

Woman Fails in Attempt to Swim Around Manhattan



By JOHN CORRY

Diana Nyad, who swims long distances better than any other woman in the world, tried to swim around Manhattan yesterday. At 1 P.M. she slid into the water off East 89th Street and headed north, but 6 hours and 25 minutes later, feeling "cold, frozen and tired," she was hauled aboard a police launch and taken to a hospital. She had got as far as Wall Street.

"You know what? I'm going to do it again," she said last night at Brooklyn Hospital.

She was still shivering from the cold, but otherwise, she said, she was fine.

"I saw the Brooklyn Bridge," she said, "but it wouldn't come.

We planned it wrong. This just shouldn't have been so hard."

The harbor police had thought that if the 25-year-old Miss Nyad had trouble, she would have it somewhere around the Battery. It was why they were waiting nearby.

As she approached the Battery, the Coast Guard radioed to a boat accompanying her:

"Take her out, take her out."

Miss Nyad, whose name is a felicitous reminder of the Greek naiad, or water nymph, kept swimming. She had thought that she could circle Manhattan in eight hours, far faster

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Diana Nyad about to enter the East River off 89th Street at 1 P.M. yesterday, and being comforted by a companion in a police boat after being pulled from the East River off Wall Street six hours and 25 minutes later.

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tan in eight hours, far faster than anyone had ever done it before, and after six hours in the water, she was ahead of her schedule.

She had hoped to pass over the Lincoln Tunnel by 6 P.M., but instead was there at 5:43. She had hoped to reach the Holland Tunnel by 7 P.M., but instead was there at 6:10.

By 6:45 she had reached South Ferry. Then she felt confused and started to swim toward shore. Her coach, Cliff Lumsdon, who was following her in a small boat, began to yell. Soon she was going the right way, and her friends on the boat held up a sign: "Looking great! We love you."

In less than an hour, however, it was all over. Mr. Lumsdon noticed that Miss Nyad's legs were sinking. She was floating on her back, and it was apparent that she could no longer continue. He dived in and held her, and when the police launch approached, she was put on board. The adventure was over.

Miss Nyad is working toward a Ph.D. in comparative literature at New York University. She is also ranked No. 1 among women by the World Professional Marathon Federation.

Last year she swam 32 miles north to south across Lake Ontario, the first person ever to make the trip. It took her 18 hours 20 minutes, and after she climbed on shore, she rested only 15 minutes and then plunged back in an attempt to swim across Lake Ontario again. Two hours later she was pulled from the water unconscious. She says that some day she will try Lake Ontario again, too.

The records on swimming around Manhattan are sketchy, but the first person to do it apparently was Robert W. Dowling. He did it in 13 hours 45 minutes.

The fastest time, however, is thought to be the 8 hours 6 minutes it took Bryon Summers in 1927.

Miss Nyad thought she could beat that. She had begun the day strong and confident, waking up at 3 A.M., her adrenalin flowing, never considering that she might fail.

When she stepped into the water, her arms and legs coated with black grease, she shivered. The cold, she says, is her worst enemy.

"So long, everyone," she said. "Thanks for coming."

The handful of people who had turned out to see her applauded. Then she was off, peering through tiny goggles into the oily waters that led into Hell Gate. An orange rind floated by, followed by some plastic bottles. Miss Nyad had been inoculated for hepatitis.

For the first hour, she said later, she felt fine.

She began at 60 strokes a minute, turning her head to breathe on every stroke, thinking that it would take perhaps 600 strokes to swim a mile.

At 1:20 P.M., 20 minutes after she started, she was off 114th Street, nearly through Hell Gate. Hell Gate is supposed to be the nearest thing to "white water" in the Port of New York, and ever since Capt. Adrian Block sailed the Tiger through here in 1612, it has been reckoned as hanzardous.

Nonetheless she kept up the steady stroke, and from the boat following her, Mr. Lumsdon extended a plastic cup on a metal pole. Treading water now, Miss Nyad drank from the cup. It was full of a hot powdered liquid that was supposed to provide her with as



Diana Nyad being comforted by a companion in a police boat after being pulled from East River off Wall Street.

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much protein as a four-ounce steak.

Some people on shore waved. A police radio car slowed down, drew abreast of Miss Nyad, and stayed with her for perhaps 100 yards. Miss Nyad kept swimming, oblivious to everything except the water and the growing strain on her shoulders.

She and Mr. Lumsdon had planned the swim carefully, noting the time of the tides, expecting her to swim with them all the way.

Unexpected Strong Wind

It was the wind, Mr. Lumsdon said later; neither he nor Miss Nyad had expected it to be so strong.

At 1:45 P.M., Miss Nyad was off West 119th Street. Minutes later she was under the Triborough Bridge. A Circle Line boat had been behind her, and when the boat's captain saw Miss Nyad, he had veered toward Randall's Island.

The tourists on board ran to one side of the boat to wave at Miss Nyad, and then they started to shout. Their voices were lost in the teeming rain that was falling, and Miss Nyad swam on, oblivious.

"Why I'm doing this is very complex," Miss Nyad had said before she started. She was sitting in a friend's car, wearing a sweatsuit, staring at the rain.

"It has a lot to do with my intimate emotions," she said. "It also has to do with conquering nature, and it has something to do with your own body."

"Actually I'm pretty involved in why I do it. It's fascinating. There's a sensory deprivation when you swim. Sometimes there are fanatstic fantasies. It's like going through months on a psychiatrist's couch."

"There's another reason why I want to do this. I live in New York, and it's nice to be

known in your hometown. Does that sound like a Kansas City kind of statement. I mean, do I sound like a hayseed?"

