



Validation of Exceptional Longevity

Jeanne Calment: Validation of the Duration of Her Life

by J.-M. Robine and M. Allard

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Jeanne Calment died on the fourth of August, 1997. She was then 122 years old. We validated her age when she entered her 121st year of life. Talking with Madame Calment was always pleasant and sometimes even funny (Allard et al. 1994; Ritchie 1995). However, the topic of the study - that is the validation of her age - requires that we limit ourselves to gathering simple verifiable statements (Robine and Allard 1995).

She stated that:

- (i) she was born on February 21st, 1875 in Arles;
- (ii) her father, Nicolas Calment, was a shipbuilder;
- (iii) her mother, Marguerite Gilles, was from a family of millers;
- (iv) her godfather was called Louis Pages [or Paget];
- (v) her godmother was Jeanne Gilles, her maternal aunt;
- (vi) she had a brother, François Calment, who was ten years older than her and who died at 97 years of age;
- (vii) she married her cousin, Fernand Calment;
- (viii) they lived for some time with Mrs. Maria Calment, [maiden name Felix], her mother-in-law;
- (ix) ever since, she lived in the same house in Gambetta Street [at the corner of St-Estève Street, next to Rue de la République], in an apartment located above their department store named "Grand Magasin Calment";
- (x) she left this house when she was 110 years old to live in a nursing home, "La Maison du Lac" where we met her;
- (xi) she gave birth to one child, a daughter, Yvonne, [Calment], born in Arles;
- (xii) her daughter married Colonel Billot;
- (xiii) they had one son, Frédéric [born Billot];
- (xiv) her daughter Yvonne died when she was 36 years old;
- (xv) her grandson, Frédéric Billot, also died at 36 years old;

(xvi) finally, she mentioned Marthe Fousson, one of the first servants she had in her service, when she was newly married.

These elements are excerpted from conversations recorded in 1992 and 1993; we added the information between square brackets to make Jeanne Calment's statements easier to understand; this information will be justified later on.

These biographical elements can be verified in many ways, as the family of Jeanne Calment belonged to the local catholic bourgeoisie and her father was a member of the Arles town council. Therefore, church, notarial, military, school and municipal documents, as well as articles from local newspapers, add to direct (about her own civil status) and indirect official records (about the people she mentioned).

In addition to church and civil records, a second direct source of information is provided by population censuses. On the occasion of these censuses, data about the population are recorded, in city halls, in large books called "lists of population counts". The first census as regards the period of time concerned was conducted in 1876.

In this study we neither aimed at being exhaustive nor at gathering all the documents attesting the age of Jeanne Calment. We voluntarily limited ourselves to direct church and civil records and to censuses of the population, to which we added a few different documents as examples (indirect civil status records, church and notarial documents, and newspaper articles). In the following we present chronological landmarks of Jeanne Louise Calment since her birth (for the full list of documents, see Annexes p. 165).

1) Birth of Jeanne Louise Calment in 1875

Birth record: On the twenty-second of February, 1875, Nicolas Calment, ship's carpenter, aged 37, declares that his wife, Marguerite Gilles, aged 37, has given birth *to a daughter, Jeanne Louise Calment, born on the twenty-first of February, 1875*. At that time, the Calment/Gilles family lives in Duroure Street, in Arles. [Birth Record, Arles1875:110].

Baptism record: *In the year 1875, on the twenty-third of February, I, the undersigned curate [Berlioz] have baptized Jeanne Louise Calment, born on the twenty-first of February, daughter of Nicolas Calment, ship's carpenter, and Marguerite Gilles, wedded before God. The godfather has been Pierre Gille Paget and the godmother Jeanne Gilles, who have co-signed the present certificate with me.*

Signed by Nicolas Calment [father], Ls Paget [godfather, whose first name was obviously Louis, the Christian name given to her goddaughter; Pierre Gille's name, mentioned on the baptism record could not be found anywhere else; his birth certificate would only enlighten us on this subject], Jeanne Gilles [godmother], François Calment [Is it her brother François, 10 years old in 1875?] and Berlioz (curate). [Arles, Saint Césaire1875, n54].

Jeanne Louise's Christian names are granted to her after her godfather's and her godmother's.

