

Opinion

One 'final swim' for Coach P



This & That
Troy Hyde

what comes next for Patterson. Not even she knows where she will be after next fall's swim season concludes.

Patterson will retire from teaching after this school year. And by rule or by law, she's unable to hold an Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System (IPERS) job for a period of time after retirement starts.

So she will not be the Aquagirls' coach for at least one season.

Patterson returned to coaching the NCMP boys' team this winter and plans to continue to do so after retiring from teaching.

"Honestly, I don't really know," said Patterson when asked what's next.

"I'm going to slow down for a bit — probably not too long — and see what's out there. I keep saying I want to work in a coffee shop or some-

thing like that, but I think I'll really miss a leadership role. I really want to get back into Master's swimming and possibly try to qualify for the Master's Crossfit Games. But I'm going to see where my heart lies."

Her heart was in the Aquagirl program for more than three decades. She is adored by her swimmers, so much so that many of her former athletes choose to return to the program in assistant coaching roles.

The two assistant coaches for the past few seasons have been former Aquagirls Jenny Jensen and Hannah Scotton.

Jensen has decided to hang up her whistle and clipboard after this season, too.

Scotton is a teacher in the district but is unsure what her plans are next year as far as coaching goes.

The ideal situation for the district, to me, would be to find a temporary solution at head coach for one season and then bring back Patterson in 2024 if she wants to return.

Patterson's final event as NCMP

head coach — at least for now — was the state meet this past weekend at the Marshalltown YMCA.

The Aquagirls, like they have done so much in the past, had plenty of success competing in an all-class meet.

NCMP registered four top-20 and three top-15 finishes.

After the meet, plenty of tears were shed. Some of them were no doubt flowing because of Patterson's departure.

"Working hard and pushing through mentally allows you to push through other hard things, too," Patterson said.

"We have heard from so many former athletes about how swimming helped them get through school, helped them through labor and helped them through some of life's challenges like divorce, illness, etc. I know I would not be the person I am today without swimming."

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It's time to seriously address the fentanyl crisis



From Washington, DC
Sen. Joni Ernst

"He was slumped over his bed when I opened the door... I screamed. Told my wife to call 911."

This is part of the heartbreaking story of a Des Moines father whose son had unknowingly taken a Percocet laced with fentanyl and was killed as a result. The loss his family suffered is sadly all too common in communities across the country. Last year alone, fentanyl was responsible for 83 percent of all opioid-related overdoses in Iowa. And now, the lethal drug has taken an unrecognizable form — disguised as candy or prescription drugs. As one man put it, people are being "deceived to death."

When a criminal distributes fentanyl to an unknowing recipient, they turn from drug dealer to murderer — and they should be treated as such. These criminals need to face the full consequences of their actions, and to make sure they do, I'm fighting to make the distribution of fentanyl resulting in death punishable by federal felony murder charges. It's past time the consequence for intentionally inflicting an overdose fits the crime.

With the intersection of I-35 and I-80, Iowa has seen a record amount of fentanyl come into our state through a porous Southern border. Cartels are taking advantage of the open border, and the flow of fentanyl from Mexico into the United States is at a record high.

Cracking down on cartel activity and their ability to smuggle drugs across the open border would combat the primary source of fentanyl flooding into our communities. We can do so by targeting cartel spotters, individuals who monitor Border Patrol activity to help cartels evade law enforcement while trafficking fentanyl and other drugs, like methamphetamine. Without spotters, cartels are more likely to be apprehended by Border Patrol, allowing law enforcement to seize fentanyl before it makes its way into the United States. I say we stop the spotters and anyone who aids cartel activity by increasing fines and prison time for their actions.

The fentanyl epidemic is exploding across our country and right here in Iowa. It's a deliberate effort by criminals, cartels, and drug traffickers to push deadly drugs into our communities. Iowans have seen the devastating effects of the fentanyl crisis. It's something I discussed on almost all of my 99 County Tour stops this year, from concerned parents to local law enforcement officers. We have to get serious about addressing this epidemic. Secure the border, hold the ruthless cartels and anyone who helps them accountable, and punish the deadly distributors.

