the wall there. In fact, I'm going back to England this September. A friend of mine has been training and is going out there so I'm going to be on his crew. So it will be exciting to go back and see this. The place where I stayed in England is kind of like a RV park that caters to Channel swimmers. So they have their own place where they build a plaque for every swimmer. So I get to go back and see my name up there on a plaque on the wall, all the swimmers. It will be fun.

BBL: That's cool. When you did finish in France, did they have a ceremony there? You said they shined a spotlight to make sure you were still compliant, but did they have any other kind of thing.

GG: Well, it's weird. It's kind of anti-climatic because nobody's there. When I landed it was two in the morning and there's nobody in France there at all. You swim back and everyone shakes your hands, but pretty much they start the trek back to England. My crew was all asleep, but I'm just so excited and happy that I couldn't sleep. Even when we got back, everyone went, we got back to the RV park and everyone's asleep and all I could do was blog about this thing and kind of put my story together before I lost it in my head.

BBL: That's such a great story. Did your whole family get to go over with you?

GG: So I kind of bribed my two oldest boys that if they helped me train for it by being in kayaks and paddling for me, that I'd take them over to England with me. So my two oldest boys went and my wife. My parents went. And Josh went; I invited him to come. One of the rules for the swim is you're allowed to have a pace swimmer who swims side-by-side with you for one hour. Then he has to get out for an hour. If you want, he can come back in. So you can alternate hours by coming in and swimming with you. I think he swam three times. But one of those times it was completely dark and I couldn't see him, so it wasn't really much help. But it was a lot of fun to have him there by my side. We trained together and it was good to have him there. I'm sure one day, he'll...he's a lot younger than I am, so once he gets to the stage of life where his kids are grown up, I'm sure he'll be over there and I'll be in the boat supporting him.

BBL: How does it work? The person in the kayak, are they telling you to turn? How do you make sure you don't go the wrong direction?

GG: Basically. They don't really tell you that. It's the swimmer's job to keep that distance, that six feet to ten feet distance between the kayaker. So if the swimmer ever runs into the kayaker, it's not the kayaker's fault, it's the swimmer's fault. The swimmer's responsible to let the kayak guide them. So if you find that distance is getting bigger, you can move more towards the kayak. So the kayak, their job is to point to a certain direction and your job is to stay within a certain distance of them.

BBL: All right. So they've got a GPS or something showing the direction you need to go?

GG: For training swims. For the English Channel, they don't have a kayak; you just have a twenty-foot pilot that pilot boats you across.

BBL: I see.

GG: So they're not in a kayak. Other swims, like the Catalina Channel, they do suggest a kayak because all the kayakers for Catalina, there is no tide. It's a straight line swim for the Catalina Channel.

BBL: So the English Channel was the first of the three that you did. To introduce this, you have a plaque on your table that you showed me beforehand that said you are a Triple Crown winner or Triple Crown swimmer. Tell us about the Triple Crown.

GG: The Triple Crown consists of the English Channel, the Catalina Channel and the Manhattan Island marathon swim. It doesn't have to be in any particular order, but you have to complete all three—the English Channel being the most famous, not necessarily the most difficult, but the most famous of the three, being twenty-one miles. Catalina Channel, twenty, twenty-one miles. They're very comparable, those two. Manhattan Island is twenty-eight miles around the island, but you're getting the assist from the East River and the Harlem River and the Hudson River; they're all pushing you. They time it so the tide pushes you up the East River and then the Hudson gives you a real push. So you're getting twenty-eight miles of swimming, but you're doing in a fraction of the time that you would do that in a lake.

BBL: I see.

So the English Channel, was there anything else you wanted to tell us about that swim or that event or how you felt? Did you stay in England after for a while and do some touring?

GG: Yeah. I was really glad to get the swim done early on in my tide window because then I could really enjoy England. It would have been real difficult for me to really go around the country, seeing all the sites, knowing that I had a big swim ahead. So it was good to get that done so I could really enjoy it. Plus finishing it. I would have just been, I imagine some people go over there, they plan on spending two weeks there, they make their attempt and something bad happens like with the weather or they don't make it and then you have to kind of cheer up as you go out and tour the country. So it was a dream vacation. Going to see the Dover Castle, that was awesome. We went and saw during the marathon of the Olympics, we got to see a part of that. As they're running past Buckingham Palace we were there.

BBL: Yeah, that's a great trip. So everyone who went with you on your crew also stayed for those two weeks?

GG: Yes.

BBL: I guess they had to, because you were required to book for two weeks because of the weather.

