

Felix Grossman approached Williams swim coaching legend Bob Muir in September of 1952 with the idea of swimming for Williams College.

Grossman was a pretty fair freestyler from New Rochelle, N.Y., but he found in his first meeting with Muir that there would be six high school All-Americans in his class who were faster at his best event. The NCAA did not then permit freshman to compete in Varsity sports so the odds of Grossman ever swimming for the Ephs were quite slim. In fact, Muir's 1953 Ephs finished 9th at the NCAA Championships won by Yale. Williams finished behind Georgia and ahead of Dartmouth.

In 1953 there was only one NCAA Championship for swimming & diving for all colleges and universities. After educating Grossman on the reality of the strength of the Williams freshmen swimming team, Muir asked, "How would you like to dive?" Those six words changed Felix Grossman's life.

When Grossman is inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame as a Masters Diver on September 13 in Anaheim, Calif., he will join Bob Muir as the only Ephs in that prestigious hall of fame. Prior to arriving at Williams, Grossman's diving career had consisted of competing for New Rochelle HS when no other divers were present so the team could attempt to pick up some points.

His freshman year at Williams Grossman lost every single diving event he entered, but his sophomore year he turned the tables and beat everyone who had beaten him the year before and finished in the top 10 in New England.

Grossman continued to improve at Williams and by the time he was a senior he finished 15th in the NCAA championships on the 1-meter board and 17th on the 3-meter, despite the fact that the Williams pool did not have a 3-meter board. Grossman's only practice on 3-meter boards came over the summer. Twenty years after graduating from Williams, Grossman a business lawyer first on Wall Street in New York (1959-64) and then in Los Angeles (1964 to present), began competing in Masters Diving. A Masters diver is anyone over the age of 21. Masters competitions are broken down into age groups of five-year segments.

Simply put Grossman's Masters diving career has been nothing short of remarkable. He has won 35 national championships and six world championships (including one in synchronized diving). Grossman has also captured 64 silver medals (51 national) and his 35 bronze medals (31 national) bring his grand total of medals won to 140!

Oh, but wait, there is even more.

In 2004 in Riccione, Italy Grossman set the world record on the 3-meter board for divers aged 70-74, tallying 213.80 points on five dives. That record still stands even though it has been challenged by world champions and record holders at the World Championships in 2006, 2008, 2010 and & 2012.

A world record is always impressive, but how about establishing a world record after having had both hips and both knees replaced?

Grossman's hips were replaced in 1987 due to osteoarthritis and in 1989 he became the first athlete to win a national championship with artificial hips, winning on both the 1-meter and 3-meter boards. His 1992 World Championship on the 3-meter board made him the first athlete to win an international title with artificial hips.

Grossman had both knees replaced in 1998 due to osteoarthritis. Winning the 2001 3-meter national championship established Grossman as the first athlete to win a national championship with four prosthetic joints and resulted in an appearance in Sports Illustrated's Faces in the Crowd in September of 2001.

At Williams Grossman would meet up with Bob Muir at 1:30 each afternoon for diving practice and much more from Muir. Grossman has called Muir his "Morrie," a nod to Mitch Albom's book, Tuesdays With Morrie, and an indication of just how special his relationship with Muir was.

"As a diver I had the privilege of spending two hours a day, 6 days a week on the other end of the log from my special professor," said Grossman. "To Bob, being a teacher at Williams (and he always thought of himself as a teacher) was one of the greatest gifts he had ever been given. To me, one of the greatest gifts I have ever been given was to have Bob Muir as my teacher."

The greatness of Bob Muir in Grossman's eyes grew ever larger when he had a conversation with UCLA basketball coaching legend John Wooden in 1971 after an event at which Wooden was the featured speaker.

"I introduced myself to Coach Wooden and told him how much I enjoyed his remarks and how much his coaching and living philosophies reminded me of my swimming coach who he had never heard of from a college he also probably had never heard of," stated Grossman. "Wooden asked what college. Following my response, which did not include my coach's name, he said, and this is an exact quote that I will never forget, "Felix, not only have I heard of Williams College, but I taught there during World War II in a Navy program and the man of whom you speak taught my oldest son to swim. To be compared favorably to Bob Muir is the finest compliment any coach can ever receive. Thank you so much."

For Felix Grossman to be enshrined in the same International Swimming Hall of Fame as his mentor, friend, counselor and role model, Bob Muir, is an accomplishment that cannot be topped -- even from the 3-meter board.