The exact number of children of the Calment/Gilles family is not known. *For the period of time from 1850 to 1891*, the Arles registry office mentions the following as children born from the Calment/Gilles family:

DATE	CHILD		FATHER'S AGE	MOTHER'S AGE
1862	Antoine	[BR;Arles:537]	24	24
1863	Marie	[BR;Arles: 705]	26	25
1865	François	[BR;Arles:286]	27	27
1875	Jeanne Louise	[BR;Arles:110]	37	37

Moreover, there is no evidence that the Calment/Gilles family did not temporarily leave Arles between 1850 and 1890. However, they probably never did leave Arles and Jeanne Louise Calment is surely the youngest child of a family of four, born ten years after her next brother, François, who was born in 1865.

Jeanne Louise Calment did not know about Antoine and Marie, who died in infancy: Antoine died at 4 and Marie died under 1. She only knew that her parents had had another child, besides François and herself. François Calment died in Arles on December 1st, 1962, at 97 years of age. Her parents had got married on October 16th, 1861.

Marriage record: *On the sixteenth of October 1861, Nicolas Calment, ship's carpenter, son of Antoine Calment, ship's carpenter, and Marie Anne Poujaud, resident of Arles, has married Marguerite Gilles (daughter of Claude Gilles, former cartwright, currently miller, and Rose Minaud, resident of Arles). [MarriageRecord; Arles1861:161-Marginal notes: Marguerite Gilles, deceased on the eighteenth of September, 1924, Nicolas Calment deceased on the twenty-eighth of January, 1931].*

2) Population censuses from 1876 to 1896

In 1876, Jeanne Calment is counted in the western canton, section j, in Arles. She is one year old and lives with: Nicolas Calment (39 years old, born in Arles, carpenter, householder), Marguerite Gilles (38 years old, born in Arles, his spouse), and François Calment, 11 years old, their son. Jeanne Calment is mentioned as their daughter. [House 131, Household 155, Individuals 486, 487, 488, 489].

In 1881, Jeanne Calment is counted in the western canton, section j, in Arles. She is 6

years old and lives with: Nicolas Calment, 44 years old, builder, householder, Marguerite Gilles, 4X (may be 43, difficult to read) years old, his spouse, and François Calment, 16 years old, child. Jeanne Calment is mentioned as child.

In 1886, Jeanne Calment is counted with her family again. She is 11 years old and lives with: her father, Nicolas Calment, 48 years old⁽¹⁾, builder, householder, Marguerite Gilles, 48 years old, having no trade or profession, his spouse. Jeanne Calment is mentioned as child.

In 1891, no 'list of population counts' was established.

In 1896, no 'list of of population counts' was established.

The period of time extending from 1886 to 1896 should be covered by school documents, Jeanne Calment having successively attended a primary school (Asile nursery school), Benet private boarding school (Place de la République), then a secondary school.

3) Marriage of Jeanne Louise Calment in 1896

Marriage record: On the eighth of April, 1896, Fernand Nicolas Calment, merchant, born in Arles on the second of November, 1868, aged 27, son of the late Jacques Calment and Marie Felix, has married *Jeanne Louise Calment*, born on the twenty-first of February, 1875, aged 21, daughter of Nicolas Calment, landowner, and Marguerite Gilles. [Marriage Record;Arles1896:37].

Marriage contract: Victor Lucien Arnaud, notary, Arles.

Among the witnesses, Emile Fassin, Louis Calment, first cousin german of the bridegroom, Pierre Calment, carpenter, aged 57, paternal uncle of the bride, and Antoine Bourdelon. Pierre Calment was born on October 8th, 1839 [BirthRecord; Arles1839:532].

It has to be noted that Jeanne Louise Calment and Fernand Nicolas Calment have the same family name: They are cousins. Their paternal grandfathers are brothers. Jeanne Louise's grandfather is Antoine Calment [BirthRecord;ArlesYearXI ⁽²⁾, ("premier Messidor", June 20th, 1803) record:273] and Fernand Nicolas' grandfather is Nicolas Calment [Birth record; Arles1810:150]. Moreover, the two brothers had married two sisters. [Marriage Record; Arles1825:122] and [Marriage Record; Arles1832:78].

