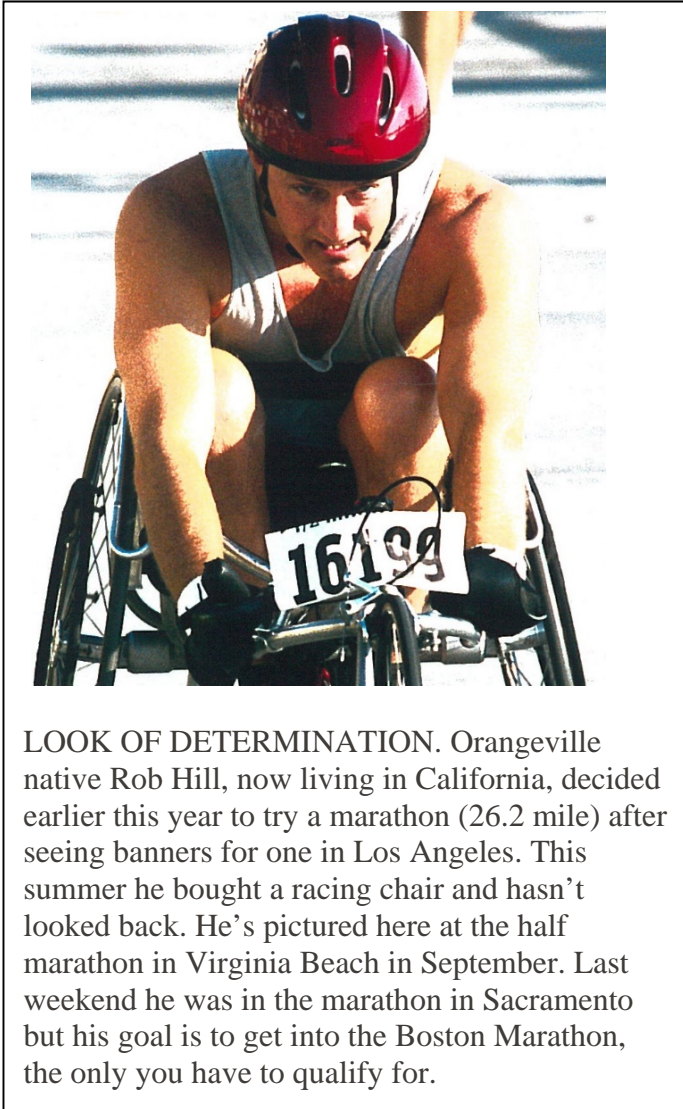


## Former resident seriously into marathons



**LOOK OF DETERMINATION.** Orangeville native Rob Hill, now living in California, decided earlier this year to try a marathon (26.2 mile) after seeing banners for one in Los Angeles. This summer he bought a racing chair and hasn't looked back. He's pictured here at the half marathon in Virginia Beach in September. Last weekend he was in the marathon in Sacramento but his goal is to get into the Boston Marathon, the only you have to qualify for.

By SHEILA DUNCAN

After seeing a roadside banner earlier this year, Orangeville native Rob Hill, 40, decided to run the Los Angeles marathon.

So after six weeks of training he did so, completing the marathon in eight hours and 50 minutes.

Not bad for a quadriplegic -who doesn't say no.

Now he has a special three-wheeled chair for racing - and he has completed several marathons, with the ultimate goal being to get accepted for the Boston Marathon next year (the only one where you have to qualify by having a time under three hours).

His wife Caroline has taken up running to keep up with him.

"I've got my wife addicted," he says, adding she used to do a lot of walking.

Mr. Hill says they go for a long run on weekends, 10-20 miles an through the week they do a two or three mile circuit around their home in Costa Mesa, one hour south of Los Angeles.

They live three miles from the ocean where there is a boardwalk system that runs for miles.

Since his first marathon (26.2 miles) back in March, he hasn't looked back.

He purchased a used racing chair at the end of July and completed three more marathons as well as some other races.

This past weekend they flew to Sacramento where he went in the marathon there on Sunday.

He's anxious to go in the L.A. Marathon again and

compare this time with last year's.

But the New York Marathon certainly stands out in his mind. "It was so soon after the terrorist attacks on 9-11, it was very emotional. You are running with 25,000 other people and thousands of total strangers are cheering you on. It was so much fun; it was really neat. It's energizing to be in the middle of the street in New York City with 25,000 other people."

He completed that marathon in four hours and 18 minutes - and did it with one flat tire when it blew five minutes before the start of the marathon.

Mr. Hill says he and his wife use their newfound enthusiasm for marathons as an excuse to travel.

They visited here in October when they were up for the Toronto Marathon, they visited Caroline's brother in New York when they were in that marathon last month, and visited Rob's brother in Vancouver when there was a marathon there.

Mr. Hill, who is a graduate of Orangeville District Secondary School, earned his M.B.A. in finance at McMaster University and also has a C.M.A (Certified Management Accountant).

Mrs. Hill has her M.B.A. in Health Care from McMaster.

But it was during their undergraduate days at Wilfrid Laurier University that the two met.

It was also during this time that Mr. Hill had his accident.

He was paralyzed below the chest in a swimming accident in 1986 while visiting a friend's cottage near Bracebridge. Kidding around, a friend and him went off the dock into three foot deep water. His head hit bottom, dislocating vertebra in his neck paralyzing him below the chest.

He has some strength in both arms, but is classified as a quadriplegic because they were weakened by the neck injury.

He's determined to do the best he can with the way his life has turned out. And he's determined to make it turn out right.

"For the most part I don't think about it; it doesn't affect what I do every day or how I interact with people."

Mr. Hill is employed with Platinum Capital Group where he is the Chief Financial Officer.

(Mrs. Hill manages the company's Human Resources department.) They have been in the United States for more than five years.

Back home in Ontario, he had worked at the Locator for one and a half years as the Chief Financial Officer he worked at Toronto Dominion Bank in downtown Toronto for three years before that.

He happened to go to California to attend a wedding of a friend from his university days who told him about a job as a Chief Financial Officer for a mortgage company.

"He talked me into coming down so 12 days later I immigrated."

Of course, Orangeville is home and he visits his parents here once or twice a year "but we don't go back when it's cold."

So Christmas will be spent with Caroline's family - in Florida.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hill will keep working on getting his marathon time under three hours - and getting into the Boston Marathon.

Who knows what the challenge be after that one is met.

"I keep joking I'm going to do a triathlon."

His mother Barb says Rob is always full of surprises and has always been a very positive person.

She says it was just like Rob to keep on going in the one marathon even though he got a flat tire a few minutes before the marathon started and he did the whole run with that flat tire.

"He wouldn't have pulled out," she says.

Her and husband Fred surprised Rob by showing up in Virginia Beach this year where he was entered in a marathon.

And they went to Vancouver when Rob was there and visited with another son, Todd.

Fred says he will never get over seeing these marathon runners getting ready to start out in the dark and cold, near the Pacific Ocean.

"It was really something to watch at six in the morning," he says.

When he first heard about Rob's marathon adventures, "I thought he was crazy, How do you drink? He has to come to a halt and take his hands off the wheel. How do you take deep breaths? I couldn't see how he could do it."

But there is no mistaking the pride. "I think it's great," Fred says. "I couldn't begin to picture this 15 years ago."