GG: Yeah, because they didn't know.

BBL: So if that two weeks happens and you can never go, you just get a credit for next time?

GG: You get a credit with the pilot, but your flight is gone, your hotel's gone. So it's a big gamble financially.

BBL: What a great accomplishment. It sounds like it was pretty easy compared to your training.

GG: It was, it really was. I remember thinking, *man, this is...* I actually did think, near the finish, yelling out to my pilot, “How much for a double?” because there are many people who actually swim a double crossing. They go to England, they get out, and they swim back. There’s literally only a handful of people that have done down, back and down—a triple. But I remember getting there and thinking, *I wonder...* then I thought, *No. Come on* (laughs). Yeah, I have thought about doing a double, but anyway, yeah, I was really blessed to have those conditions.

BBL: So there was never a point when you wondered if you would make it or not?

GG: Never. In fact, I was most worried about the cold. I mean, even training for this, I was taking baths with cold, cold, cold water in the summertime. I’d have the kids fill up big bowls of water and put them in the freezer out in the garage and then in the afternoon I’d come home from work and I’d turn the cold water on, but it was still, even the cold in the middle of summer, the cold water out of the tap is not very cold. So I’d tell all the kids to go out and bring in all this ice and dump it in and they just love it because I’m in the bath just freezing with this ice floating around. That’s one of the things I did to prepare for the cold because you hear about the English Channel, hypothermia, cold water, so when I get there, I had prepared for something that was around 60. Well, the water was around 64, 65. It was wonderful. It never felt cold. I said, “This is refreshing!” It was great! I could have swum all day. Well, I did swim all day in that water. It was wonderful. So that was a relief that the cold was not an issue at all.

BBL: Can you prepare yourself against hypothermia by taking cold baths?

GG: Yeah, to acclimatize your body. There are some people that say...there’s two things: there’s acclimatizing your body to cold as well as putting on a layer of body fat. I

probably went a little extreme on the body fat portion. I put on forty pounds. When I was swimming in the channel I was 240 pounds. That was pretty chunky. That probably helped with the cold water. But looking back, I probably could have gone a lot to the less extreme. I'd already acclimatized so much I probably could have gotten away with going a lot lighter.

BBL: Was that a conscious effort to put on forty pounds?

GG: Yes. If you take the average English Channel swimmer and look at them, they don't look like an athlete. They don't have the physique of an athlete, but they really need the body fat to be able to go for hours and hours at that cold temperature.

BBL: That's really something. So when did you do the Catalina?

GG: I did that the next year, 2013.

BBL: So then you did Manhattan in...

GG: Twenty-fourteen, June. The thing that was different about Manhattan is that one's a race. The others can be done, they're done as a individual through the federation, whereas Manhattan, it's an actual race that's held in June. Now there was such a fit. Because of hurricane Sandy in 2013, the race in 2013 was kind of a fiasco in that the pilots had so much damage to their boats that on race day there just weren't pilots there for the swimmers. The field of about forty swimmers, more than half of them didn't finish because some reason or another. So in 2014 they decided to take that field of forty swimmers and to break it into three different waves: a fast wave one weekend in June. June 14 of 2014 was the first wave, then two weeks later was the second wave and the third wave.

So after I had done the English Channel swim in 2012, I get back and I hear about another swimmer from Utah that's swimming the English Channel. I thought *what in the world?* I had never heard of this person, Joelle Beard. So I got in contact with her while she was over there preparing for her swim and said, trying to get more information from here, you know, who are you? So I told her about my swim and gave her some things that might help her. She came back and we met for the first time in Ogden, our families got together, and I mentioned to her, "Hey, have you heard about the Triple Crown Open Water Swimming? and she hadn't. So I talked about it with her. She swam Catalina the same year I did and we swam Manhattan together, except she was in a different wave, but we basically swam all three events the same years and it was awesome.

BBL: That's funny you guys hadn't crossed paths before then.

GG: Yeah, she lives up in Brigham and so she did all her training up there. I did my training down in Davis County.

