

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Marcia Cleveland First American Woman to Traverse Niagara Falls in Swim Suit

NIAGARA FALLS, NY, April 1, 2009: Early Wednesday morning, on a crystal clear April 1st, while many were just awakening, American Marcia Cleveland crept down the slopes of the Niagara River on the Canadian side at the intersection of Upper Rapids Boulevard and Niagara River Parkway. At 7:07am, she left the comforts of the shore as she has done countless times before along many waterways throughout the world, slipped into the waters just above the hydroelectric power company, and began stroking her way to history as the first person to successfully traverse Niagara Falls, the most powerful waterfall in North America, in a Speedo.

Wearing just a regular lycra bathing suit, a latex bathing cap, and a pair of swim goggles, she looked confident as she passed the midpoint of the pier. During this first part of her journey, she was able to swim in the lee of the power company pier until the mid-channel island, making the first third of her 1+ mile journey fairly carefree, that is, as carefree as one can be when traversing such waters above Horseshoe Falls. She was asked afterwards, "Did it ever enter your mind that you had a high potential to join the 4 million cubic feet (110,000 m³) of water falling over the crest line every minute?" The decisively articulate Ms. Cleveland responded, "Nope. I knew my job was simply to swim now and think later."

Once past the pier, Ms. Cleveland was in the open Niagara River Channel. Never known as a pure sprinter, but partly thanks to the more than 8 cups of Starbucks triple-shot espressos she began drinking 90 minutes before her swim, Ms. Cleveland was able to put on the jets and sprint the remaining half mile to the American Shore.

Onlookers cheering from the north side of Goat Island Loop Road remarked that they never felt that Ms. Cleveland's swim or life was at risk. "With a turnover of 120 strokes per minute and a kick that looked like it could churn butter, I thought if she could just get past that darned dangerous channel near the American Falls, she had it in the bag," said Nick VanNuk, of Sucker River, Saskatchewan.

Knowing her older two sisters would be extremely upset with her if she got anywhere near "Three Sisters Island" without them, Ms. Cleveland used her powerful kick and surged towards Goat Island, then the channel beyond. Only this small 100 yard channel spanning boiling rapids that emptied over the American Falls seconds later separated Ms. Cleveland from the cars zooming by on Robert Moses Parkway in the United States, and history. When she reached terra firma at 7:38am, Mrs. Zaker's 3rd grade class from nearby Niagara Street School, interrupting their morning "activity walk," sang a beautiful rendition of God Bless America to an elated Ms. Cleveland.

Asked afterwards if the 38F water temperature was a factor, Ms. Cleveland countered, "Naaah. It's all in your head. But I did think my mile time was pretty slow."

One of the children who sang asked, "Why did you decide to do this swim at this time of the year?" to which Ms. Cleveland replied, "Well, with the economy the way it is, I was looking for the best priced hotel rooms. We got a sweet deal on a room at the Holiday Inn Express last night, and they even gave us complimentary chocolates and apples when we checked in. And have you ever seen this place in the summer? It's wall-to-wall with tourists. Who needs all that hassle?"

Another child piped up, "If you hadn't made it, what would have happened?" "I would have received a major ouchie," said Ms. Cleveland, "and my passport might have slipped out of my suit" as she handed it to the approaching immigration official.