

Published February 3rd, 2010

Tillie Turns 100

By Sophie Braccini



On January 27th the Orinda Senior Village celebrated the first 100th birthday of a resident. The apartment complex houses independent seniors who live unaided. Tillie MacCharles was one of the first residents to move to the Village at 20 Irwin Way, on December 3rd, 1989. With the face of a much younger woman, who still enjoys going for walks (with a little help from her walker) and has same wit as she always had, the charming centenarian received a unanimous homage from the Village as her 100th birthday was celebrated.

"I moved here to get closer to my daughters," says MacCharles, who used to live in Southern California. She was born to a family of German descent who moved to the United States in the late 19th century; she didn't speak any English until she went to public school in her native Pigeon, Michigan.

She worked in different capacities including real estate and with her husband William, who was an automobile constructor. They had two daughters that MacCharles raised while pursuing a great passion for sewing. "She was nicknamed Tillie the Tailor," says her daughter Susan, an Orinda resident. As far as devising the cause of this great longevity and health one clue could be the herbs that she has taken all her life. "We never had a regular doctor when we raised the

family," says MacCharles, "we had a Chinese doctor and he gave me many herbs that I have been taking faithfully all my life."

Another clue may be MacCharles' joy in living. "I continue to cook and enjoy a glass of wine with my meals," she says. She has been an active participant in the many activities the Village offers.

But what is most striking about this older lady is her calm, positive attitude and gentle presence. For example, due to macular degeneration, she cannot read or write anymore. When she speaks about it, you can't feel a hint of frustration or regret; she simply states, "I have peripheral vision, I see enough to see people and direct myself."

MacCharles will further celebrate the great birthday with her family, daughters, sons-in-law and step-grandchildren at Golden Gate Fields. "My mother was always a great handicapper," says daughter Susan, "she used to bet a lot and win a lot."

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA