



## **GUS RYDER**

1899 – 1991

When Gus Ryder passed away in 1991 at the age of ninety-two, Etobicoke Council held a one-minute silence to honour his memory. Not only a long-time Etobicoke resident, Ryder was also one of Canada's most outstanding athletes and coaches. He was revered and respected by all who knew or worked with him.

Ryder coached both Marilyn Bell and Cliff Lumsden, two Canadian swimmers who achieved world fame. Beyond coaching star athletes, he spent countless hours teaching children to swim, and was particularly known for his work teaching children with disabilities. His time spent coaching children was one of Ryder's happiest memories.

In 1930, Ryder established the Lakeshore Swim Club on the lakefront and selected its motto: "Everyone a life-saver." Ryder personally saved forty-seven lives and won all of the Royal Life-Saving degrees. In 1952, with the opening of the New Toronto Memorial Pool as the permanent home of the Lakeshore Swim Club, a lifetime ambition was realized. Former Etobicoke Mayor Doug Holyday said "(as a child) I can remember taking the streetcar to the old Sunnyside Pool where Ryder ran the Lakeshore Swim Club."

Over the years, Gus Ryder and his fellow instructors at the Lakeshore Swim Club taught many thousands of people to swim. His services at the Lakeshore Swim Club were completely voluntary. Any monies he raised through his business or other achievements he contributed to Lakeshore Swim Club for programs teaching children with disabilities. He once said: "Champions come and go... but kids go on forever. I'd rather teach five hundred youngsters to swim than to produce a champion." Of course, he did both, many times over.

Marilyn Bell (known as Canada's Sweetheart after she became the first person to swim across Lake Ontario) recalled Ryder with great fondness. "He taught me things that helped me live my life like the sun is going to

come up tomorrow and that the tide will always turn,” she said shortly after Ryder’s death, “And he taught me not to be a quitter.”

“He was like a father to me,” said Cliff Lumsden, another of Canada’s famous swimmers and a fellow Etobicoke Hall of Famer, “He had a bond with us.”

Physical fitness was an important theme throughout Ryder’s life; at the age of ninety, he was still swimming daily and playing handball.

As one might expect, Ryder did not seek fame or honour, but he achieved both. Among many other awards, he was named Canada’s “Man of the Year,” earned the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship, was the only Canadian to be awarded Life Membership in the English Channel Swimming Association. He donated blood more than one hundred times, and was awarded the Red Cross Badge of Service. In 1975, he was made a Member of the Order of Canada. For all his dedication to young people and fitness, Gus Ryder was inducted into the Etobicoke Hall of Fame in its inaugural year.

*Inducted into the Etobicoke Hall of Fame in 1974*