**VALE – ANITA EIFLER**

**Born:** Germany 13-Sept-1919

**Died:** Perth 29-May-2012

**Aged:** 92 yrs

Anita was born in a beautiful old town in the north eastern foothills of the Harz Mountains in Germany. In the summer of 1923, after having moved to Frankfurt, her Father decided that it was time for her to learn to swim properly and at age 12, she joined the local swimming club as its' youngest member and, with extra training and encouragement from her Father & swimming teacher, became Girl Champion swimmer of her school for many year after.

At this time, there were only a few heated indoor pools in Frankfurt and winter training turned towards exercise and gym workouts. Summer training was a 1km stretch of river using heavy wooden kickboards to swim upstream against the flow - not downstream which would have been much easier! Today, most competitive swimmers are trained over all strokes and concentrate of their best stroke for competitions. In Anita’s time, swimmers specialised in their best stroke and were not allowed to swim other strokes and so she specialised in Breaststroke, Backstroke (double arm with Breaststroke kick) and later Butterfly with a Breaststroke kick. The single arm Backstroke with Freestyle kick and Butterfly with Dolphin kick came much later.

In the following years she twice won the South German Junior Championships and in the summer of 1935, when she was 16, swam 2 World best times in the 50m & 100m Breaststroke. Unfortunately, they could not be counted as official World Records as they were timed by the Coach, but they did result in her being selected for the 1936 Olympic Games squad to swim the 50m & 200m Breaststroke. The last training session was a 6 weeks training camp in Berlin before the Games and this was where her hopes for an Olympic medal came to an end. Anita’s Mother had never liked her sporting activities and had always wanted a "frilly girl" and, given that all that time ago respectable girls had to protect their reputation, she was not allowed to go unchaperoned in male company or with a male coach to the training camp. Her Father could not take time off work to accompany her and unfortunately for Anita that was the end of her Olympic hopes as World War Two started in 1939 and every sporting event stopped 2 years after that.

After the war and having lost all her belongings and nearly all of her family, she moved to the small town of Schwabisch-Hall near Stuttgart. Now married with young children, she started competitive swimming again in 1947 with a local swimming club and at age 31, gained a silver and bronze at the South German Championships in Ulm in 1950 for the 100m Breaststroke and 100m Backstroke. In 1955 Anita and her family migrated to Australia then lived in New Guinea for 6 years before moving back to West Australia where she followed her second love and her ambition to become a teacher. For 15 years she taught German as a private tutor to primary, secondary pupils and adults and helped university students in the afternoons and evenings at her home. Teaching swimming, coaching and corrective strokes became her specialty and was heard to say proudly, that all her pupils excelled in both learning how to swim and how to speak German!!!!

When Maida Vale AUSSI (now Masters) started in April 1979, Anita joined as one of the Founding Members and could now fulfil her dream of "Gold". And she certainly did that, over the years she made the World Top Ten in 5 years, twice gained the National Aerobic Title in the her age group; gained Gold, Silver and Bronze medals at the National Championships, Silver at the Albany Masters, and set many State and Nationals records

Anita was not just an excellent swimmer but she had been successful in athletics - twice winning the heptathlon at athletic championships and coming 1st & 2nd in winter skiing in Germany. She was a qualified swimming teacher and coach as well as being a qualified member of the Life Saving Society in Germany before becoming an instructor and examiner with the Royal Life Saving Society in Western Australia. Again Anita strived for “Gold” and won several Awards and Gold, Silver and Bronze medals at many R.L.S.S. championships over the years.

Despite having to endure a number of surgeries which finally restricted her stroke to a one-armed Backstroke and a restrained Breaststroke, Anita continued to swim until only a couple of months ago when it finally became too difficult for her. In 2004 Anita became a Life Member of Maida Vale Masters and has been one of our most enduring and passionate members who will be sadly missed by everyone in our club.

Anita died peacefully in her sleep on Tuesday 29th May and is survived by the love of her life, her husband Joachim, their 3 daughters and many grandchildren.

 