Church wedding: *In the year 1896, on the eight of April, the banns having been duly published during the parish service of this church as well as during the parish service of St Trophime church, the marriage license having been granted by Monsignor the archbishop, as well as the exemption from the prohibition of marriage as within the third degree of consanguinity existing between the two parties, and that of prohibited time, and no other impediment having been discovered, I, the undersigned, parish priest of Saint Cesaire church in Arles, have asked for and received the mutual agreement of Fernand Nicolas Calment,*

merchant, major son of the late Jacques Calment and of Marie Felix, resident of Arles in St Trophime parish, on the one hand, and of Jeanne Louise Calment, minor daughter of Nicolas Calment and Marguerite Gilles, resident of Arles in this parish Saint Cesaire, on the other hand, and I have presently and solemnly joined them in wedlock, in the presence of Pierre Calment, Emile Fassin, Louis Calment and Antoine Bourdelon. [Arles, Saint Césaire 1896, n 8].

4) Birth of Jeanne Louise Calment's daughter in 1898

Birth record: On the twentieth of January, 1898, Fernand Nicolas Calment, aged 29, merchant, declares that his wife *Jeanne Louise Calment*, aged 22, has given birth to a girl, Yvonne Marie Nicolle Calment, born on the nineteenth of January, 1898. The Calment/Calment family is then residing in Gambetta Street in Arles. [Birth Record; Arles 1898:110].

The department store and the Calment's house are located, at the same address, at the angle of Gambetta Street and St Estève Street, next to Rue de la République.

Jeanne Louise Calment is not known to have had any other child. She never mentioned any other name than Yvonne's.

Baptism record: *Yvonne Marie Nicolle Calment, born on the nineteenth of January, daughter of Fernand Nicolas Calment and Jeanne Louise Calment, has been baptized on the thirteenth of February, 1898, in Arles, in St Cesaire church. The godfather has been Nls Calment [Nicolas obviously] and the godmother Marie Calment. [Arles, St Trophime 1898, n10].*

Christian names Marie and Nicolle were given to her after her godmother and her godfather.

5) Population censuses from 1901 to 1921

In 1901, Jeanne Calment is counted in Gambetta Street in Arles. She is 26 years old and lives with: Maria Felix (54 years old, merchant, householder and employer), Fernand Calment (33 years old, son and merchant) [her husband], Yvonne Calment (3 years old, grand-daughter) [her daughter] and with Louise Bauchet and Marie Bertrand, servants. Jeanne Calment is mentioned as daughter-in-law.

In fact, in 1901, Jeanne Calment is counted twice: her father, Nicolas Calment, is counted at St Martin de Crau where he owns a house (mas). He is 63 years old (householder, shipbuilder, employer). He declares: Marguerite Gilles (63 years old, spouse), Marguerite Minaud (37 years old, cousin), François Calment (36 years old, son, having no trade or profession), *Jeanne Calment* (26 years old, daughter).

In 1906, Jeanne Calment is counted in St Estève Street in Arles. She was born in 1875 and lives with: Fernand Calmen[t] (born in 1868, merchant,

householder and employer), Yvonne Calmen[t] (born in 1898, daughter) and Marthe Fousson, born in 1898 [error], servant. Jeanne Calmen[t] is mentioned as spouse and owner [House 83, Individual 110].

Marie Felix [her mother-in-law], born in 1847, employer and landowner, is counted in a separate apartment, next to hers, with Marie Perrot, servant [House 83, Individual 111].

In 1911, Jeanne Calment is counted in St Estève Street in Arles. She was born in 1875 and lives with: Fernand Calment (born in 1868, householder, draper and employer), Yvonne Calment (born in 1898, daughter) *and Marthe Fousson, born in 1885 at Fontvieille, servant*. Jeanne Calment is mentioned as spouse and as having no trade or profession [House 80, Household 91].

Maria Calment, born in 1847, householder, having no trade or profession, is counted in a separate apartment, next to hers, with Madeleine Olivier, servant [House 80, Household 92].

