



APPENDIX 4.3

ANN MERAW INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Bev: What inspired you to start swimming?

Ann: I thought I could swim as far as I could see! So that's more or less how I got started. I swam 10 miles (16 Km.) when I was 10 years old. I entered a 2 ½ mile (4 Km.) swim race and I came first and I wound up with two trophies and thirteen prizes out of this swim and it was at the PNE that they were giving the trophies out. And they had me up on stage and they said, "Do you have an amateur card?" I said "No, what's that?" They asked, "Well, do you belong to a swimming club?" I said, "I don't belong to a swimming club." So they said, "Sorry we can't give you your awards." With that, the president of the Vancouver Swimming Club rushed up on the stage and said, "If she joins the club right now will she get her awards?" They said, "Yes." So I got mixed up in swimming then. In competition that is.

Bev: When did you decide to start to swim long distances?

Ann: Oh, when I got into the Vancouver Swimming Club. No one could beat me after it got a half a mile (.8 Km). Well, I went up to mile (1.6 Km) swims. So then I started swimming distance and I kept making it longer and longer.

Bev: Let's talk about your Bowen Island swim.

Ann: Alright, when I swam to Bowen Island, people thought it couldn't be done. So I did it in 7 hours and 14 minutes. In 1934, I swam across the Strait of Juan De Fuca. And I swam around Stanley Park.

Bev: Could you talk about the Okanagan Lake Swim?

Ann: I was asked if I'd try Okanagan Lake, to try and break the 32 mile (51 Km.) record across Lake Ontario. So I decided to swim and it wasn't too favourable on the first swim. But I did 42 miles (68 Km.). I established a World Endurance Record for women at that time. I carried on the following year. In 1958, I tried the long one of 55 miles (89 Km.), which I did in 32 hours and 10 minutes.

I had a challenge from Bill Sadler of Little Rock who was a world champion. He challenged me \$5000. He started with me but was taken out at 12 0' clock at night because the water was too rough and too heavy a chop. So he lost \$5000. I went on and continued to swim and broke a new World Distance



Record, broke the Men's Endurance Record, the Women's Endurance Record-which was my own-and set a new Distance Record for Women, Men, and Endurance for both Women and Men.

Bev: When you swim that kind of distance, what happens to your body?

Ann: Well, you prepare before you go in the water. You watch everything you eat for a good three months before. And you build muscle. I would put 2 pound (.9 Kg.) lead weights on both ankles and both wrists and do all my swimming with that on. And I would swim in the morning from 5 'til 9 o'clock. Then work all day and start again from 7 o'clock to 11 at night.

Bev: What does it feel like to lose weight while swimming?

Ann: I took 17 pounds (7.7 Kg.) off in one swim of 25 hours. Now, on the other 2 swims, I never lost an ounce because I had followed exactly what I was to eat. I had some macaroni and cheese because it would dissolve in your system. If you feel you are going to get sea sick, you drink ginger ale.

Bev: When you were swimming for long, long periods of time, what kept you going?

Ann: Well, you sort of forget everything else and you keep your swimming rhythm. I used to hum tunes to myself, like "Sidewalks of New York". It was good timing. And if you did a slow song to yourself, why your stroke would slow down. You'd hum something to yourself that was a little faster than your stroke and you'd try and keep up with it. So it kept your stroke up.

Bev: I know you swim in the ocean. Can you tell me some of the encounters you have had with sea life?

Ann: I got stung by a jellyfish. And then I was followed by a shark one time but it didn't bother me; followed right alongside 'til I got to the shore. When I would swim in English Bay, a seal would swim behind my feet. He'd follow me to Jericho Beach and I wouldn't see him again. And next morning, same thing. But that was about all, I never had any problems in the water.