



JOHN J. WATKINS | THE TIMES At 104 years old, Beatrice Lee has seen two world wars, and the advent of the automobile, airplane and telephone to name just a few.

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Dolton woman prepares to turn 105

ILLINOIS: Born in 1900, Beatrice Lee says she just kept moving.

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DORCHESTER | The morning's drizzle cleared up and gave way to a sunny sky, as Beatrice Lee sat dressed to the nines on the back porch of The Dorchester senior residence in Dolton.

Her hearing has faded some, But sitting there last week in a green skirt with a pearl broach and matching earrings, her alertness apparently had not.

She giggled and shrugged when asked how long she planned to keep going. Her answer was simple when questioned about her secret to making it this far.

"I don't know," she said, her voice gravelly. "I just kept moving."

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Lee has kept moving for more than a century. At 104 -- and expecting to see 105 on Aug. 31-- she is the oldest living resident the center has ever seen.

Tomorrow, Mayor William "Bill" Shaw and the village Board of Trustees will honor Lee with her second proclamation, the first coming when she turned 100.

"Certainly, we want to highlight a person who has been able to live 105 years and been through what most of us will never see," Shaw said.

Lee, he said, has been an example for others in the community to follow.

As Shaw sat on the porch beside her, it was clear her sense of humor had not dissipated over the years. He joked with her about how he almost found her a boyfriend.

"They say he's 99. That might be too young for you," he said, as she shrugged and scoffed at the comment.

Lee, who was born Aug. 31, 1900 in Port Gibson, Miss., came to the Chicago area when she was 17. She spent years as a hairdresser and said she used to make blankets.

She has seen enough for two lifetimes: two world wars and numerous others, the advent of the automobile, airplane and telephone to name just a few.

Asked about her fondest memories, she replied simply, "The world," noting how much has changed.

"She's an inspiration to all of us here at The Dorchester," said Director Linda Pasternak.

That was obvious as a row of senior citizens smiled and said their "hellos" as Lee, assisted by her walker, made her way more quickly than one might imagine through the building's lobby.

According to Pasternak, Lee still finds two things considerably gratifying: the occasional dance and a martini from time to time.

With more than a century behind her, Lee has had plenty of opportunity to indulge both pleasures over the years.

"Lot of martinis," she joked.

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