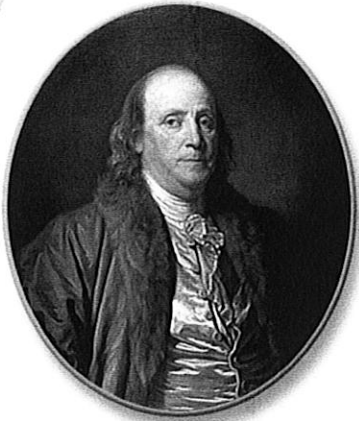


THE HISTORY OF HAND PADDLES



Benjamin Franklin experimented with a modified painter's pallet, as an aid to swimming.



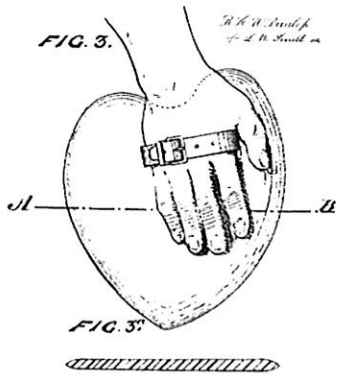
The first mention of a hand paddle to aid swimming in modern times is found in Benjamin Franklin's autobiography. As a boy, he had fashioned two wooden palettes, oval in shape and with a hole through which to put one's thumb. With one on each hand, he paddled through water, observing that they helped him to swim faster.

The first patent for hand paddles was issued in 1876, to Englishman R.H.W. Dunlop, the inventor of "Plate Swimming." Obviously influenced by Franklin, Dunlop's plate swimming was popular in England for a brief period, but was a fad that soon fell out of fashion.

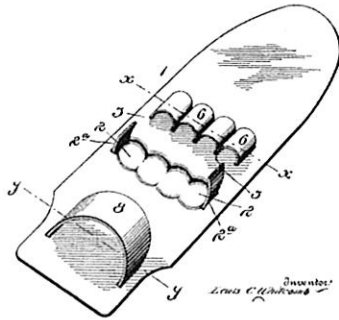
In 1901, a patent was issued to Lewis Whitcomb, for a "swimming device" that "quickly and easily applied" would be especially useful in emergencies, as in "the case of a sinking battleship, thus providing for the saving of life, as the device will enable a swimmer to propel himself through the water. Made of wood, it had loop holes for four fingers and a strap for the wrist.

In 1929, the Speedy Swimmer Company, of Sabina, Ohio advertised "Speedy Swimmers." Made of aluminum, light weight and flexible, "yet strong and dependable, they provided speed for the swimmer and confidence for the beginner." They were equally valuable as a lifesaving device. "If caught in an undercurrent, they give a powerful grip on the water, enabling the swimmer to make rapid headway against the undertow."

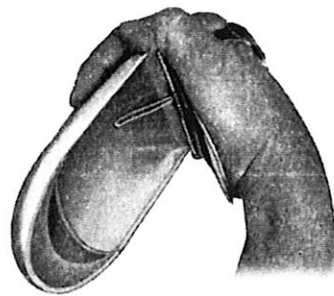
In the late 1960's and early 1970's coaches around the world discovered the idea of using hand paddles as training devices. The Hall of Fame has several in our collection. But it was Jim Montrella, a coach at the Lakewood (California) AC, who designed a device that utilized a rectangular shaped plastic paddle, with holes for surgical tubing that held the wrist and middle finger to the paddle, that the modern, commercial hand paddle came into being. Montrella received his patent in 1973 and licensed it to Speedo. While there have been many variations since, the original design is still being sold today.



Dunlop's Hand Plate



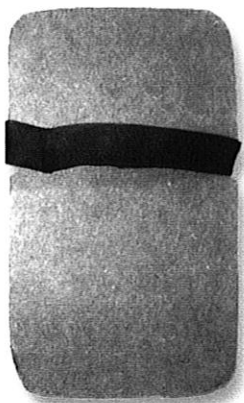
Whitcomb's Swimming Device



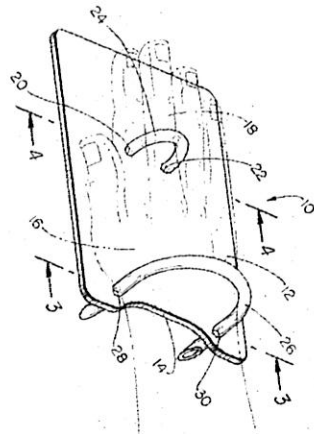
The Speedy Swimmer



Aluminum Paddle with elastic (1960's)



Training Paddle used by Olympic Champion Karen Moe



Design from Montrella Patent



Paddle licensed by Speedo



Jim Montrella in the 1970's