In 1921, Jeanne Calment is counted in Gambetta Street in Arles. She was born in 1875 and lives with: Fernand Calment (born in 1868, householder, draper and employer), Yvonne Calment (born in 1898, daughter, without trade or profession), and Josephine Camiotti, servant. Jeanne Calment is mentioned as spouse and as having no trade or profession [House 832, Household 1173].

Maria Calment, born in 1847, householder, having no trade or profession, is counted in a separate apartment, next to hers [House 832, Household 1174].

6) Death of her mother, Marguerite Gilles, in 1924

Death record: Marguerite Calment, aged 86 years, born in Arles, on the twentieth of February, 1838, spouse of Nicolas Calment, daughter of Claude Gilles and Rose Minaud, departed this life on the eighteenth of September, 1924 [DeathRecord; Arles1924:36].

7) Marriage of Jeanne Louise Calment's daughter in 1926

Marriage record: On the third of February, 1926, Captain Joseph Charles Frédéric Billot, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, born in Arles on the fifth of March, 1891, aged 34, son of Paul Emile Marie Honoré Frédéric Billot and Jeanne Marie Jouve, marries Yvonne Marie Nicolle Calment, born on the nineteenth of January, 1898, aged 28, daughter of Fernand Nicolas Calment and Jeanne Louise Calment [Marriage Record; Ar1es1926:18].

Marriage contract: Victor Lucien Arnaud, notary in Arles.

Among the witnesses: Louis Ginoux and François Calment.

Church record: *The wedding has taken place on the day after, the fourth of February, 1926: between, on the one hand, Billot Joseph Charles Frédéric,*

Captain at 63rd R.A.N.A., major son of Paul Billot and Jeanne Marie Jouve, baptized at St Trophime on the twenty-second of March, 1891, resident of Arles and, on the other hand, Calment Yvonne Marie Nicolle, major daughter of Fernand Nicolas Calment and Jeanne Louise Calment, baptized at St Trophime on the thirteenth of February, 1898 and resident of Arles (in Gambetta Street). Witnesses: Louis Giroux and François Calment [Arles, St Trophime 1926, n2].

8) Population census of 1926

In 1926, Jeanne Calment is counted in Gambetta Street in Arles. She was born in 1875 and lives with: Fernand Calment (born in 1868, householder, draper), Maria Calment (born in 1847, mother), and Pauline Cheylan (born in 1895, servant). Jeanne Calment is mentioned as spouse [House 255, Household 278].

Her daughter Yvonne Marie Nicolle, newly married, is not counted with her any longer.

9) Birth of her grandson Frédéric Billot in 1926

Birth record: *On the twenty-third of December, 1926, Yvonne Marie Nicolle Calment, aged 28, gave birth to a boy, Frédéric Jean Paul Billot, son of Joseph Charles Frédéric Billot, Captain of Artillery, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour. The Billot/Calment family is then residing in Gambetta Street in Arles. [BirthRecord; Arles1826:353].*

Baptism record: *'In the year 1927, on the ninth of February, I, the undersigned curate, [XXX], have baptized Frédéric Jean Paul Billot, born on the twenty-third of December, son of Joseph Charles Frédéric Billot and Yvonne Marie Calment... The godfather was Paul Emile Billot and the godmother Jeanne Calment, spouse Calment, who have co-signed the present record with me' [Arles, St Trophime1927, n2].*

10) Death of her father, Nicolas Calment, in 1931

Death record: Nicolas Calment, aged 93, former shipbuilder, widower of Marguerite Gilles, son of Antoine Calment and Marie Anne Poujaud, departed this life on the twenty-eighth of January, 1931 [DeathRecord; Arles1931:64].

11) Population census of 1931

The census of 1931 was the first to be typewritten. It comprised numerous typing and copying errors and erasures. We can read, in Gambetta Street (house no. 1594 and household no. 1925):

Calment Fernand, born in 1868, Householder, Merchant;
Calment *Maria*, born in 18xx (1847 erased), Spouse, Having no trade or profession;
Billot Joseph, born in 1891, Son-in-law, Having no trade or profession;
Calment *Maria*, born in 1847, Mother, Having no trade or profession;
Billot Frédéric, born in 1926, Grandson, Having no trade or profession;

Xauzarxues (erased) Louise, born in 1894, Servant, Cook;
Cheylan Pauline, born in 1895, Servant, Maid.