By the second hour in the water yesterday, Miss Nyad was starting to feel tired. The grease on her body had started to wear off; her goggles grew foggy. The water was not rough, but it was dirty. Miss Nyad worried about an eye infection.

Then, shortly after 4 P.M., Miss Nyad saw the George Washington Bridge. It seemed to be enveloped in mist, and somehow it made her feel better.

People on Shore Wave

All up and down the East River people had been waving to her. At 155th Street, while Mr. Lumsdon was looking at a ragged street map of Manhattan, which he was using almost as much a chart that marked the tides, a big blue yacht passed Miss Nyad.

She was the Chanticleer from Jensen Beach, Fla. The crew waved furiously. Miss Nyad kept on. She was moving through a little pool of filter-tip cigarettes that had collected in the oil slicks.

On shore, a man was blowing a whistle, jumping up and down, and flapping his arms. All the way up the East River, the bridge tenders had been waving, too.

By 4:45, Miss Nyad was off West 158th Street, and 30 minutes later she passed West 79th Street. It was growing dark; visibility was poor, and Mr. Lumsdon had started worrying about the ferries that operated from the Battery.

His boat, however, had no ship-to-shore radio. He asked the people on a boat that was also following Miss Nyad to call the Coast Guard. He wanted the Coast Guard to

warn the ferry boats about Miss Nyad.

The Coast Guard was warned, and immediately sent the message asking that Miss Nyad be taken from the water. She kept swimming.

By 6:45 she was off South Ferry, and the ferries were no problem at all. The strain and the cold were telling, however, and by Wall Street she was done.

Last night in the hospital, when she first saw Mr. Lumsdon, she said, "Cliff, were you disappointed?"

Mr. Lumsdon shrugged his shoulders and started pacing.

"Yeah, well the winds were wrong," he said.

Diana Nyad was born Diana Sneed, but her parents divorced when she was 3, and she never knew her father. Her mother Lucy's second marriage, which also ended in divorce, was to a wealthy Greek land developer named Aristotle Zason Nyad.

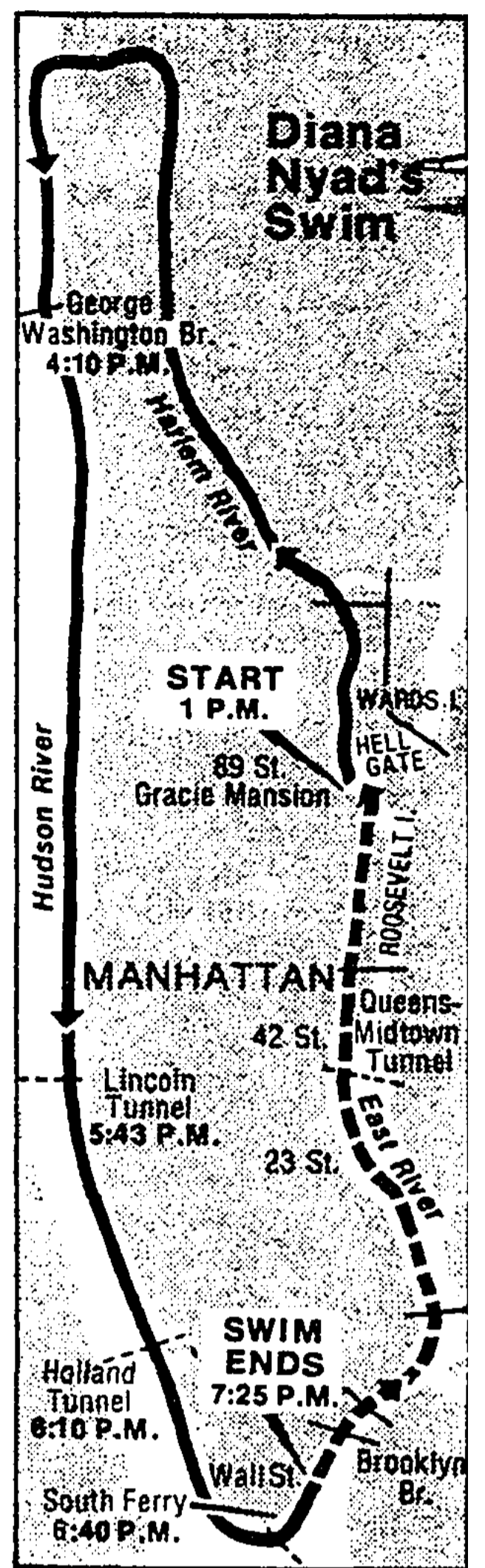
Her first marathon swim came on July 16, 1970, when she entered Labatt's International 10-Mile Marathon Swim on Lake Ontario "just to see what would happen."

She came in 10th, swimming against 17 men and three other women, and set a woman's world record for 10 miles—4:23:00—that won her \$400.

At 16, Miss Nyad fell ill with endocarditis, a virus infection of the heart, but after a summer's bed rest, she was swimming. She was graduated from the school in 1967.

Entering Emory University in Atlanta, she majored in pre-med, planning to become a surgeon. Giving in to pranks (like parachuting from a fourth-story dormitory window), however, she neglected her studies and was expelled.

Lake Forest College in Illinois later accepted her as a student, where she became interested in drama, majored in French and continued swim-



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ming, sleeping less than four hours a night to do all three well.

Why? She was asked by friends. She wrote to one:

"Sometimes I feel so desperately afraid that my life will be over before I've had the chance to find out my potentials and limitations."