Swimming
by Carolyn Farb

At 17, state champion Steve Landquist became the first swimmer in history to do the 200-yard breaststroke in under two minutes. Today, the 22-year-old holds two world records—for the 100- meter breaststroke and as part of the 4 x 100-meter medley relay. He is also the author of "Swimming: A Personalized Program." Personable and eager to please, Landquist is a sports promoter's dream of a swimmer. With his Speedos drying, this BMOC is a real estate major at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

Carolyn Farb met with Landquist over strawberries and champagne in her suite at Dallas’ posh Mansion on Turtle Creek and found this Southern gentleman just as smooth on dry land as he is in water.

STEVE LUNDQUIST: I started out when I was eight years old. My parents threw me in the lake. I've lived near a lake all my life in Georgia and I joined a club program in Forest Park, Georgia and came up through the ranks. Then my dad and Governor Al Tallman built a pool for the community and we had a pretty good team. We ventured out from there and I ended up at S.M.U.—I had gotten my scholarship from S.M.U. simply because people did have the foresight and the plan to afford the training for that kind of thing. I'm very grateful to my dad and Mr. Tallman and all the other people along the way who have helped.

CAROLYN FARB: You've been described by your assistant coach, Eddie Sennette, as the "premier swimmer in America today." Do you feel a little pressure or competition?

SL: I wish I were as optimistic as you. Gosh, yes. There's more competition than I would wish for the whole year and that's all there is. You feel it. Any time I get in a pool and set to do a world record, I'm not out there for second place. There's an old saying—first is first, second is last. I try to uphold that even though second place is a good consolation and third place is good. It depends on how your race went and that kind of thing but you find that everybody is out there, essentially, for number one, and that's all there is. If you're out there just to get second place, I don't know if you should be in the pool.

CF: Do you really like to compete?

SL: A lot of people ask what I think about five hours a day when I'm staring at the bottom of a pool. That's the last thing I'm thinking about. The first thing I'm thinking about is the competition or my stroke. I'm not worried about that. There are so many variables to think about that it's hard to get bored. I think I don't eat that many things from the bad. Those guys who don't concentrate on the detail.... The little things make a big difference.

CF: That has been said to be one of your strengths. You concentrate on detail and get clean grades.

SL: You have to. I'm not the best yet, but I think that's what the best do and I would certainly like to model myself after them.

CF: You had a little water skiing accident. You were skiing barefoot.

SL: I was better at falling that day than I was at skiing. I was on my way to go barefoot and I hit a few waves I really wasn't supposed to. When do you train, what do you do?

SL: We use weights two or three times a week for about an hour and a half and we use the weights to gain strength. The difference in the program I've been in for the past year, as opposed to some of the people on the S.M.U. squad, is that I'm just gaining strength. I'm not in it to do a circuit—circuit training is where you go through 30 or 40 stations and you just get so tired you can't move by the end. I believe you just get as tired lifting hard weights and lifting heavier weights. You're in there to get stronger, not to build endurance. We're just going to endurance in the pool and that's where I've gone away from the S.M.U. tradition. I'm not saying that my program is bad or anything, I'm just saying that this is what I've found best for me and I know that I'm not body well enough to know what it needs. Take a typical day—well it's in the morning and I'll be up at 6:15 and be through swimming around 8:15. Then I go to school after I eat breakfast. I have a nine o'clock class and I'm back out of that and I'm halfway through half an hour and have from 12:30 till 3:00 off—that's what you get all day. That's pretty much you just choose to sleep during that time but I find if I sleep during that time, I won't sleep at night. I'm back at school at 3:15 and out at 6:15. You go straight to dinner because that's close, 6:15 and you're through eating at 7:00 so you get from 7:00 until the next day to prepare for practice and for school.

CF: Do you find that the discipline you have from swimming sort of reinforces the discipline you have in school?

SL: Sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't. I had a 3.8 last semester so 3.2 is a good mark. If you're in school as it is a job, and I think I'm slowly re-directing my goals from all swimming and some of the other things. It's kind of hard to be able to focus all my attention into a job.

CF: I've heard that you're very well-rounded and entrepreneurial. Have you any plans to go into business and work?

SL: I'm working on a company right now, trying to start—but I don't want to go any further into that. I like to invent little stuff and all that. They usually get shot down before they get to the drawing board. I have a lot of ideas but they take so much money and research that I couldn't begin to get the venture capital for it, so I don't even begin to worry about it.

CF: Will your parents be proud of you?

SL: Yes. I give speeches every now and then to kids and parents and I'll say that I'm for their families. I don't want the parents to feel.