Joni Ernst, a native of Red Oak and a combat veteran, represents Iowa in the United States Senate.



33 years clean and sober

Nov. 3, 1989, I lay on my living room floor covered with blood, bleeding to death. It was 2 a.m. I had drunkenly pitched through the glass top of my coffee table and cut myself to smithereens. It was the wake-up call I needed. I had to have help. I could no longer quit drinking on my own. I entered a program of recovery and my whole life turned around.

About 30 days clean and sober, I had a spiritual experience so profound it changed my life completely. (I write about it in my first book, "Protected," available through Amazon or me.)

It was a November to remember. Each year during the month of Thanksgiving I like to take stock of what it was like then and now, and give thanks for all the blessings I have received. Today I am happily married, have two kids and four grandkids, and am living the life I dreamed about. I'm the writer I always wanted to be.

Profound discovery: the same high I used to get from drugs and alcohol I get from writing. (Writing is a mood-altering substance.) However, the high I get from writing doesn't end up in a blackout or find me coming to in another state, wondering how I got there. The writing high is constructive rather than destructive. It doesn't drain my checking account, beat



Empty Nest
Curt Swarm

the crap out of me, or leave me waking up in a jail cell. The end results of my writing high are that my Empty Nest newspaper column is published in about 50 newspapers, the recent publication of my third book, "Task Force IED," and the completed rough draft of a fourth book. You get the drift? A benefit of sobriety is goal achievement, the making of a legacy.

I'm a "respectable" person of society now, doing socially acceptable things rather than socially unacceptable. I'm invited to give book signings, am welcome to return to places I've been, and have become an elder in our church. ME, AN ELDER! THE GUY WHO PITCHED THROUGH THE GLASS-TOP OF A COFFEE TABLE! — an elder in the same church where I attended recovery meetings. Now that's recovery!

Here's a biggy I learned in the program of recovery: I'm the problem, not everybody else. It's me that has to be relieved of the bondage of self. I have to change. Whammo! What a piece of Humble Pie! There's a little prayer that I memorized and refer to quite

often. Within the prayer are these words: "Relieve me of the bondage of self. Take away my difficulties." It's not everybody else. It's me that's the problem.

I even teach creative writing in our home. If piano teachers can teach piano in their home, and artists can teach art in their home, well then, by golly, I can teach creative writing. In fact, I'm going to fire the creative writing class back up this winter. I took a year off because of COVID, but I'm raring to go again.

BTW: You don't teach creative writing. You just get out of the way and let the students write. The writing is critiqued by each of the students and me. Having a weekly deadline is a great motivator. (No doldrums here!)

How did I celebrate my sobriety birthday? I accidentally dumped coffee onto the keyboards of both my computers — my main computer and backup, rendering them inoperative. My whole world was turned upside down. I hate to admit it, but my life is tied to computers. I went from celebration to panic in a heartbeat. Shows to go me how easily my world can be shaken up. But I'm the one who killed the computers. No one to blame but myself.

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YOUR VIEW

No bang for our taxpayer bucks

Our elections are over and the much-ballyhooed "red wave" did not happen.

Except here in Jasper County and Iowa, where it seems we only want one team on the field of play at a time.

Turns out the voters across the rest of the country were smarter than some of the candidates and didn't fall for the trap

set for them by the Trump foot soldiers.

Split-party tickets are always the best outcome of any election. It means the voters aren't loyal to the team, only to the candidate.

Opposition, debate, argument, discussion and compromise are what have always worked best for democracy and that doesn't happen when one party controls all government.

And Republicans are seeing that crazy doesn't always translate into votes. It was novel and fun when Trump did it but that

act has grown stale and people are ready for the adults to take back control.

Except here in Jasper County and our district. That's too bad and it means we can expect just more of the same ... a lot of talking with no bang for our taxpayer bucks, no real economic development, and no real changes for the better.

But, I guess as long as that is what voters want, who can argue?

**John Moore
Newton**