

Her 111th Birthday

I have been to many parties in my life, but never one marking someone's 111th birthday. Until Thursday.

Nyleptha Roberts, a resident of Life Care Center of Sparta, Tenn., was honored on that milestone in her life. And what a celebration it was!

Sparta Mayor Tommy Pedigo was there. White County Executive Herd Sullivan was there. Wallace Austin, president of the Chamber of Commerce, was there. Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen did not attend, but he sent a letter congratulating the oldest resident of his state.

A delegation from Life Care's corporate headquarters attended, including Chairman Forrest Preston and his wife, Kathleen; President Beecher Hunter and his wife, Lola; Aaron Webb, senior vice president for legal administration, and his wife, Marie; Paul Zani, regional vice president; Rob Alderman, director of public relations, and Jodi Herod from that department; and Aaron Brooks and Wes Hall, representing the company's Corporate Media Productions department. Jimmy Rhodes, Life Care's director of music services, and Larry Blackwell put on a musical show to charm the audience. Matthew Cummings, executive director, was emcee for the event. Among the speakers was Dr. Abhay Kemkar, the facility's medical director, and Ms. Roberts' personal physician.

The room was filled with well-wishers: other residents and their families, staff members, volunteers and citizens of the community.

Ms. Roberts basked in the attention. Her face lit up when Preston planted a kiss on her cheek as part of his greeting. She had comments as each speaker came to take the microphone, and reminisced before the program began about her trip last September to Life Care's annual management meeting at the Gaylord Opryland Resort in Nashville, where she was the star of the show.

She said she had a good time there, and "I'd like to go back again."

When the program was over, she said she was happy so many people came to see her. "I hope everyone will come back next year [for her 112th birthday party], if I'm still here," she smiled.



Nyleptha Roberts celebrates her 111th birthday with guests, including Forrest and Kathleen Preston.

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And who knows? Ms. Roberts might just eventually claim the title of the oldest living person in the world. Currently, that individual is Gertrude Baines, 114, born April 6, 1894, according to Wikipedia. An African American, Baines resides in Los Angeles.

Nyleptha Roberts is our lady in waiting, in line for the throne. But most of all, we are grateful for God's blessings in her life, and we pray for His peace and joy to reign in her heart.

– Beecher Hunter