Of course, after Calment Fernand, we should read:

Calment Jeanne, born in 1875, Spouse, Having no trade or profession;

We can consider that:

In 1931, Jeanne Calment is counted in Gambetta Street in Arles. She lives with: Fernand Calment (born in 1868, Householder, Merchant and Employer), Joseph Billot (born in 1891, Son-in-law, Having no trade or profession), Maria Calment (born in 1847, Mother, Having no trade or profession), Frédéric Billot (born in 1926, Grandson, Having no trade or profession), Louise Xauzarxues (erased) (born in 1894, Servant, Cook) and Pauline Cheylan (born in 1895, Servant, Maid).

No mention is made of Yvonne Calment, spouse of Joseph Billot, which might be a recopying error.

12) Death of her mother-in-law Maria Felix in 1931

A few days after the census, on April 11th, 1931, Maria Calment, Fernand Calment's mother, maiden name Felix, born in 1847, her mother-in-law, dies [MarriageRecord, Arles1868:15-mention of the death in the margin].

13) Death of Jeanne Louise Calment's daughter in 1934

Death record: Yvonne Marie Nicolle Calment, aged 36, *daughter* of Fernand Nicolas Calment and *Jeanne Louise Calment*, spouse of Joseph Charles Frédéric Billot, has departed this life on the nineteenth of January, 1934 [DeathRecord; Arles1934:36].

14) Population census of 1936 [handwritten again]

In 1936, Jeanne Calment is counted in Gambetta Street in Arles. She was born in 1875 and she lives with: Fernand Calment (born in 1868, householder, merchant, employer), and Louise Causargue, maid, cook. Jeanne Calment is mentioned as spouse and as having no trade or profession [House 8, Household 10].

Charles Billot (born in 1891, householder, merchant), having Calment as employer [it is obviously Joseph, Charles, ... Billot] and Frédéric Billot, born in 1926, son, having no trade or profession are counted in a separate apartment, next to hers [House 8, Household 11].

15) Death of Jeanne Louise Calment's husband in 1942

Death record: Fernand Nicolas Calment, aged 73, son of the late Jacques Calment and of Marie Felix, *spouse of Jeanne Louise Calment*, departed this life

on the second of October, 1942. The Calment/Calment family is then residing at 2, St Estève Street in Arles [DeathRecord;Ar1es942:475].

16) Population Census of 1946

In 1946, Jeanne Calment is counted in St Estève Street in Arles. She was born in 1875 and lives with: *François Calment, born in 1865, her brother, pensioner*. Jeanne Calment is mentioned as householder and as having no trade or profession [House 3, Household 1349, Individuals 3635, 3636].

Joseph Billot (born in 1891, householder, pensioner) and Frédéric Billot (born in 1926, son, student) are counted in a separate apartment, next to hers [House 3, Household 1351, Individuals 3638, 3639].

17) Marriage of her grandson, Frédéric Billot, in 1950

Marriage record: On the third of March, 1950, Frédéric Jean Paul Billot, born in Arles on the twenty-third of December, 1926, medical student, (son of Joseph Charles Frédéric Billot, retired Lieutenant-Colonel, Officer of the Legion of Honour and of Yvonne Marie Nicolle Calment, deceased), marries Renée Yvonne Taque, born on the twentieth of January, 1926, in La Londe les Maures (Var), dental student (daughter of Louis Alphonse Taque and Madeleine Germaine Montret) [MarriageRecord; Arles1950:150]

18) Population Censuses of 1954 and 1962

In 1954, Jeanne Calment is counted in St Estève Street in Arles. She was born in 1875 and lives with: Joseph Billot (born in 1891, son-in-law). Jeanne Calment is mentioned as mother [House 2, Apartment 359].

Frédéric Billot (born in 1926, householder, medical doctor) and Renée Billot (born in 1926, spouse) are counted in a separate apartment, next to hers [House 2, Apartment 360].

In 1962, the list of population counts is typewritten once again. Typing errors are not as numerous as they were in 1931.

