



## Background

Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport ferry vessels

January 22, 2010

### *Marilyn Bell Di Lascio*

Marilyn Bell Di Lascio (born 1937) is a beloved Canadian sports hero, after becoming the first person to swim across Lake Ontario on September 9, 1954, at the age of only 16.

Bell Di Lascio swam from Youngstown, N.Y., to Toronto, a distance of more than 51.5 kilometres, in 21 hours. Over the course of her swim, she overcame frigid water, lamprey eels, pollution and overwhelming fatigue.

Her swim inspired Canadians across the country, and they followed her progress through hourly radio updates. When she reached a breakwater along Toronto's lakeshore, just west of Exhibition Place at what is now Marilyn Bell Park, she was greeted by thousands of cheering supporters.

Bell Di Lascio became an international celebrity after her feat of strength and endurance. In the two years after her historic achievement, she also became the youngest person to swim the English Channel as well as the Strait of Juan de Fuca between Vancouver Island and Washington State. Her courage and determination in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges earned her a place in the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame.

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### *David Hornell*

Flt. Lt. David Ernest Hornell (1910–1944) was a pilot with the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War.

Born on the Toronto Islands, Hornell was raised in the community of Mimico. On June 24-25, 1944, he was the captain and first pilot of an anti-submarine aircraft patrolling the waters around the Shetland Islands, approximately 200 kilometres northeast of Scotland. Hornell's crew engaged and destroyed a surfaced German submarine, but not before taking direct anti-aircraft fire from the enemy vessel, forcing the plane down in the North Sea.

Freezing and exhausted, and with two members dead from exposure, the crew was inspired by Hornell's cheerfulness and valour. He offered to swim to a lifeboat that had been dropped a half-kilometre away by a rescue aircraft, but had to be restrained by his crew. Shortly after the remaining crew were rescued after 21 hours in the water, Hornell succumbed to his injuries.

In recognition of his heroic efforts to save his fellow crew members, courage in battle, and devotion to duty, Hornell was awarded the Victoria Cross, the British Commonwealth's highest military honour.

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The Toronto Port Authority took delivery of its new ferry, the *Marilyn Bell I*, in December, 2009. It will serve the Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, with the existing ferry to be named the *David Hornell* serving as the alternate vessel. The two ferries will transport approximately 1,500,000 passengers across the Western Channel to and from the airport every year.

The *Marilyn Bell I* was chosen through a contest held in late 2009 sponsored by the TPA. Over a thousand entries were submitted, and a shortlist was selected upon which Torontonians could vote for their favourite name in an online poll. Marilyn Bell won the poll, with David Hornell coming in second.

*Marilyn Bell I* was built in the town of Wheatley, ON, on the northwest shore of Lake Erie, by Hike Metal Products. Its dimensions are the same as the vessel currently in service (29.26 metres by 11.5 metres, or 96 feet by 37 feet), but it weighs 270 tonnes, compared to the existing ferry's 219 tonnes.

At a cost of \$5 million, the *Marilyn Bell I* can carry 200 passengers, an improvement of 50 passengers over the existing ferry's capacity. Additionally, the passenger area features an abundance of padded bench seating, an improvement in comfort for travellers. *Marilyn Bell I* has a numeral at the end of its name to distinguish it from a small vessel operating in Nova Scotia also named after Bell.

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