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1-2024

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Recommended Citation

Brower, Raelene, "Michigan Member Celebrates 109th Birthday" (2024). *Lake Union Herald*. 1162.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/1162>

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Michigan Member Celebrates 109th Birthday

UNTIL JUST A FEW YEARS AGO, ANN BAUER WAS ZIPPING AROUND TOWN IN HER CAR MOST DAYS, RUNNING ERRANDS, SHOPPING FOR GROCERIES. SHE LIVED INDEPENDENTLY IN HER OWN HOME IN BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN, UNTIL A FALL FOUR YEARS AGO AND NOW TAKES UP RESIDENCE AT A LOCAL NURSING FACILITY.

But that hasn't slowed her down. If you were to ask her how she feels she'll tell you she feels great, just like she did when she was in academy.

At her birthday party on Sept. 17, 2023, her daughter Raelene Brower brought her a cake with the numbers 1-0-9 and jokingly told her there weren't enough candles to put on the cake. Ann laughed hysterically and said, "Oh, I guess you're right. And that's too many to blow out!"

People who live 100 years or more aren't rare anymore. A search of the e-Adventist database for Lake Union centenarians reveals a list of about 75 names, most of them women. Among centenarians, 85% are women and 15% are men, according to the New England Centenarian Study based at Boston University. The reasons aren't clear.

An explorer and learner at heart

Ann, who may well be the oldest member in the Lake Union although we couldn't verify this at press time, was born in 1914 in a sod house on the western prairies of North Dakota. Her mother's family had immigrated to the United States from Russia around 1909, seeking freedom and an escape from their belief in an imminent revolution. She is the oldest of five children who grew up on a farm, but

after graduating from high school, she traveled 600 miles to go to college to become a nurse.

In 1940, the day after graduating from nursing school, she married Al Bauer and they lived and worked in North Dakota, British Columbia, Wisconsin and Michigan during their careers, raising four children together.

Ann experienced and survived the Depression, two World Wars, learning to drive when her oldest child turned 16 (they took driver's education and their licensing exams together), and all the marvels of modern technology.

She was one of the first Tupperware dealers in the 1950s, deciding there was more flexibility in direct sales than shift work as a nurse. Over the next 42 years, she was "the Tupperware lady," driving a station wagon and training dealers, as well as being one of the top 25 sales leaders in the United States for many years. Her primary motivation for her career change was flexibility with children at home and being able to pay for Adventist education from first grade through college, which she successfully accomplished!

Always an excuse for a party

Ann's early life was one of hard work and not much fun, so as an adult almost any reason was a



Scan to watch an Adventist Digital Library interview with Ann Bauer after she turned 100.



◀ Ann at her Sept. 17, 2023 birthday party.
◀ Ann Bauer was presented with flowers by former Pioneer Memorial Church pastor Dwight Nelson when she turned 100, in 2014.

good excuse for a party. Her family and friends were recipients of birthday parties, Christmas baking and wrapped presents. Laughter filled her home. She remembered birthdays, anniversaries and other milestone events with cards.

A Berrien Springs resident since 1966, Ann has loved being an involved community member. Some of her favorite traditions are the Fourth of July parade, Camera Club, Garden Club, concerts and traveling with tour groups. If it was happening, she was there.

When Ann and Al were married, the National Park System was in its early stages of development. They shared a goal of visiting as many National Parks as possible during their lifetime. Family vacations with four children usually involved a “side trip” after a work-related convention or time spent camping in a park.

In retirement, Ann and Al spent almost 20 years traveling in the United States and internationally, with travel to local and regional Michigan destinations and to every continent except Antarctica. Before Al’s death in 2006, they enjoyed getaways in their travel trailer, then a small RV for “snow birding,” and meeting friends at various destinations.

Family, friends and faith

Over several decades, the couple hosted high school girls playing in the Wisconsin state basketball tournaments, missionaries on furlough needing a temporary home and then Andrews University international students feeling displaced and far away from anything familiar.

As a deeply spiritual person whose faith has helped her persevere, Ann’s positive outlook on life and a genuine interest in all it has to offer has made her into a “lifelong learner.” Her advice to friends and family over the years has been to keep an upbeat attitude, even if things don’t go their way. “Who says everything is supposed to go your way?” she would ask. “Don’t let it bog you down for too long. Life can be a few minuses; it can’t be plusses all the time. That’s OK. We need those, too, so we appreciate the plusses more.”

A firm believer in a healthy lifestyle, she and her brother started the “120 Club” many years ago. When asked what that was, she said, “Well, based on science, if you take good care of yourself, there’s no reason you can’t live to be 120 years old!” It appears she has almost attained her goal. ■

Raelene Brower, with Herald staff