

# ACCENT

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Movie  
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### Vox Populi

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"The Morning News is a true Southern newspaper, for only in the South would a reviewer refer to the non-human characters of 'The Phantom Menace' as 'exotic, multi-hued critters.' Next time, for variety, call them 'exotic, multi-hued varmints'."

"Now that the city council prohibits bikes in squares, I wonder how long it's going to take some biker, riding around the squares on the road, to get hit by a motorist. Probably, less time that it takes to put this fine into effect."



"Hey, I would just like to thank the man who stopped to pick me up when I fell on my bike and was bloodied on all four limbs, with a broken hand. Thank you, sir."

"I'm a grandmother and a great-grandmother and I think we need to get the prayer back in schools and also the checking of the kids' conduct. I didn't realize they had done away with all that."

"I'm reading that (former school Superintendent Pat) Russo going to North Carolina is Savannah's loss and North Carolina's gain. Is this a misprint?"

"It seems AT&T's fixin' to start charging me \$3 a month for not making long-distance phone calls. City officials should take note. Maybe they should charge people a tax, instead of a property tax, because they don't own homes."

"Your editorial concerning Hubert Middle School is ridiculous and malicious. Once again, the newspaper stands up against public schools."

### Spears smeared?

"Shame on you for criticizing the principal at Hubert Middle School regarding Britney Spears' costume. She is a performer. Have you ever seen a play at a school that has actors wearing costumes? Why tarnish a positive event in our schools in the midst of all the tragedy?"

"Why is it that so many people consider a few inches of Britney Spears' midsection of greater concern than guns and cigarettes for all? We're making backwards fools of ourselves, Savannah."

"The staff and students of Hubert Middle School thought they got slimed on May 14. But the Morning News really slimed them on the next Friday. Shame on you."

Researched and compiled by Doug Groce

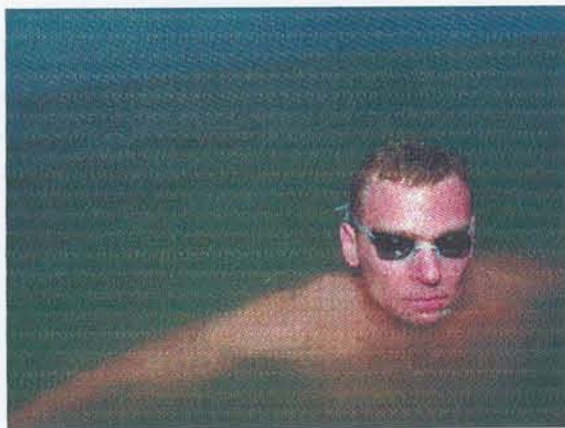


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## hydro POWER *Athletes will test their strength & courage in a 7-mile swim to raise money for local club*

Story by Jim Thomas • Photos by Scott Bryant  
Savannah Morning News



Walt Rhame will swim today from Hilton Head Island to Tybee Island in an effort to raise money for the Savannah Swim Team. At top, Rhame swims off North Beach recently during a workout in preparation for his 7-mile route.

For most people, simply dipping a big toe in the ocean in May would be an act of courage.

The water temperature is 69 degrees, 10 degrees colder than in July. But Walt Rhame will get more than just his feet wet when he ventures out into Calibogue Sound today.

A coach for the Savannah Swim Team, Rhame will try to swim a seven-mile stretch from Hilton Head Island to Tybee Island called "Shark Alley" to raise money for the local swim club.

Rhame says he hopes to raise \$2,000, but admits that some people think he doesn't have all of his oars in the water.

"When I was trying to get sponsors, I'd get two reactions," he said. "Some swim team members thought I was being brave. Those who don't know anything about swimming thought I was nuts."

Rhame won't be making the trip alone, however. Tad Ganem, who swims in the masters division for SST, and John Beraira, a Ranger at Hunter Army Airfield, will also try to complete the island-to-island course.

But Rhame is the one who came up with the idea

### Swim route



Distance: 7 miles  
Water temperature: 69 degrees  
Current: About 5 knots, or 5.8 miles per hour  
Swim time: About 5 hours  
Source: Walt Rhame Savannah Morning News

See POWER, Page 10F

## 'Leave our church alone'

Nativity parishioners to appeal to bishop to save house of worship

By Audrey D. McCombs  
Savannah Morning News

Delores Cox, Beverly Linderman and D.E. Aliffi want Bishop J. Kevin Boland, head of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, to know their feelings on the potential closing of their church.

"Leave our church alone," Linderman,

many years. This is what we want," said Cox, 68, a member of Nativity for about 44 years.

Parishioners learned earlier this month that the steering committee of the Savannah Deanery Parish Feasibility Study — appointed by Boland to make recommendations on how to best use church facilities, finances and personnel

### Inside

Recommendations to the bishop regarding the church's situation.  
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More religion news.

### Coming Monday



In Monday Accent, Savann

# Power

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after talking with Ganem about a way to raise funds for SST to help pay for trips to meets.

"I've done the swim before from Tybee to Hilton Head," Rhame said, "but that was without any support when I was in the Rangers. A couple of us just got together and went across."

"This time we wanted to kind of make an event out of it and have a party afterward."

Rhame has made the swim twice before. The first was in August of 1989 when he was a 20-year-old private.

