

# Canada's Skin Care Icon, Olwen Hyross

BY JAYNE HOBBS

I am careful when referring to one of my colleagues as an icon, as someone called me that once and I felt very old! However, the dictionary defines icon as “an object of uncritical devotion; symbol.” This certainly describes Olwen Hyross who has successfully worked in the beauty industry for over 43 years.

Olwen wears many hats, from Marketing Director to CEO to educator/trainer to industry consultant. She is one of those beauty professionals who seldom appear in the press, but are highly influential in the inner workings of the industry.

I interviewed Olwen during her recent launch of skinDNA in Canada. The following is an excerpt from that interview.

**Jayne:** Many consider you an industry icon. How did your career develop?

**Olwen:** It was my intention to become one of the best in my field, but never an icon. At an early age I wanted to become a hairdresser until I discovered, with great passion, the world of health and beauty; there was no holding back.

I trained in London, England, graduating with a Health & Beauty Specialist Diploma. After immigrating to Bermuda, I was instrumental in developing one of the first full-service beauty practices; a fore-runner to today's Day Spa.

From Bermuda I moved to Victoria, B.C. where few full-service salons existed. As a result, I pursued sales, eventually becoming the Assistant Cosmetic Buyer for Eaton's, Vancouver. Next, I joined Lancôme and launched its skin care line throughout B.C. Upon moving to

Toronto I joined Elizabeth Arden and eventually returned to clinical practice, helping to establish one of Toronto's first Day Spas.

**Jayne:** What struggles did you have establishing yourself in the industry?

**Olwen:** Being young and female, I was not always taken seriously, so I had to be persistent and sometimes an over-achiever in order to prove that I could meet male management's expectations. Unfortunately, I was often labeled an “opinionated woman”. Luckily, I gained a wealth of knowledge and experience in a short period of time which, along with my passion, helped me when dealing with management issues, and also when giving advice to mature clientele.

**Jayne:** When and why did you decide to start your own business?

**Olwen:** After my last position as Corporate Marketing Director for a pharmaceutical company, I decided that after many years of successfully working for others, it was time to establish my own company. I founded Vital Beauty Products Inc. in 1993 and started importing products from Europe.

**Jayne:** Explain how your vision has helped you become one of the industry's great pioneers.

**Olwen:** I have a natural ability to know the industry needs and trends, which helped me to pioneer new technology. In 1988, I launched the first hyaluronic acid-based, anti-aging skin formula, Visible Youth. And in 1994, I introduced



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the first oxygen therapy system, ECHO2. I was one of the first to give seminars on free radicals and anti-oxidants, and I have always treated clients holistically before it was popular to do so.

**Jayne:** What beauty advice can you offer our readers?

**Olwen:** It is possible to slow down the aging process and “grow old gracefully”. Always practice preventative skin care and healthy nutrition. Seek professional advice and develop a regular regimen that you do faithfully. Likewise, don't get hooked on quick-fix cosmetic procedures. There are effective alternatives that are less invasive and allow your skin and body to repair and restructure naturally. These alternatives do take more time, as every renewal process does, but in the long term they produce a healthier skin and a more natural look. Too many procedures are a dead giveaway. ■