

Local resident celebrates 100th birthday

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Maxine Aldridge plans to ring in her 100th year at the Village Green Resort



Maxine Aldridge, 100, married at 18, had four children over 20 years and takes just two pills a day as well as a nightly cocktail.

Maxine Aldridge stands 4'9". She takes two pills a day; one for her thyroid and another for her blood pressure which, isn't troublesome per say, but it does fluctuate. She goes out to eat several nights a week and ends every night with a cocktail. On the morning of Jan. 6 she ventured out into the aftermath of a notable winter storm to get her hair done. It was her 100th birthday.

"Am I 100 today?" she asked over her third cup of coffee. Early onset dementia has set in but like her daughter Nancy said, "What doesn't start to go at 100?"

Nancy, 80, lives with Aldridge in a house they share with Nancy's sister, Susie, 69. They've been residents of Cottage Grove for 14 years and before the threat of a new snowstorm was announced, they planned a birthday party for Aldridge at her favorite local haunt: Village Green.

"She likes to sit in front of the fire place and people know here there, they come and talk to her and she really likes that," Nancy said.

The party has since been postponed a week but Aldridge's daughters still planned to celebrate the milestone day that was first marked 100 years ago in Doons, IA.

Aldridge was born to a painter and housewife in 1917 just after the new year. While two cousins have made it to 101 and 104 years of age, Aldridge's mother died early.

"She had a leaky heart valve," Nancy explained. "Today it's a trip to the doctor but not in 1921. Mom's birthday is Jan. 6. Her brother's was Jan. 8 so my grandmother celebrated on Jan. 7." But on that day in 1921, Mrs. Josephine McKinney went to lay down and didn't wake up. She was 35.

Aldridge remembers being shuttled around after her mother's death, eventually settling with an aunt and experiencing a harsh childhood. At the age of 18, she met Ernest Aldridge. They were married 10 days later and over the course of 20 years, had four children together.

"They were married for 54 years until dad passed in 1988 at 81," Nancy said.

Aldridge would see a son, Douglas, pass in 2007 and shepherd her daughters through their own losses. Both women lost their husbands and Nancy buried both of her children.

"She's been our rock of the family," Nancy said.

Without her hearing aid, most conversations with Aldridge require a bit of shouting but according to her daughters, she enjoys the company of others and likes to have long conversations. They say she's still gregarious and happy to tell a joke. And while she's forgotten how to play her favorite card game, it doesn't stop her from winning a round of solitaire on the computer. A technology she used regularly until the age of 90.

"My sister had a business in Seattle and mom did all the invoicing for it on the computer," Nancy said.

Aside from her two daily pills, Nancy said Aldridge is in perfect health. Her secret?

"She does everything wrong," Nancy said. Aldridge doesn't take vitamins, drinks light cocktails and eats as she pleases.

The remainder of Aldridge's family is scattered through the country but plans are already in the works for a family reunion this summer. It will be a chance for Aldridge to see her 13 great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. As for her future, Nancy said,

"Women tend to live long in our family. She's had a good, full life."

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FRIDAY, JAN. 13: Herb Chicken Patty or Meatloaf, both w/gravy.
MONDAY, JAN. 16: closed for holiday
TUESDAY, JAN. 17: Baked Chicken Breast or Beef Patty, both w/gravy.
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