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Portland, Oregon.

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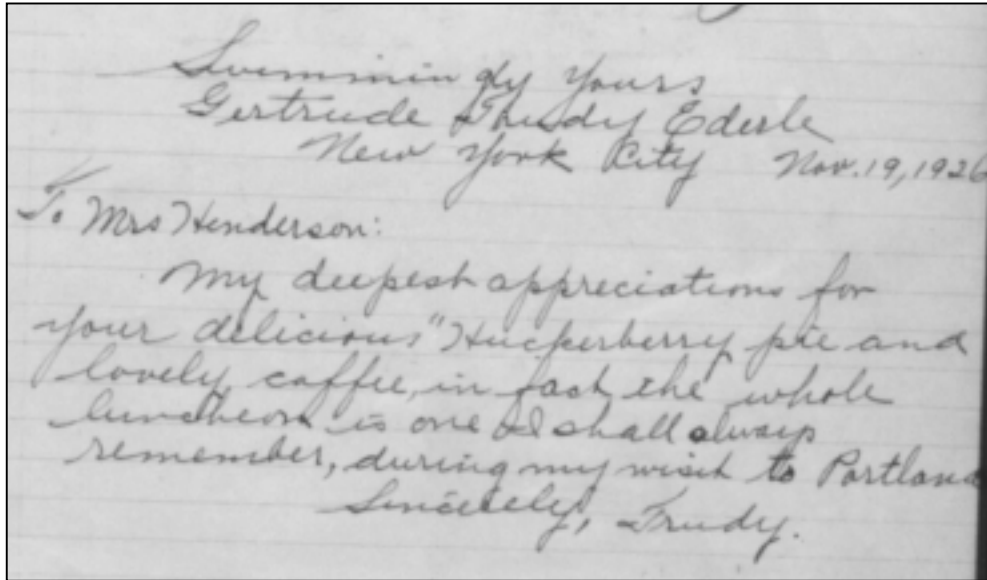
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GERTRUDE EDERLE

C-26-393

Signed Guestbook: November 19, 1926



Summery yours
Gertrude Ederle
New York City Nov. 19, 1926

To Mrs Henderson:

My deepest appreciation for
your delicious "Huckleberry pie and
lovely coffee, in fact the whole
luncheon is one I shall always
remember, during my visit to Portland
Sincerely, Trudy.

The scanner view above isolates Gertrude Ederle's entry from page 393 of the cloth Guestbook, that also contains the signatures of Queen Marie of Rumania and heavyweight champion Gene Tunney. (See profiles of Queen Marie and Tunney)

Gertrude Ederle Vitae:

Profession: Professional swimmer/Olympic champion

Born: October 23, 1906 / New York City

Died: Still viable at Age 94

Age at Chalet: 21 years



**DETAILED STUDY OF EDERLE ENTRY----->>
FOLLOWING PAGES**

DETAILS / GERTRUDE EDERLE ENTRY

Trudy beats them all!

Gertrude Trudy Ederle is unique from the rest of the Chalet guests profiled in this study in that she is still alive! (June 21, 2001) One explanation that makes such longevity possible (age 94), is simply that Gertrude Ederle was barely 21 years old when she made her entry in the Guestbook - the youngest guest to be examined in this study. Another factor, the health scientists would be quick to add, is that active swimming is of proven health benefit.

The English Channel

For those who recall Gertrude Ederle, it is probably not for her Olympic medals, however significant, but for a single act of heroism that made her the most famous and talked about woman in the world: Gertrude Ederle was the first woman to successfully swim the English Channel. In so doing, she beat the existing world record time held by a male. On August 6, 1926, she entered the cold and turbulent water of the English Channel at Cap Gris-Nez France and began her swim toward Dover, England - geographically the closest distance across the Channel at a distance of approximately 21 miles. Due to naturally shifting tidal currents and variable wind conditions, the distance that swimmers actually travel is always greater and on that day she swam close to 35 miles. She covered the distance in 14 hours and 31 minutes, beating the world record established by an Argentinian, Enrique Tiraboschi, by one hour and 59 minutes.