In 1962, Jeanne Calment is counted in St Estève Street in Arles. She was born in [18]75 and lives with: Joseph Billot (born in [18]91, son-in-law (Gendxe), X[M corrected as V]. Jeanne Calment is mentioned as widow (V like 'veuve') [House 5, Apartment 1].

Frédéric Billot (born in 1926, householder, medical doctor, M) and Renée Billot (born in 1926, dental surgeon, spouse, M) are counted in a separate apartment, close to hers [Antonelle Square, House 3, Apartment 1].

19) Death of her brother, François Calment, in 1962

On the first of December, 1962, her brother François Calment dies, [BirthRecord, Arles1865:286-mention of the death in the margin].

Death record: François Calment, born in Arles on the twenty-fifth of April, 1865, son of Nicolas Calment and Marguerite Gilles, resident of Arles, at the "Hospice de Chiavary", departed this life on the first of December, 1962 [DeathRecord; Arles1962:435]

20) Death of her son-in-law, Joseph Billot, in 1963

On the twenty-fifth of January, 1963, her son-in-law Joseph Billot dies [BirthRecord,Arles1891:93-mention of the death in the margin].

Death record: Joseph Charles Frédéric Billot, born in Arles on the fifth of March, 1891, Officer of the Legion of Honour, retired Colonel, resident of Arles, 2 St Estève Street, widower of Yvonne Marie Nicolle Calment, son of Paul Emile Marie Honoré Frédéric Billot and of Jeanne Marie Jouve, departed this life on the twenty-fifth of January, 1963 [DeathRecord;Arles1963:46].

21) Death of her grandson Frédéric Billot, in 1963

On the thirteenth of August, 1963, her grandson Frédéric Billot dies, [BirthRecord, Arles1891:93-mention of the death in the margin].

Death record: Frédéric Jean Paul Billot, born in Arles on the twenty-third of December, 1926, medical doctor, spouse of Renée Yvonne Taque, resident of Arles, son of Joseph Charles Frédéric Billot and of Yvonne Marie Nicolle Calment, has departed this life on the thirteenth of August, 1963 [DeathRecord; Arles1963:346].

22) Jeanne Calment sells her house 'en viager'⁽³⁾, in 1965

Jeanne Calment, aged 90, henceforth without any family, sells her house "en viager" to a notary from Arles, Maître André-François Raffray (Blois, 1993).

23) Population census of 1968

In 1968, Jeanne Calment is counted in St Estève Street in Arles. She was born on the twenty-first of February, [18]75 and lives by herself. Jeanne Calment is mentioned as widow ("V" for "veuve") and as having no trade or profession ("SP" for "sans profession") [House 36, Apartment 1].

Renée Billot (born on January 21st, [19]26, dental surgeon, spouse, V) is counted in a separate apartment, next to hers [Place Antonelle, House 39, Apartment 1].

It is obvious that Jeanne Calment was born in 1875 (the census mentions 'born on "21/2/75"'), as the census dates back 1968.

24) Jeanne Calment celebrates her 100th birthday, in 1975

On February 21st, 1975, Madame Calment celebrates her 100th birthday, in private. No document on this event is available.

25) Population census of 1975

In 1975, Jeanne Calment is counted in St Estève Street in Arles. She was born on February 21st, [18]75 and she lives by herself. Jeanne Calment is mentioned as Calmant, maiden name Calment Jeanne, Eps (...) and X (M, married, corrected as V, widow) [House 1].

If Jeanne Calment had been born in 1975 and not in 1875 (the census mentions "born on 21/2/75"), she could not have been counted living by herself on the 1975 census.

26) Jeanne Calment moves to "La Maison du Lac", in 1985

Aged 110 years, Madame Calment leaves her apartment in Gambetta Street [at the corner of St Estève Street, next to Rue de la République] and moves to "La Maison du Lac" (nursing home), on January 10th, 1985 [admission file to the home].

27) Jeanne Calment celebrates her 110th birthday, in 1985

On February 21st, 1985, Madame Calment celebrates her 110th birthday at La Maison du Lac. From that date, her birthday was mentioned every year in the press (Cf. newspaper cuttings: Anonymous, 1985; Anonymous, 1986).

