


LONDON2012


Jeanne Wilson Vaughan with some of her memorabilia at her home in Lafayette. BY MICHAEL HEINZ/JOURNAL & COURIER

London cheers continue to resonate for Vaughan

1948 Olympic swimmer, Lafayette resident, also was a Purdue pioneer

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Lafayette resident Jeanne Wilson Vaughan will never forget the last time the Olympic Games were in London.

The opening ceremonies, basic by today's standards, are ingrained in Vaughan's mind forever.

As the Americans entered the famous Wembley Stadium, there was an eruption unlike anything the 1948 Olympic swimmer has heard before or since.

"We had a boy, I think he was in track and field, and he held the American flag," Vaughan said. "As soon as that American flag hit the stadium, and the stadium was full, I've never heard such screaming and applause."

"It lasted for a long time. I couldn't believe it. In the stands were all these British people holding flags and waving them. It really got to me. I even cried I was so impressed with what they did. They were thanking us for helping them win the war."

It would be Vaughan's one and only appearance in the Olympics. She accepted a

modeling job after returning to the United States and never entered in competition again.

Prior to that, she became the first female swimmer at Purdue University and is a member of the Purdue Athletic Hall of Fame.

After one year at Northwestern, the Chicago native transferred to Purdue to train with legendary coach Dick Pappenguth. Her stories still serve as inspiration for current Boilermakers.

"We've had her come in and speak with the team about her experiences, and that's a really good and unique opportunity for our student-athletes to hear about her past," Purdue women's swimming coach John Klinge said. "To be the first women's swimmer involved with our program even though there wasn't a varsity team at the time and to have her as an Olympian, that is something that is neat about our program."

Vaughan, who eventually married Jack Vaughan and settled in Lafayette, set 10 American records in the breaststroke in the 1940s. She was a four-time All-American and earned her spot in the 1948 Olympics winning the 200-meter breaststroke at the

DID YOU KNOW?

Jeanne Wilson Vaughan wasn't the only Purdue swimmer to qualify for the 1948 Olympics in the 200-meter breaststroke.

Carol Pence "Penny" Taylor also made the trip to London as did male swimmer Keith Carter. Carter earned a silver medal in the event and also finished fourth in the 100-meter freestyle.

trials in Detroit.

She has some stories.

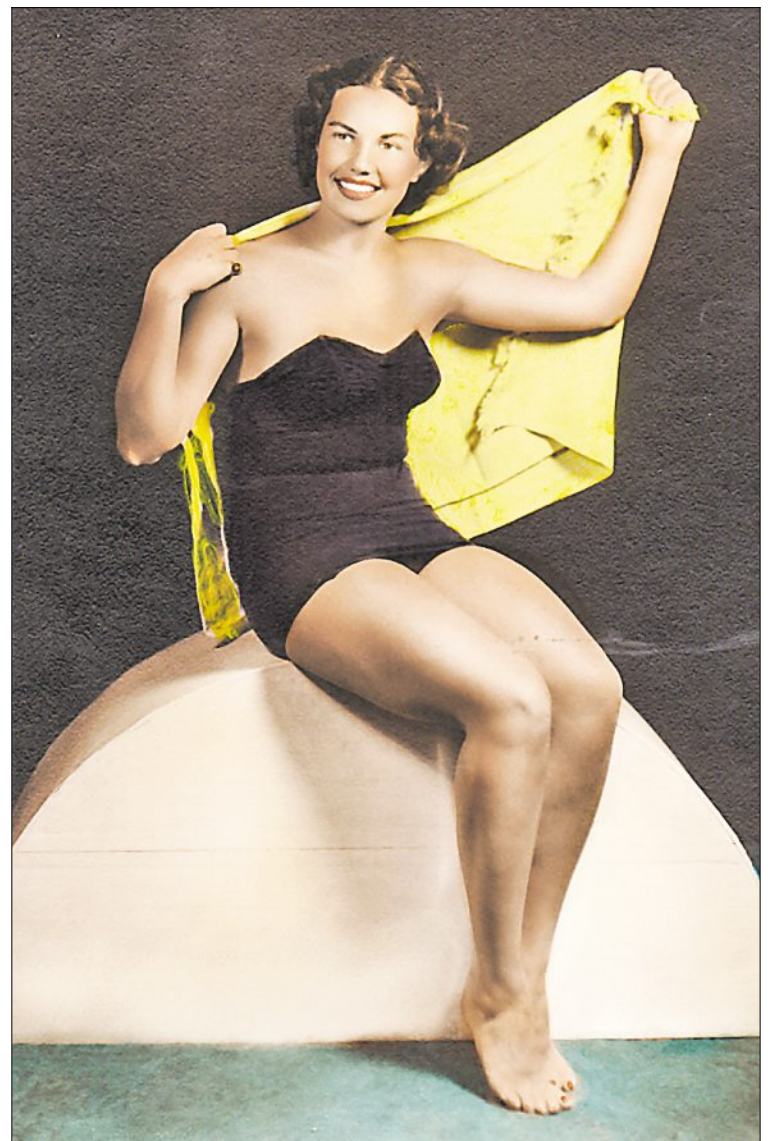
Like the one where Pappenguth asked her to show up at men's swimming practice at 3 o'clock. She bought a new bathing suit and showed up at the pool to a chorus of boos. Her bathing suit was red, and the Purdue team didn't approve of her wearing rival Indiana University's colors.

Her success at Purdue received notice and Pappenguth was soon able to draw more female swimmers to West Lafayette before taking over the United States Olympic swimming and diving team.

Unfortunately for Vaughan, her one trip to the Olympics, including the six-day boat ride it took to get to London, had just one breaststroke event.

She was a sprinter. The event was 200 meters.

"I led all the way to 100 meters and then ran out of breath or something," she said.



Jeanne Vaughan shortly after the 1948 Olympics in London. PHOTO PROVIDED