[brief interruption]

GG: So of all those three races, though, Manhattan took me eight hours to swim that. But I had, because of my earplugs, I couldn't really hear my kayaker. I heard him yell something out, "You're going to get pulled." Pulled out of the water. That had me really freaked out. So apparently, after the race I found out, I talked to him about what he said. So coming down the Hudson there's a point where a cruise ship pulls out and they block the path of the swimmers. So what they do, normally, if that situation occurs, they pull the swimmers out of the water, then they take them back to where they were, drop them back in and let them swim so they're not going to run into the boat. I thought he said you're going to get pulled. I didn't know about this ferry. There is a time restriction on

that race and I thought that I was so slow that I was going to get pulled because of the time constraint, not because of the ferry. So at that point, this was about halfway down the Hudson River, I started just really sprinting, I mean, hard-core sprint the whole time and by the time I got out my shoulders were so bad. I got back and I had a MRI done and I had a 90% tear in my rotator cuff. I just killed my shoulder. So I've had both shoulders worked on, both rotator cuffs torn, so I should be able to get back in the water in the next month and pursue that.

BBL: So you just had surgery recently?

GG: Yes, last month I had my right side repaired. After England, I got back from England and later that year, so November of 2012, I had my left rotator cuff repaired. It was scary because right before I went to England, I'd seen this guy many times because of all the training you put on your shoulder, it's sure sore and sore, and he kept giving me cortisone shots to help relieve the pain, but those things are just a band aid and you're not supposed to really have too many of those. Right before England he said, "You've torn a rotator cuff." I said, "What? Right before England?" He said, "It's not that bad, but you've torn it. I can give you one last cortisone right before England. It will make it so you can make the swim, but when you get back you're going to have to repair it." So that was good. It didn't cause me trouble when I was there.

BBL: And when you got back had it torn more?

GG: Yeah.

BBL: Wow. But in the meantime, then, in between doing all of these events, you still have your Great Salt Lake swim going on. And what is that official name?

GG: Great Salt Lake Open Water Marathon.

BBL: Is there something called GSLOW?

GG: So there's a club called the Salt Lake Open Water Club that is a club that meets to swim in the Great Salt Lake as well as Pineview, other lakes. It's the club. But the race itself is the Great Salt Lake Open Water Marathon and GSLOW is the abbreviation for that race.

BBL: I see. So you still had that going on and organizing that. I notice it's scheduled again this year for June 6th.

GG: Yes.

BBL: You were telling me beforehand some of the challenges you might have this year in terms of the water level.

GG: Yes. So we ordered these kayak trolleys to make it so that the swimmers won't have to carry the kayaks across the beach from the South end of Antelope to the water's edge. Last year I was one of the kayakers and I had to carry that thing for at least half a mile, maybe three-quarters of a mile. It got to the point where I was so tired that I was just dragging it and my kayak took a beating. It was sandpaper on the bottom of it. So I've got these trolleys this year so they can pull them and it will be a lot easier.

BBL: How many slots do you have in the race for this year?

GG: So we have twelve. We've already got six that have filled up. It's weird. The first, in 2013, I guess the word had gotten out so much about the success of the 2012 race that it filled up within two weeks, all twelve spots. This year it's not so lucky, where we've got eight spots that have been taken up from Oregon, Texas swimmers, California swimmers, a couple are from Utah. It's interesting how we can get people from out of state to get onboard more than we can instate people.

BBL: So what about the mile swim? Do people have to sign up for that in advance too?

GG: Yes.

BBL: How are the numbers for that going?

GG: Usually we find that most people sign up for that last minute, so we're not too concerned. We've got maybe two people, but usually we get about thirty to forty swimmers for that by the time we start the race.

BBL: Do you have a limit on the number of spots for that?

GG: No.

BBL: That takes quite a bit of coordination because you've got to get permits from various places, right?

GG: Yes. We've got to get one from the State of Utah to actually land at Black Rock, then one from the Utah State Parks to get through the south end of Antelope, as well as to get assistance from Dave out on the lake to help anybody that might need help. Every year we've had it, except for the first year, in 2013 and '14, we had one or two people get pulled for various reasons, being cold or something.

BBL: Do you continue to train on Great Salt Lake? I know not right now because you're recovering, but when you get back in there, how often will you do that?

GG: Once a week.

BBL: Where do you normally swim there?

GG: Usually I'll go out to the Great Salt Lake Marina down by Saltair. It's more pleasant down there. I find the north end of Antelope Island is more shallow, so it's difficult to swim there without hitting the bottom. The water seems to be a little bit cleaner down there by the GSL Marina.

BBL: Tell us about your ice swim.

