

100 YEARS: Ruth Peterson “expected to live to be 100”

Continued from page 1

you can’t anymore.”

Following graduation Peterson made a surprising move to Florida with a friend and classmate and stayed for about a year before she returned to Milwaukee where her mother had arranged for her to work at the Army Air base.

“I think my mother was worried I wouldn’t find a man and believed that working at the air base would increase my chances,” she said. “As it turned out, that is how I met my husband who was doing officer’s training there. We got married within about three months, which happened a lot during the war time because people were unsure about the future.”

Eventually the couple was transferred to Palm Springs, California, which was a big change for Peterson.

“I had never seen a mountain and wasn’t accustomed to living around Hollywood stars,” she said.

After a short stint in the west her husband was transferred back to Minneapolis, Minnesota, a much more familiar surrounding for a

Midwest girl. Her daughter Karen, who lives in Ecuador, was born in 1945.

She recalls that when her second child, Tom, of Eugene, was born in 1947, her insurance covered 10 full days in the small hospital in Grantsburg, Minnesota.

“That’s hard to imagine now,” she said.

A stay-at-home mother, Peterson ventured into the work world at about age 50 when she took courses to learn about taxes and other bookkeeping and worked part-time in that field for a number of years.

It was Tom who enticed his parents to visit Oregon in 1990 and by 1991 they had purchased their home in Black Butte Ranch.

“It was in dire need of a remodel and we hired contractor Lynn Johnston, who did a tremendous job of making it what we wanted,” said Ruth.

Peterson, who claims she was very shy as a child, decided that the only way to get to know people in her new community was to get involved. She played tennis, got involved in book and bridge clubs, and even learned to play golf.

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not keeping score and just having fun,” she said.

Peterson quit playing tennis — in which she was quite skilled — at age 89 out of fear of falling and breaking a bone.

“I have osteoporosis and didn’t want to take any chances.”

Pete embraced the Black Butte Ranch lifestyle immediately and enjoyed it for the six years he lived in Oregon. He died of colon cancer in 1997.

In addition to her activities at the ranch, Peterson became involved in the Sisters Library and also served on the board for Habitat for Humanity, for which she remains a staunch supporter.

“I got a lot more out of the work for Habitat than I put into it,” she said.

As a Wisconsin native, she remains a tremendous

Green Bay Packers football fan. “They really blew it last week,” she said, referring to a 28-point blowout loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

She attended the “Ice Bowl” in 1967, in which the Packers edged the Dallas Cowboys for the NFL championship — but she didn’t see the miraculous finish. Due to the brutal subfreezing temperatures, she headed to her car with minutes to play and the Cowboys ahead by three points, only to hear on her car radio that the Packers had scored the winning touchdown in the game’s final 11 seconds. Many consider it the most exciting professional football game ever played.

“That’s life,” she said.

She still takes in a lot of sports on television.

Peterson feels unsure about whether technology, including the smartphone, is a good thing or not, but says “It’s fascinating what these phones and computers can do. They can do everything.”

She does embrace some technology. As a member of St. Edward the Martyr Catholic Church, she uses

her iPad for, among other things, taking part in Mass on Sundays.

When asked to share any advice about living a long life, she said, “Keep busy!”

She says that staying physically active is essential and making friends is vital. She walks around her cul de sac twice a day and does some other indoor exercises. Her social life is a bit diminished during the pandemic, but she has had some friends over while also practicing safety protocols.

In addition she says she keeps her mind sharp by keeping up with the current news of the day and doing crossword puzzles.

Despite some health issues, including an emergency room visit two years ago, and anemia, she remains upbeat.

“Jim and I take care of each other,” she said.

Summing up her thoughts on living a long life, she said, “I am Catholic and I love God. I think that it makes a difference to have faith to keep you going when things aren’t going so well and you have someone to turn to.”

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