28) Jeanne Calment becomes the subject of a medical dissertation, in 1989

George Garoyan devotes his medical dissertation to the case of Jeanne Calment: "A hundred and fourteen years of life or the long story of the oldest person in France", Medical dissertation, Marseilles, 1990.

29) Jeanne Calment breaks the head of her femur, in 1990

Jeanne Calment, aged 114, fractures the neck of her femur on January 27th, 1990, a few weeks before her 115th birthday [Victor Lèbre, personal communication].

30) Publication of an article on her genealogy, in 1990

In 1990, Jeanne Calment is 115 years-old, when Gé-Magazine devotes an article to her genealogy [Provence, 1990].

31) February 21st, 1993: 118th birthday of Jeanne Calment

Jeanne Louise Calment celebrates her 118th birthday, a quite exceptional event. The national press, which takes an increasing interest in her, reports it (Fondation Ipsen, 1993).

32) February 21st, 1995: 120th birthday of Jeanne Calment

Jeanne Louise Calment celebrates her 120th birthday. The international press relates this exceptional event (McWhirter, 1995, for example; Fondation Ipsen, 1996).

33) Jeanne Calment dies, in 1997

Death record: On the fourth of August 1997, at ten forty-five in the morning, Jeanne Louise Calment, born in Arles on the twenty-first of February, 1875, pensioner, resident of Arles, daughter of Nicolas Calment, died, and Marguerite Gilles, deceased, widow of Fernand, Nicolas Calment, departed this life [DeathRecord, Arles1997].

Discussion

Jeanne Louise Calment (daughter of Nicolas Calment and Marguerite Gilles) [BirthRecord;Arles1875:110], wife of Fernand Nicolas Calment [MarriageRecord; Arles1896:37] and mother of Yvonne Marie Nicolle Calment [BirthRecord; Arles1898:110], future wife of Joseph Charles Frédéric Billot) [MarriageRecord; Arles1926:18] is often mentioned in the civil status register of the city of Arles: 1875, 1896, 1898, 1926, 1934 and 1942 without any ambiguity. In 1875, she is in her first year of life; in 1896, she is 21 years old when she gets married; she is 22 year old when her daughter is born in 1896; in 1926, her daughter is 28 when she gets married; in 1934, her daughter dies at 36 [DeathRecord;Arles1934:36]; in 1942, her husband dies at 73 [DeathRecord;Arles1942:475]. Jeanne Louise Calment is then 67 years old. On August 4th, 1997, Jeanne Louise Calment dies [DeathRecord;Arles1997:00433].

Among the very numerous indirect documents available we kept: (i) her parents' marriage [MarriageRecord;Arles1861:161], (ii and iii) their deaths [DeathRecord; Arles1924:36] and [DeathRecord;Arles1931:64], (iv) her brother's death [Death Record;Arles1962:435], (v and vi) her grandson's birth and marriage record [Birth Record;Arles1826:353] [MarriageRecord;Arles1950:150], (vii) as well as his death record [DeathRecord;Arles1963:346]. These documents are important as they enable us to complete the chaining of the information from 1861 to 1963.

Jeanne Calment seems to have had three different addresses only: Duroure Street, from her birth to her marriage; Gambetta Street, at the angle of St Estève Street, from her marriage to her admission to "La Maison du Lac", on January 10th,1985; and, finally, "La Maison du Lac", a nursing home.

The address in Gambetta Street and that in St Estève Street are in fact the same house, located at the angle of two streets. The store called "Nouveautés - Calment" (Calment's department store) still exists at the angle of Gambetta Street and St Estève Street, facing Rue de la République.

In 1901, Jeanne Calment, who had got married in 1896, is counted in her mother-in-law's household. The same year, her father also declares her in St