GG: So a friend of mine, his name's Goody Tyler, he swam, I met him because he was from Ogden and he swam the 2012 race, the eight-mile GSL race. So we met there. He was training with us, with Josh and I out at Great Salt Lake, and he approached us, both of us when we were out there on a training swim, right before getting in the water he approached us and said, "I just went and visited with a doctor and I have cancer." He was going to go in for chemotherapy at the start of the year, January. At that point—this was in November—we were still swimming, we had started to develop that acclimatization to cold water, and right before he went in for chemo, mid-December—we'd all heard about the ice mile—he said, "I'm going to go for an ice mile." In fact, it was weird. We show up, we're just going to do a regular swim, an out and back from the opening of the marina, out and back is 440 yards, so that's basically a quarter mile. Usually we do two laps. And we took the temperature, as we normally do, and it was forty-one degrees and we're like, "Wow, this is cold enough for ice mile if we want to do it." He kept going. He says, "I'm going to go for an ice mile." We're like, What?

Now, technically for an ice mile, this was only the second year of the organization's existence. Now they've got stringent rules on attempting these things. You have to have an ambulance on site; you have to have an electrocardiogram prior to the attempt, things like that. But at the time, those rules weren't quite there.

So he went ahead and did four laps of this thing. Dave Shearer was in his boat at the time and he was right there. Josh and I were walking up along the break wall and saw him do his four laps. And he gets out, we get him in a car that's all heated up, warm him up slowly. So he's the first Utahn to do an ice mile. That inspired me to think, *hey, whoa,*

that's something I could do. It was a good achievement for him because he was about ready to go through chemotherapy and all that and it was something that kind of inspired him to deal with those hard times. I did my ice mile in 2013, so it would have been 2012 when he did his, because I did mine in December of 2013.

Same kind of thing. Keep swimming through October, November, December. Keep a close eye on the water temperature. I remember the week before, the first week of December was really warm. The water was like fifty, forty-eight. It was really high for that time of year. Then a big snowstorm had come in and the water had dropped, so it was the perfect time to go. So when I got in, the temperature was thirty-seven. We had five different readings from different thermometers ranging from thirty-five up to thirty-seven was the highest. I had all these people there. I'd organized something where I encouraged people to donate to the Utah Food Bank, so everybody had come and they brought food and they had a news crew on site. The water was thirty-seven on average, and I needed to hit forty-one. I mean, those three degrees are huge when you're getting that cold.

So I got in and I thought, okay, if I can at least just do two laps. So I get in and do the two laps. At that point I was so numb, I was like, well, I might as well just keep on going. So I just kept going. I tried to swim as fast as I could because I knew the fastest I could go I would generate some sort of heat. But got the four laps out, got it, got into the van and my friend who was an EMT was there and was able to monitor me, make sure I got heated up properly. But, yeah, I was so gone mentally that I couldn't remember much. I do remember him asking me a couple of questions, one being what was my phone number and I couldn't really remember, so I had to blurt out something and I gave him a phone number that was like ten years old.

BBL: I couldn't remember a phone number from ten years ago. Is that a bad sign?

GG: Yeah, it just goes to show that your mental awareness, your subconscious can come out more when you're recovering, having a traumatic event like that, you can remember things from your past that you normally probably couldn't. But I was able to get warmed up and that was...I would like to do that again. In fact, this year, the United States had its first winter swimming championship ever in Vermont. I would have liked to have gone to that, but that was in the middle of surgery. But I do plan on going to that next year.

BBL: Some people might say this interest you have in cold water swimming is extreme. Does anybody ever say that to you?

GG: I get lots of people saying I'm crazy.

BBL: What drives you? Do you know?

GG: Well, once you get out of the water, when it's not necessarily that cold, let's say the water is fifty or even forty, high forties, when you get out of the water, hypothermia really is not an issue because hypothermia is when you're in the water for an extended period of time. For ice mile, hypothermia would be an issue, but most people when they get in for like a polar bear dip, they're in the water and they're out of the water in less than a minute. So hypothermia is not going to be a problem. But that experience, that's why polar bear dips are so popular, because people get in and get out. Your body has a natural way of producing endorphins. It's like a natural high that's very addicting. So it really is kind of just like that, it's a natural high and it's addicting. Now when you get to water that cold, you don't quite experience that. You can't really feel...you don't have

any blood in your hands and they're tingly and you lose sensation in your fingertips for about a week.

BBL: Really?

GG: Yeah. Once you get to that cold, to that extreme, the whole reason that got you into it is not happening anymore, but at that point it's really the challenge. But over the years they've really started to fine-tune the rules and the safety procedures because so far nobody's died yet, but if they had not done that and if they don't keep a close eye on people who are doing these types of things, and the way they're preparing, somebody could die from it because it's pretty dangerous.

BBL: You seem to take precautions. Do all these new regulations and the regulation of all these really fun things you used to do, is it kind of putting a damper on it for you?

