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Dousman Woman Celebrates 100th Birthday

A chat with a centenarian on living through 100 years



Dousman, WI. February 20th, 2015 – Margaret Balkman of Dousman, WI, celebrated her 100th birthday in style with over one hundred of her extended family members and friends. Her party at Three Pillars Senior Living Communities featured over two hundred greeting cards for the birthday girl, colorful décor (almost as vibrant as her personality), an appearance by clowns, and happy stories told by those closest to her.

If you want to know the keys to a healthy, happy, long life, Margaret Balkman can tell you in three words: faith, family, and humor. As she celebrates her 100th birthday, she declares that she has absolutely nothing to complain about. “Well, unless you want me to start, I could think of a few things...” she chuckles.

Born February 20, 1915, in Chenequa, Wisconsin, she was an only child, and she jokes it’s because her parents couldn’t handle the thought of any more kids if they would be like her. She admits she gave her parents and teachers a run for their money over the years. To this day, her friends call her “Trouble,” and rightfully so, she affirms. She credits her father with passing along his fantastic sense of humor.

Half Norwegian and half Swedish, Margaret explains that means she’s half stubborn and half stuck-up, but that’s not all; she’s surely full of love for children, dramatic arts, and music, as well.

She completed several years of college which paved the way for a fulfilling career working with children. She taught kindergarten, coordinated a multi-county government-run daycare for migrants, and dabbled in social work.

At age 21, Margaret married her best friend whom she’d known since they were babies. She fondly remembers her wedding day as a shining highlight of her hundred years. She now boasts three children, eight grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

After retirement, Margaret filled her days with meaningful volunteer work in the Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital surgery waiting room – a job she enjoyed very much. Additionally, she became one of the earliest members of the

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local theater group, the Schoolhouse Players. She sums up her involvement in the Schoolhouse Players as “the most fun I ever had.”

At age 94, after a search for the perfect senior living community, she fell in love with the independent living apartments at Three Pillars Senior Living Communities in Dousman, Wisconsin. She moved in and continues her legacy there today.

Looking back over her hundred years, she can't get over how things have changed. “We live in a different world, completely. My dad used to take me to school in a wagon or a sleigh. We didn't have automobiles, we didn't have electricity, we didn't have phones, let alone those things – cell phones that have a camera so you can see the face of who you're talking to.”

She recalls more highpoints in her life than she could possibly list. She declares only one regret: she wishes she had spent more time doing the things she loved with her husband while he was alive. She reminds us all that if there's something you've always wanted to do, “You go *do it!*”

Margaret concludes, “I did a lot. I accomplished a lot. I didn't accomplish some things. My faith in God, my sense of humor, and my enjoyment of people might just bring me through another year of this good life.”

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For more information about this story or Three Pillars Senior Living Communities, please contact Kelsey Pangborn, Communication Strategist at 262.965.7333 or kpangborn@threepillars.org. www.threepillars.org

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