

THE BIZARRE MURDER
OF A MICHIGAN
AVENUE DOCTOR

COMPARING
PRIVATE
HIGH SCHOOLS

DECEMBER 2007

Chicago®

63 WAYS TO **PAMPER** YOURSELF

Go ahead— you
deserve a break:
winning ideas
to soothe mind
and body

ARENA:
**45 GIFT
IDEAS**

RICH MELMAN:
THE KEYS TO
SUCCESS

U.S. \$4.99 CANADA \$5.99



CHICAGOMAG.COM

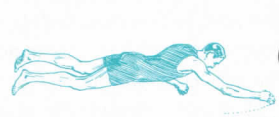


HAIR AND MAKE-UP: KAREN BRODY MODEL: MELANIE KING/FORD CHICAGO DRESS: DINA BAR-EL CAKE: THE SUGAR SYNDICATE RINGS: TARINA TARANTINO NECKLACE AND BRACELET: DAME DESIGNS AT PANACHE



Cheat on Your Boss TEST-DRIVE THE JOB OF YOUR DREAMS

IN 1999, Brian Kurth was stuck in traffic on the Kennedy Expressway when he had a thought that changed his life. "I literally was Dilbert working for the phone company," recalls Kurth today. Facing an endless line of cars as he made the daily commute to his job at Ameritech in Hoffman Estates, Kurth grumbled to himself, *There has to be more to life than this*—and in an instant the idea for a business popped into view. The idea percolated until he was laid off from a dot-com in 2001, took a cross-country trip, and moved to Portland, Oregon, where in 2004 he founded **VocationVacations**, a company that brokers "mentorships" for adults hoping to dip a toe into the profession of their dreams. "It's the incremental, first baby step toward a new life," says Kurth, 41. "We remove the barrier to entry, risk-free." The short-term internships—usually lasting one to three days—allow adults to shadow a mentor in careers such as acting, private investigating, wedding coordinating, or owning a café. Seventy-five percent of his customers are looking for a new career, Kurth says, and 20 percent of alumni are now in their dream jobs. Packages start at around \$549 for one-day ventures like cheesemaking or owning a doggy day-care facility, to \$2,999 for a two-day mentorship with a Broadway director. *Vocationvacations.com*, 866-888-6329



Perfect Your Crawl



HOPING TO ACHIEVE A STROKE OF GENIUS, OUR WRITER LETS SWIM GURU JOHN FITZPATRICK UNRAVEL 15 YEARS OF MUSCLE MEMORY BY NOAH ISACKSON

The last time I wore a Speedo was October of 1992, when my college swim coach told me I was too slow, that I'd be better off leaving the team to focus on my classes. I haven't been a serious swimmer since. But, one afternoon, I asked John Fitzpatrick to change all that. Fitzpatrick, head coach of the Chicago Blue Dolphins masters swim team, teaches private lessons designed to fix a swimmer's stroke. Far from an old-fashioned swim class, a session with Fitzpatrick, at \$100 an hour, involves a flat-screen TV, mirrors, an underwater camera, and a Dual-Propulsion Endless Pool, which is a 240-square-foot water tank with machines that unleash a powerful adjustable current. It's the aquatic version of a treadmill, with Fitzpatrick filming and critiquing clients as they swim in place.

"We approach your stroke the same way a boat designer might build a ship," Fitzpatrick said, shortly after we both jumped in. "It's all about the way you move through the water." I took about 40

freestyle strokes so Fitzpatrick—his students call him Fitz—could make a diagnosis. "Your hips are too low," said Fitz, who was holding a remote control sealed inside a plastic bag, "and your head is too high." In other words, my ship was sinking.

Fitz then demonstrated two drills. In the first, Fitz swam freestyle while looking at a mirror attached to the bottom of the pool. Swimming while staring at that mirror quick-

ly corrected my body position, but it was also a big tease. Why? Sooner or later, a swimmer needs to breathe. "That's where the stroke really breaks down," Fitz said. For years, my habit was to turn my head and lift it slightly out of the water, a move that, according to Fitz, forced my hips toward the bottom of the pool.

The second drill focused on breathing; Fitz started out kicking on his right side, his head resting on an extended arm; he then switched to his left side; finally, Fitz kicked while flipping back and forth. The idea was to change my body position so I spent more time swimming as if I were a blade knifing through the water. This new position would be more efficient and make breathing easier—all I had to do was turn, not lift, my head to take a "bite" of air. Following Fitz's example was not easy, however; at times I looked like an exhausted salmon swimming upstream. "This is hard," Fitz reassured me. "We're trying to erase the muscle memory you've built up over millions of strokes."

Near the end of my second hourlong session, the finale had come: I swam freestyle using the new techniques I had learned. At first, my arms pulled efficiently through the water and I felt more comfortable than I had in years. A postmortem analysis of the film footage showed that I was no longer dragging my legs through the water. But, after only 20 seconds, I was breathless and tired. Fitz explained that the new stroke would sap my strength until I got used to it. "It takes about 10,000 repetitions or six weeks before it becomes natural and automatic," he told me. The next day, I obediently hit the pool—200 down, 9,800 to go.

John Fitzpatrick, 2220 N. Elston Ave.; 773-251-5308, chicagobluedolphins.com

DIP IN

Instead of paying a premium to join a gym with a pool, buy a workout card for the fitness center at the **INTERCONTINENTAL CHICAGO** hotel (505 N. Michigan Ave.; 312-321-8830). The facility houses a 75-foot-long beauty beneath a mosaic-tiled vaulted ceiling. The InterContinental's ten-workout pass is \$120; the **EDGEWATER ATHLETIC AND SWIM CLUB** (1040 W. Granville Ave.; 773-262-2455) offers one for \$79.