In mastering the Channel, Ederle not only achieved fame for herself but also profoundly advanced the status of women athletes in general, where the prevailing attitude was that females were not as capable as males in activities that demanded physical strength and endurance. At the onset of her swim, it is reported that the odds makers gave her one chance out of three that she might complete the crossing, apparently ignoring any bets that she might set a new world record time.

Ederle returned to New York City to receive the adulation of a crowd estimated at two million, who lined the street as her victory parade made its way down lower Broadway. To the news media she declared: "*I knew I could do it. I knew I would, and I did.*" Her reception in New York City, at that time, has been described as the greatest display of public affection ever before showered upon a sports figure. (1)

What follows world fame?

After Ederle's sensational swim, she was immediately pursued by commercial interests requesting endorsements, stage appearances, swimming exhibitions and movie parts; a dollar estimate regarding these offers approximated \$900,000. She subsequently accepted a two-year contract offer from the William Morris Agency, to swim in vaudeville, and a portable swimming tank accompanied her on the road. Without more information, it seems a good bet that Ederle was touring for the William Morris Agency when she came to the Chalet. Ederle is credited with making one silent film, *Swim Girl, Swim* (1927), a comedy/romance with a college campus setting. This film also included Bebe Daniels in the cast. (Daniels had appeared with Chalet guest Harold Lloyd in many of his films.) The release date for *Swim Girl, Swim* was September 3, 1927, almost 10 months after Ederle visited the Chalet.

Stress plagued Ederle shortly after her record swim and it is reported that she had a nervous breakdown at age 21. No doubt adding to her stress was a debilitating hearing problem; an impairment that had appeared in childhood, and subsequently exacerbated by the cold waters of her Channel swim. Eventually she became totally deaf. In 1933, she suffered a fall and injured her spine. She was forced to wear casts for almost four years and it was the opinion of many of her physicians that she would never walk again. Thankfully the medicos were proven wrong and she was quite capable of swimming in the Billy Rose Aquacade at the New York World Fair in 1939.

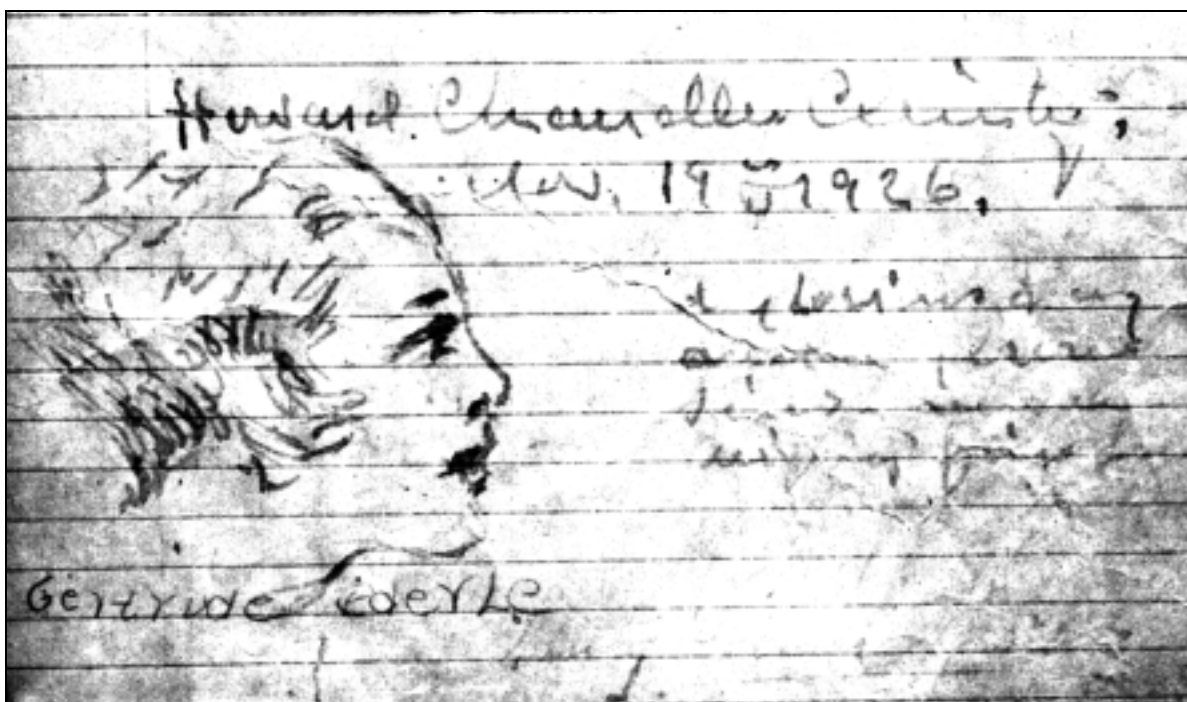
In that spectacle, she co-starred with another swimming champion, Johnny Weissmuller, who had competed with Ederle on the 1924 Olympic team in Paris. Due to an ear infection, Weissmuller was forced to bow out and was replaced by Buster Crabbe. We remember Johnny Weissmuller as the quintessential Tarzan in movie roles (1932-48) and Buster Crabbe also took his turn on the vine in 1933.

