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Centenarian celebrates big day

By GINGER MIKKELSEN
VIEW STAFF WRITER

Lottie Broker watched in wonder as her whole life passed before her eyes. And what a life it was.

On May 6, Broker turned 100 and a crowd came to Carefree Senior Living's Eastern location to celebrate. Activities director Cyndi Tatum and leasing director Amy Berry teamed up to give Broker the full "This is Your Life" experience.

They reminded her that when she was 50 in 1953, the first issue of Readers Digest came out.

"And brace yourself, Lottie. That was the year Playboy magazine hit the streets and changed men's literature forever," Berry said as she handed the centenarian copies of both magazines.

In 1978, when Broker was 75, doctors perfected balloon angioplasty to combat heart disease and the first test tube baby was born.

"So here, we have a balloon for you and a baby doll and a test tube," Tatum said.

"Now the year is 2003, and guess how old you are, Lottie," Berry asked.

The 100-year-old Berlin-born woman just sat in her plastic-jeweled tiara and grinned.

Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman called Broker the Queen of Las Vegas and said there was only one rotten thing about her being 100.

"The bad news is, I just won an election, and Lottie, you're going to have to wait four more years to vote for me," Goodman said. "But I'll tell you what. I'll be here to take you to the poll with me."

Ken Templeton, president of Carefree Senior Living, said Broker's is the first 100-year birthday he has attended. Though Carefree Senior Living has had older residents, they all moved in after they hit the big 100.

Lighting all 100 candles on Broker's cake took a while and everyone speculated that the smoke alarms were sure to go off. At the very least,

the crowd thought the 100-carnation flower arrangement donated by the Flower Market was bound to wilt. When the Carefree staff rolled the cake in front of her, Broker paused to make her wish and then she had her whole family help blow the candles out.

Tatum read a short biography on America's oldest resident ever, a 113-year-old woman who recently died. Throughout her life, until the end, the woman indulged in Kentucky Fried Chicken and Twinkies.

"I wish you all a long and healthy life. So I have Twinkies here for everyone," Tatum said.

Broker said she doesn't have any Twinkie-like secrets to share that might explain her long life.

"I was just living one day to another," she said. "I did a lot of good things to help other people."

Broker had her own business in New York where she operated a hair-removal salon. When she hit 70, she didn't settle down. Instead, she set out to travel around the world. The senior went on 15 ocean liner voyages. Hong Kong, a stop on three of the trips, was her favorite. The only place she never saw was Africa.

"But that's your next trip, right Lottie?" Berry said.

Even now, Broker gets out as much as possible. She's first on board when the Carefree Senior Living bus transports residents about town.

"Miss Lottie hasn't missed a trip," Berry said.

"She's a mean bingo player," Tatum said.

Broker's niece Lorraine Brandes said her aunt is bound to spend plenty more birthdays in Las Vegas.

"We lived in Florida for 27 years, then I moved her to Arizona and I promised her we'd never move again," Brandes said. "Four years later we moved here. Now I'm moving to Seattle, and she said her furniture can't take another move so she's staying here. She loves it here. She's really happy and she's made lots of friends."

Broker's friends are glad to have her.

"She's a nice lady. We tease her about bingo, but she loves it," Carefree resident Pearl Sullivan said.