GG: No. I mean, they don't really have any rules on how you prepare. You can still go out and prepare. You still want to have somebody with you, but they don't have any regulations on making sure that you have a doctor there when you're training.

BBL: So you don't feel over-regulated or they're taking the fun out of it or whatever?

GG: No. It is a good idea to have an ambulance there.

BBL: You had an EMT in your case.

GG: Yeah.

BBL: You had a beard when you did that swim. Was that on purpose? Was that intentionally? Or was that related to something else?

GG: For the longest time I thought that if I put a good layer of lanolin, channel grease on there that it would protect my shoulders a little better, but it didn't. I just like the look

of it and I always would tell people that it was protection from the chafing, but it didn't really. I just liked the look of it (laughs).

BBL: Okay. It was a nice beard. I just wondered if it had a connection to that.

So what have you got in the future?

GG: Well, it depends on how my recovery goes this spring. I'm allowed to get back in the water next month. I really want to do a length of Flathead Lake in Montana. It's the largest freshwater lake in the western US. That's a twenty-five mile swim. But we'll have to see. I can't really at this point, it's such a short timeframe, too, because I'm going from not swimming for six months to training for that. That would be a dream swim. If it's not this year, I would like to do it next year.

BBL: Anything else you see down the road, any of the big ones?

GG: Eventually I would like to do the North Channel swim between England and Ireland and then English Channel when I'm fifty. There's something called the half-century club where anybody who swims the English Channel when they're fifty or older is in that club. So it's something to shoot for.

BBL: When are you fifty?

GG: That is in eight years from now, so it's quite a ways down. But there's people who are swimming the English Channel when they're...the oldest guy is like seventy-two, I want to say. So there are no age restrictions really. I mean, a lot of the best swimmers in the world for the English Channel are seniors.

BBL: Right. So you might even do it more than after you're fifty.

GG: Yeah, if my body lets me. But I'd be kind of selfish. My wife, she runs marathons and she wants to run a marathon in every state. She's run over a hundred total so far, but

that's mostly been in the western US. So I'd like to quit focusing so much on my swims and encourage her to, really finances haven't been allowing us to do far away states, but as we get older and can afford it more, it would be nice to spend more trips where we can both do something or just her.

BBL: That's great.

Will you continue training at Great Salt Lake?

GG: Oh, yeah.

BBL: And continue your race out there too as long as that keeps going?

GG: Yeah.

BBL: Any other plans with the lake that you see that you'd like to do out there?

GG: For the longest time I had this dream to do a staged swim from Black Rock way up to the north side in Spring Bay, but I took a trip up to the north side once to support a kayaker who had actually kayaked from the south side all the way to the top side and back in a week and took a chance to swim in that pink water up there. Oh, my. Even though I was doing heads up breaststroke, the fumes from the water was just so overwhelming that I was like, I don't know if it's humanly possible to actually put my face in the water and swim in that condensed saltwater. It was just way more extreme than the south end. But that was a dream to be able to do that. You'd just need a complete super hero to be able to swim that distance in that north side.

BBL: Yeah, and not worry if you lose your tongue.

GG: Yeah, that's a lot of backstroke or even breaststroke.

BBL: I want to ask you, too, about the lake itself. What do you see about the future of the lake? Do you have any concerns or thoughts about Great Salt Lake?

GG: Well, I was hopeful about the causeway that Union Pacific runs. I read about this bridge that they were thinking about constructing and I hoped that they were going to do that. That way it could bring the salinity of the north side down, even though it would make it so the south side was more concentrated. I had hoped that would actually go through, that way something like a staged swim could be possible, because right now it's just so concentrated; it's not possible. I don't think so. That's my biggest hope for the future of the lake is that we can make it more of a one lake rather than two separate lakes so that something like that could be possible. I don't know, that's kind of a narrow perspective. But, yeah, I'm always interested, and we're always praying for more moisture to keep that lake level high, high enough that the boaters can enjoy it as well as the swimmers. We have a good relationship. We make sure that we have [unclear] and things with us so we don't have any problems with boaters.

BBL: Is there anything else you want to tell me, either about your swimming career or anything else that I haven't asked you that you'd like to include in this?

GG: That about covers it.

BBL: This has been great. It's truly impressive, your swimming adventures. I'm so glad we got to include you with the project and I think it will be really cool for people a hundred years from now who might be inspired, like you were with Orson Spencer, and say, "Hey, I'm going to do something cool like that, too." I think that's great. Thanks a lot. I'll go ahead and turn this off.

END OF INTERVIEW