Rhame and a fellow Ranger parted one night in Tybee and wound up staying in a local hotel. Around 5:30 the next morning, Rhame said his friend punched him in the arm and said, 'Let's go to Hilton Head.' "I said, 'Sure, man, let's go.'"

When his friend started walking toward the Tybee Lighthouse, Rhame said, "Hey, the car's this way."

"No, we're going this way," said his buddy, pointing to the ocean.

"Hey, cool," Rhame said.

But Rhame didn't realize how far a swim it was.

"It was still dark when we hit the water," he said. "We couldn't even see Hilton Head. All we could see was a couple of lights."

When they got about halfway across, Rhame said they found themselves in the middle of the shipping lanes.

"We were like, 'Oh, my God!'" he said.

By the time they finished the five-

hour swim, Rhame said they were "sick as dogs."

"We didn't have any water," he said. "We were totally exhausted and completely dehydrated."

Fortunately, Rhame said they hit the tides at the right time and that helped carry them to shore. They then called up their squad leader and told him that they were in Hilton Head.

"He said, 'So,'" Rhame said.

"Well, we swam from Tybee. Can you give us a ride?"

"Swim back," the squad leader replied.

Rhame said the squad leader eventually came and got them. But they weren't sure at first.

"We were kind of sweating it for a while because we thought he was serious," Rhame said.

The second time Rhame made the swim was August of 1992 with three members of his squad. Unlike the first time, though, they wore inflatable vests and brought quart bottles of water, along with a diving buoy.

Nonetheless, Rhame said two of his companions started having trouble swimming at the mid-point. One began suffering leg cramps and had to grab on to the buoy for support.

Rhame wound up attaching the buoy to a belt around his waist and dragging his companion the final two miles.

"We were in Calibogue Sound, so we could stand up," Rhame said. "But the current was going pretty fast. That was pretty hard."

## More precautions this time

This time Rhame, who will be wearing just a normal swimsuit, has taken more precautions. A 17-foot fishing boat will be used as a safety

boat and be within 10-15 feet of the swimmers at all times.

A rescue swimmer and a scuba diver will also be on hand to help if necessary, as well as friends who will have their own boats.

In addition, the Coast Guard has issued a marine warning to let commercial craft know that swimmers will be in the water.

Rhame said he planned on taking off at 6 this morning from South Beach on Hilton Head and won't touch land again for 4-6 hours near the North Beach Grill on Tybee.

Every 30-45 minutes, Rhame said he would stop for a water break to keep himself hydrated.

"The other two times I did it we were so dehydrated that we had nothing left at the end," he said. "We want to be able to have fun at the end this time."

## Swimming with the sharks

Sharks and jellyfish would seem to be the biggest obstacles. Rhame said he saw some sharks the last time he swam from Tybee to Hilton Head.

"The closest they got was maybe 10 feet away," he said. "You'd see the dorsal fin come up, then they'd circle around, go under and come back up somewhere else. We saw them about five or six times."

Asked if he was scared, Rhame said, "Absolutely. Of course, I was scared. All it takes is a little two- to three-foot shark to take your leg off."

However, Rhame is not worried about another incident.

"You don't hear about too many shark attacks out there," he said.

"Generally, I don't think they're going to bother you, especially with

all the boats and noise. If I was really concerned, I wouldn't be doing it."

Of more concern are the jellyfish, whose sting can cause some people to go into shock.

"You can't see them very well," Rhame said. "They float on top of the surface. We're going to have someone with a net or a pole to push them out of the way."

Aside from any creatures they might encounter, Rhame said the main problem would be the current created by the Savannah River, which flows into the ocean.

The current can range from five to eight knots, according to Tim Donaldson, chief petty officer for Station Tybee.

"That's pretty strong," Donaldson said. "You're going to be in for a pretty good battle."

To compensate for the current, Rhame said the route of the swim would be Z-shaped so they won't get thrown off course.

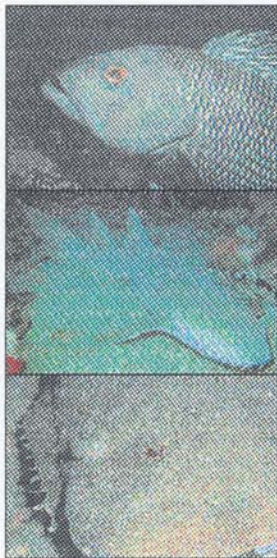
"It will be like tacking back and forth, like the sailboats do," he said.

A competitive swimmer from the age of 5, Rhame began training for the event in December. In the last five months, he estimated he has swum 25,000 to 30,000 yards a week or 14 to 17 miles at the Chatham County Swimming Complex.

On top of that, he has swum from the three-mile distance from North Beach to the Tybrisa Pavilion on two other occasions.

Even with all the planning and practice, Rhame knows the swim will be difficult. But he's looking forward to facing the task.

"I like challenges," he said. "I like to do something that scares me every now and then. This scares me."



## Creatures of the sea

Some of the fish the swimmers might encounter today:

**Top:** Sea bass

**Middle:** Nurse shark

**Bottom:** Flounder

To read more about the wildlife along the coast, visit [www.graysreef.nos.noaa.gov](http://www.graysreef.nos.noaa.gov)

Photos courtesy of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary