



Gary Thill

Editor *Aquatics International*

Since becoming editor of *Aquatics International* in 2003, Gary Thill has taken on a number of pressing issues:

- In 2005, when Gary learned that blacks were three times more likely to drown than whites, he commissioned a special report that brought the issue to light. USA Swimming has since started nationwide minority outreach and learn-to-swim programs.
- Under Gary's direction, a 2006 investigative report revealed that water venues are top targets for sex predators and that most aquatic professionals were unprepared to deal with them. The article went on to win a Neal award, and set in motion sex predator awareness initiatives.

• In late 2008, an increasing number of people began falling ill after attending spray parks. Gary took action, despite the risk of upsetting spray park manufacturers. Publication of the article led to another Neal award. Today, many states have instituted spray park precautions in keeping with the recommendations of the article.

• In 2010, a lawsuit alleged that more than 30 coaches for USA Swimming — the governing body of competitive swimming — had been sexually abusing young athletes, and that the organization tried to cover it up. Once again, AI's report revealed the need for change and provided needed solutions. This article is one of the magazine's three Neal award finalists this year.

Gary earned his journalism degree with honors at South Dakota State University. Afterward, he became an award-winning reporter for *The Bulletin* daily newspaper in Bend, OR. He then earned his master's degree in journalism at the University of Oregon. Before becoming editor of *Aquatics International*, Gary was managing editor of its sister publication, *Pool & Spa News*.

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