Martin de Crau where he owned a house (mas). From 1906 to 1926, she lives with her husband Fernand Calment (householder) and her daughter. Her mother-in-law lives in a separate apartment, close to theirs. In 1926, her daughter gets married and is not counted with her any more. The population census of 1931, which was the first to be typewritten, comprises many typing errors. We can consider that Jeanne Calment lives then with Fernand Calment (her husband, householder), her son-in-law, Joseph Billot, her grandson Frédéric Billot, and her mother-in-law, Maria Calment. Thus, in 1931, four different generations of people are living together in the same apartment. There is no mention made of Yvonne Calment, spouse of Joseph Billot, which might be due to a re-copying error. In 1931 also, a few days after the population census, her mother-in-law dies. Her daughter dies in 1934. In 1936, Jeanne Calment lives with her husband Fernand Calment. Her son-in-law, Charles Billot, and her grandson, Frédéric Billot, are counted in a separate apartment, next to hers. In 1942, her husband dies. In 1946, Jeanne Calment lives with her brother François Calment. Her son-in-law Charles Billot and her grandson, Frédéric Billot, are counted in a separate apartment, next to hers. From 1954 to 1962, she lives with her son-in-law, Charles Billot, himself a widower. Her grandson, Frédéric Billot, now married, lives close to them. Her son-in-law dies in 1963; from 1968 to 1975, Jeanne Calment is counted as living by herself.

Arles parish registers enable us to check and complete the information regarding the birth, the marriage and the death of Jeanne Calment (St Césaire and St Trophime Parishes) as well as the birth and the marriage of her daughter (St Trophime Parish). In addition to these five direct parish documents regarding Jeanne Calment, the baptism record of her grandson provides us with important complementary information since Jeanne Calment, spouse Calment, was his godmother.

On the whole, seven direct civil status documents (i) bear witness to the identity of Jeanne Louise Calment from her birth date to her death. (ii) They are complemented by numerous indirect civil status documents which confirm the chaining of the information (iii) by 14 direct documents from censuses which confirm the age or the birth date of Jeanne Calment [1876, 1881, 1886, 1901, 1906, 1911, 1921, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1954, 1962, 1968, 1975], (iv) and by direct or indirect parish documents, (v) by notarial documents (marriage contracts, sale of a house), (vi) by a medical doctorate dissertation, (vii) and by newspaper articles.

The great number of documents making it possible to check the age of Jeanne Calment leads us to draw up a list of criteria and to put forward a standard for the validation of extreme ages.

1. Declaration of the age reached, at age 100 and not at ages above 110: the person must be known to have celebrated her hundredth birthday X years before the declared age of 100 + X.
Regarding this point, Jeanne Calment's case is not exemplary since the

first articles mentioning the celebration of her birthday date back to 1985, on the occasion of her 110th birthday celebrated at La Maison du Lac (cf. newspaper articles). Fortunately enough, this lack of publicity (of which the authors know the origin) is compensated by the documents of the population census of 1975.

2. Available direct civil status documents (birth, marriage and death records) and not excerpts or re-copies: yes-no, how many?
3. Available complementary direct civil status documents (population census, parish records [except if the parish documents serve as civil status documents], notarial documents, military documents, school documents, etc.). By kind: yes-no, how many?
4. Available indirect civil status documents (and not excerpts or re-copies): yes-no, how many?
5. Logical, devoid of ambiguity, chaining of events (births, marriages, deaths, etc.): yes-no, on how many generations before that of the centenarian? on how many generations after that of the centenarian? on what part of the period of time extending from the birth date to the date of the day (to the date of death in the case of a deceased person)?

As regards Jeanne Louise Calment, a centenarian who has been known since 1985 (when she was 110) and who was 122 years old when she died, there is a perfect chaining of the information on *the four generations having preceded her* [i.e. birth, marriage and death dates of her 2, 4, 8, and 16 parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents] - covering the 1723-1931 period of time - *and on two generations after her* [i.e. birth, marriage and death dates of children and grandchildren] - covering the 1898 - 1963 period. On the whole, the chaining covers 7 generations from 1723 to 1963. With the complementary direct documents, we have - *from her birth to her death*, a perfect chaining from 1875 to 1997; in particular with a perfect chaining constituted by 14 direct documents from population censuses from 1876 to 1975, the year of her hundredth birthday.

In fact, so far, we have found 216 direct ancestors of Jeanne Calment on the nine generations having preceded her.

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Notes

1. Considering the precise date of the 1886 census, compared to that of 1881, the persons counted must be counted older by 4 or 5 years.
2. Revolutionary calendar.
3. When a house is sold 'En viager', it is sold on an instalment system to provide the seller with a life annuity.

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