

“Lake Ontario is Fate”



according to Patty Thompson, who plunged into its waters last month in an attempt to become the oldest woman ever to swim across. At the “advanced” age of 45, Thompson, who had earned medals at the Commonwealth Games, represented Canada at the Olympics, and become Women’s World Professional Marathon Champion in 1969, decided that it was time to get

the Lake swim behind her.

An absence from swimming of 18 years might intimidate some, but Thompson approached her new goal with humour, hope and very realistic expectations.

“I’m just gonna go in and swim,” she said shortly before the big event. “On a clear, nice day, I can do it in less than 18 hours.”

Surprisingly, rigorous training was not really part of her preparations. Continuing to work full-time as a real estate law clerk for Fasken Campbell Godfrey, and commuting daily from Burlington to the TD Centre, severely limited swimming time.

“Working full time, you just can’t train as much, and pool time is also hard to arrange.” These limitations did not daunt Thompson, however. The only thing that she thought might be a problem, other than the weather, was “the age factor. Things start going on you.”

What Thompson shows all of us is that it’s not what goes on you that counts—but how you use what you’ve got left.

And the story has a happy ending. On the morning of Wednesday August 14th at 8:20, nineteen hours and twenty minutes after she started, Patty Thomson arrived in Toronto, completing what she set out to do.



Patty, training in the pool at the Fitness Institute.