

REMARKABLE WOMEN

Honouring Women From Our Vancouver Communities



Photo courtesy Cliff Lemire

Ivy Granstrom

Ivy Granstrom was a remarkable woman and outstanding athlete who overcame many challenges on the way to compiling an impressive list of athletic and personal achievements. Some may recognize Ivy as Queen of the Polar Bear swims as for 76 consecutive years she was a fixture at the annual English Bay event. But Ivy's accomplishments go far beyond braving frigid waters.

Due to a childhood infection, Ivy had poor eyesight that failed gradually throughout her life. During World War II, she hid her condition to train as a nursing aide with the Red Cross and joined the air raid patrol. After suffering a major back injury in a car accident, Ivy started rehab by walking, then jogging, then running right into the record books of Masters track competitions.

Ivy started her running career in blind sports events, but later competed against sighted athletes. Ivy had a pacer, Paul Hoebrigs, who would guide her by voice, each holding onto the end of a cloth band. She was named Sport BC Athlete of the Year in 1982 and was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada in 1988. In 1993, at age 82, she won seven gold medals in her class at the World Senior Games in Utah and two silver and three bronze medals at the World Veterans championships in Japan. In 1994, she broke five records, two at the Pan Am Masters championships and three at the World Masters Games in Australia.

In 2001, Ivy was inducted into the Terry Fox Hall of Fame. She passed away on April 14, 2004.