During WW2, Ederle was employed in an aircraft plant and afterward returned to her element as a swimming instructor. She was to find that her deafness was a decided handicap in working with her usual swimming students and so she compensated by offering classes designed for hearing impaired children.

Some readers might be interested in filling in the long gap in Ederle's life story, from swimming instructor to the advanced age of 93. As far as this writer knows, no biography exists that might tell us whether she ever married and if so, had children. What was her level of happiness/sadness after her celebrity faded?

Who was the artist?

Page 393 of the cloth bound Guestbook also contains a pencil sketch of Gertrude Ederle's profile, shown below. Did Gertrude draw this herself? The artist responsible for this likeness is not known. The writing surrounding the sketch has not been deciphered.



Other

- In the 1924 Olympics, Ederle won the gold medal in the free relay and two bronze metals in the 100 meter and 400 meter freestyle.
- Ederle's mark as the only woman to swim the English Channel lasted less than a month when Amelia Gade Corson completed the swim on August 29, 1926. Corson was unable to beat Ederle's time, however.
- Ederle's record for fastest female to swim the channel held until August 8, 1950, when Florence Chadwick bested her with a time of 13 hours and 20 minutes.
- Today (January/2000) the fastest time across the channel is held by a male from the U.S. by the name of Chad Hundebly. He crossed in 7 hours and 17 minutes in 1994. (Note: this information may be outdated)
- Ederle's success as the first female to conquer the Channel appears to have broken a psychological barrier: Since Ederle's triumph in 1926, over 270 swimmers are believed to have made the crossing successfully, including a 12 year-old girl in 1983, and a 65 year-old man in the same year.
- Ederle's advanced age has made her eligible for a ghoulish contest: On the Internet/99 you will find a website for *The Ale House, The Beer Joint of Your Dreams*, in Vestal, New York. In brief, fellow imbibers are invited to contribute names of famous people who they think are most likely to die within the given year. (The dead pool) In 1998, Gertrude Ederle's name was entered in a pool that included Frank Sinatra, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and Joe DiMaggio. Sorry, but it must be said that even at age 94, Gertrude Ederle is still beating the men in the pool!

(1) It would not be long before New York City would see another victory parade when Charles Lindbergh completed his historic flight across the Atlantic on June 13, 1927. The turnout for the Lindbergh parade was of historical proportion, but one unofficial account declared that the turnout for Gertrude Ederle exceeded that of Charles Lindbergh.