



## Meet North Carolina Swimmer Bob Brown

Here is the story of a swimmer who had a **quintuple** bypass surgery in 1995, and he is still going strong!

Brown has been a fitness swimmer since 2004 and here is why: "I had a quintuple bypass surgery in 1995. Before then, I really led an unhealthy lifestyle: I smoked, and ate all the wrong foods. Of course that had to change after my heart attack, which by the way happened as I was walking," he says.

He proceeded to walk 2 miles a day, and was also using the treadmill. But eventually he decided that just walking was not challenging enough. Brown had heard that swimming was supposed to be the best exercise, and so he started swimming on his own in 2004.

During one of his workouts, his arms started to feel really heavy; he went back to the cardiologist who then put 5 stints into 3 different veins. After this, he went back to the pool and started swimming again on his own. At that time, one of the lifeguards, who is himself a Masters swimmer, and the Masters coach, Frank McGrath, encouraged him to start swimming with the Masters team.

Here is how Brown thinks swimming with a team has helped him: "I had never learned how to swim as a child, and I really did not do very well. It would take me an hour and twenty minutes to swim a mile. With the help of coach Frank I have really improved a lot. I realize it is hard to "teach an old dog new tricks", but I am willing to learn and am having a great time doing it," he says. His time on the mile has come down a lot.

When asked what he enjoys about fitness swimming, Brown responds by saying "the team feels like my extended family. There is an appreciation for each other and each other's commitment to the sport. Look, I may not be the fastest fish in this pond, but it really does not matter at all, we are very good friends. I really like the challenge of a scheduled workout and being with others who are enjoying this just as much as I do."

As for the benefits of swimming there is only one statement that matters: "**I have a healthy heart.**"

In July of 2007 Brown had another (very mild) heart attack. He took his nitro capsule right away and his cardiologist, a teammate who was swimming right next to him, took him to the hospital. He put another stint in one of Brown's veins and recommended he go to Chapel Hill to have the bypasses thoroughly checked out. "There I was told I was doing just fine, but I decided to get another opinion. This time I went to the Duke University Hospital, where the head of cardiology checked my entire history and looked at all of the scans. He told me that my heart had made a miraculous recovery: all of the bypasses had bypassed themselves and the main artery is wide open. I attribute all of this to my healthier lifestyle. Swimming is a major part of that," says Brown

*A note to the reader: Bob Brown has participated in the one-hour postal swims and the 3,000-yard swims several times.*