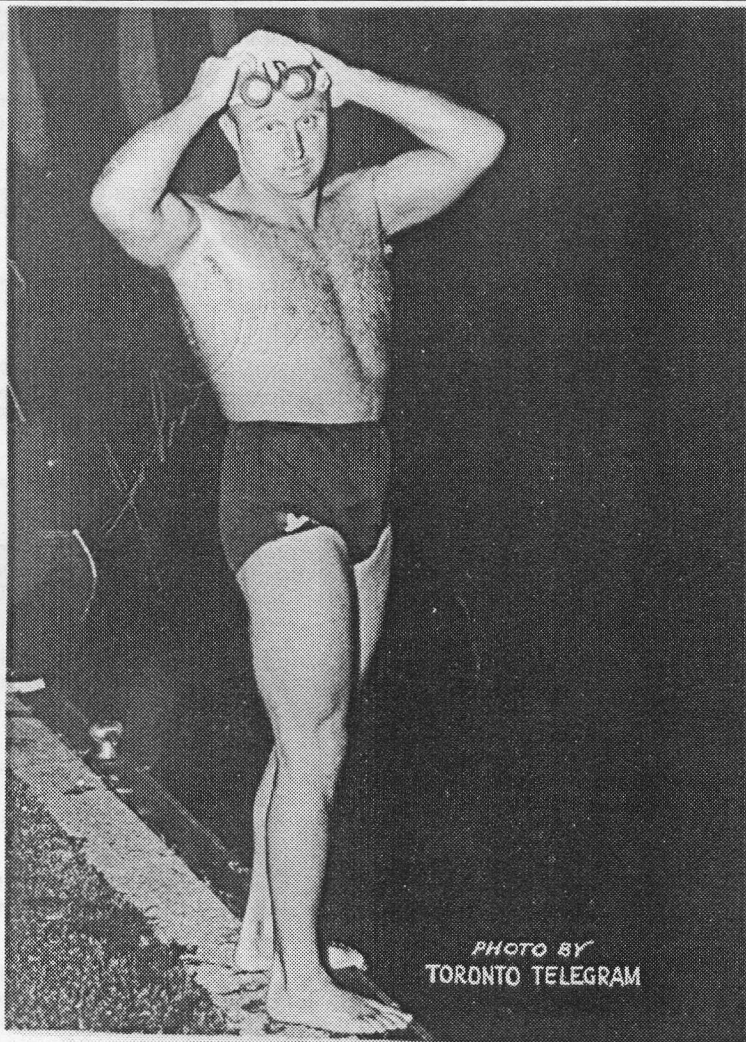


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Ontario Aquatic Hall of Fame

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John Jaremey was born on May 1, 1920, in Port Arthur (now Thunder Bay). John inherited his father's passion for swimming. Just as his father regularly swam across the Dniester River in his native Ukraine, so did John often race against his brothers in the creek of the family farm.

John was a highly successful member of the professional swimming circuit until his retirement in 1960. Although he experienced many ups and downs, his crowning achievement was his 32-mile Lake Ontario crossing on July 22-23, 1956.

When John moved to Toronto, he worked as a steamfitter foreman. During the winters, he trained hard at the John Innes Memorial Pool and Harrison's Bath. From the end of April through Labour Day, he trained in Lakes Wilcox and Simcoe until Lake Ontario became warm enough. His only son, Chester, recalls walking back and forth along the boardwalk all day long while his father swam in Lake Ontario.

Fuelling his training regimen with his favourite diet of steak and eggs for breakfast and supper, John was well prepared to become a frequent top-five finisher in such events as the 26-mile Atlantic City race. His prize money was always sufficient to support his family during the summer months.

With little, if any, advance publicity, John entered Lake Ontario at Niagara-on-the-Lake on July 22, 1956, at 5:47 a.m. Capably supported by his coach, Pat Roach, and navigator, Captain Harvey Randle, John began the realization of his goal "to swim the lake if it kills me."

Enjoying ideal conditions at the outset, the strapping 195 pound swimmer was halfway across by noon. However, John soon began to experience fatigue, aching muscles, stomach cramps and sore eyes from leaking goggles, while the water temperature fell to 58 degrees Fahrenheit near the end. When doubt and notions of quitting entered his mind, John suppressed them with a more compelling thought. "John, don't quit, that little girl made it. You're a big man, come on, let's go!" When he saw the large searchlight that his union brothers had rigged up on the shore, John knew that he would finish the swim.

Amid the cheers of 12,000 spectators, he touched the Eastern Gap at 3:02 a.m. on July 23. Succeeding where at least twenty others had failed before him, John Jaremey became the first male to swim across Lake Ontario. He was also just the second person to complete the crossing since only "that little girl" (Marilyn Bell) had ever done it before.

Not without a sense of humour, John told reporters about two things that had amused him. First, he hadn't seen any of the eels that were supposed to bite him, and second, he had lost his shirt in a boat propeller mishap after finishing the swim.

John swam regularly until he suffered a stroke in a swimming pool in 1992. In 1994, a monument commemorating the athletes who swam across Lake Ontario was unveiled in Niagara-on-the-Lake. John's name appears on the plaque as the first male and second person to complete the crossing. John passed away on July 26, 2003, leaving his wife, Mary and son, Chester, who remembers his father as one of the first people he knew, who believed that regular exercise was inherently good. "He taught me to swim and he taught me to exercise regularly for the fun of it." Mary recalls her husband as "a very determined guy."

The Ontario Aquatic Hall of Fame is pleased to induct swimmer John Jaremey.