

## *Celebrating 108 Years*

I've been fortunate in my life to have attended the parties of two charming women who were celebrating their 108<sup>th</sup> birthday. The first one was Dorothy Giehm, a resident of Life Care Center of Tucson. That was back on January 10, 2000. She was a gifted lady with a passion for art, music and ceramics, and she stayed interested in all of these hobbies during her latter years.

The latest one is Nyleptha Matilda Roberts, a resident of Life Care Center of Sparta, who marked that auspicious milestone on Sunday, March 12, of this year. Sabra York, the executive director of that facility, and her staff held the celebration of that event, however, on Friday, March 10. My wife, Lola, and I were privileged to be a part of that occasion.

As reported in the news article about the party (see the Village Square or the LCCA website), Mrs. Roberts was a coal miner's daughter and then a coal miner's wife who became a Tennessee treasure. That's what Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen called her in a letter saluting Mrs. Roberts.

The honoree enjoyed every moment of her party. She was dressed in a stunning white outfit purchased by her son. She was mentally alert and fully engaged – with frequent quips – in the speeches, the music and conversations with friends, admirers and well-wishers who packed the dining room of Life Care Center of Sparta. "I made headlines!" she cracked at one point.

In addition to her longevity, another important fact about Mrs. Roberts was disclosed by her son, Columbus Leon Shell, who said that she has never been in a hospital, and her biggest health problem is "a little high blood pressure."

How has Mrs. Roberts been able to live such a good life for so long? She credits her faith in God. Her son agreed, but attributed another important characteristic: "She does not seem to worry about anything; she goes with the flow. She believes that everything will turn out all right somehow."

Another identifying quality, which may also have factored into her longevity, is her sense of humor. She delights in sharing jokes and funny stories with the other residents and the staff at Life Care Center of Sparta. During an interview with her, I requested that she tell a joke. She did:

"They asked me don't I get lonesome living by myself. I said, 'No, I live with four guys. I get up with Charley Horse. I spend the day with Will Power. I have lunch with Arthur Itis, and I go to bed with Ben Gay.'"

(more)

She chuckled as the crowd around us roared with laughter. She knew she had hit a home run.

Come to think of it, Dorothy Giehm also possessed of a sense of humor.

Maybe – just maybe – God grants long life to those who enjoy it more.

--Beecher Hunter