

99 WRITING

Mermaids, the Job for Dreamers

by Mady, 826 Valencia

TYPE
INFORMATIONAL

Have you had dreams of mermaids growing up? Or maybe, if you're like Eric Ducharme, you still have dreams of mermaids? Well, lucky for you, you can come pretty close to being a mermaid. If you are looking for a job and are crazy about mermaids, you can make a living by performing live as a professional mermaid, just like Mermaid Melissa.

Melissa performs at birthday parties, in shark tanks, and at VIP parties. Weeki Wachee Springs Resort, which has mermaid shows in Florida, chose her as one of their water ballerinas. Melissa says in her article, "Life as a professional mermaid" on *priceonomics.com*, "To be selected as one of the park's thirty-five full-time mermaids was an honor and a privilege: women came from across the world to audition."

So what about the mermaid tails? What are they made of? That is the exact question I asked Eric Ducharme. His reply was, “Our silicone tails are made of a special-effects-grade silicone.”

Eric is the owner of a company that actually makes the mermaid tails. He works as a part-time merman, and also loves mermaids. “I am [still] and always will be, a merman first at heart. That is my inspiration for designing tails.” Eric was still a kid when he started making tails out of anything he could find, including garbage, bags, glue, masking tape, and the sheets off his own bed,” according to Mertailor’s official website. Eric also performed at Weeki Wachee as the prince when he was just sixteen years old. He’s twenty-two now and the owner of Mertailor.

So where did it all begin? Well, one of the earlier, more famous mermaids was Annette Kellerman. She was born on July 6, 1886, and died on November 6, 1975. She dove from ninety-two feet into the sea and from sixty feet into a pool of crocodiles as one of the stunts in her films. In films, she normally started as a mermaid whose name was a variation of her own name, Annette. She won the women’s mile and 100-yard swimming competition in South Wales. She even got a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for her “fairytale films.” And she made or designed most of the mermaid tails for her films, which are similar to the ones used today by Weeki Wachee Springs mermaids.

Esther Williams was also a competitive swimmer and much actress. She wasn’t that famous for becoming a mermaid as much as her competitive swimming and diving. The reason she’s still included in the history of mermaids is because of her films, where (just

like Annette Kellerman) she acted as a mermaid. She was very much a daredevil, and almost got herself killed when she jumped from 115 feet and broke her neck while performing in the film Million Dollar Mermaid.

So where can you go to see these fabulous mermaids? The best place to go is Weeki Wachee, where both Melissa the mermaid and Eric Ducharme performed.

It was “founded” in 1946, by Newton Perri, who was trained to swim underwater in World War II. They invented a form of breathing under water while smiling and without having an air tank strapped on their backs. If there’s one thing you take away from this article, it’s that mermaids aren’t just a myth anymore, they’re jobs for dreamers.