

ASHBY HARPER

The golden years have been kind to Channel swimmer Ashby Harper. He's among a select few who can achieve world marks at a time when retirement beckons.

And, he loves a challenge. Before the year is out, be prepared to etch his name back into the record book as the oldest person ever to swim the English Channel. He did that on Aug. 28, 1982, when, at age 65, he swam the distance of 28½ miles from Shakespeare Beach near Dover, England, to the French Coast in 13 hours and 52 minutes.

Harper, then headmaster at the Albuquerque Academy, broke the record that James "Doc" Councilman, 58, achieved in 1979. Harper, 72, wants to regain the mark in August. Aussie Clifford Batt, 68, broke the mark in 1987.

Harper also swam the 29 miles around Manhattan Island in New York and 26 miles between Santa Cruz Island and Santa Barbara, Calif. And at age 69, he was listed the first to swim the

21-mile length of frigid Lake Tahoe, Nev.

Harper graduated with honors at Princeton University in 1939 with nine letters in football, swimming and baseball. He had majors in French and Spanish. He served as a fighter pilot and a bomber pilot with the U.S. Navy during World War II where he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with four clusters.

During Harper's 20-year term (1964-85) as headmaster at Albuquerque Academy, the school expanded dramatically. Academy moved into a \$4.9 million plant on a 300-acre campus and enrollment increased from 160 to 465 in two years then to 550 when the school became coeducational in 1973. Enrollment today is 806.

Professionally he became director of Colegio Americano in Quito, Ecuador, in 1947 and headmaster at the American School in Lima, Peru, in 1952. He served as Headmaster at the St. Louis Country Day School and was director of the first Peace Corps program in Guatemala (1962-63) before joining the Albuquerque Academy.