

At 102, Fort Lupton woman earns her wings — and a cat



Myrtle Carroll sits back and waits for her ride in a small plane Sunday. Carroll, a resident of the Eagles Nest, next to the Platte Valley Airport, wanted two things for her 102nd birthday: a kitten and a ride in a plane. She got the first earlier this week and got the plane ride Sunday (June 27, 2010) during a party. Marilyn Taylor takes her five residents at Eagles Nest, an assisted living home, out on the porch every day for lunch so they can listen to the airplanes.

She started the tradition with her first resident, Myrtle Carroll, when she opened Eagles Nest a year ago next to the Platte Valley Airport and the Vintage Aero Flying Museum in rural Fort Lupton. Carroll turns 102 today, and her eyes and ears feel the many years. But she can hear the planes. She loves that sound. She loves it so much, in fact, that when Taylor asked her if she would like to ride in one of them, Carroll surprised her family with the answer.

“Well, yes, I would,” she said.

Sunday, for her birthday, friends, family and fellow residents gathered next door at the museum and the airplane strip to celebrate her present: A few loops through the vast blue sky that surrounds the prairie.

This was perhaps Carroll's second ride in an airplane in her life, and her first in a small aircraft. She wanted a kitten for her birthday, and Taylor, who already has a few cats and a couple dogs, agreed. When Carroll asked for the plane ride for her other present, Taylor said she could do that, too.

Her assisted living home has an association with the flying museum, and it goes beyond its cute name and the many historic aviation photos that decorate the place. Taylor's fiancé, Mark Holliday, is the museum's chief pilot who flies the World War I-era "Red Baron" plane, among others, for demonstrations. He agreed to take Carroll up in a Cessna 182, a four-seater. She sat in the back. When Carroll learned that her request would become a reality, she had to wear an airplane pin on her blouse before she left her bedroom every day until Sunday.

"When you're 102, if you want to fly, you should be able to fly," Taylor said.

Flights by 100-year-old people are rare, said Walt Barbo, past president of the Colorado Pilot's Association, though he has recorded a few by 90-year-olds.

"I've never even met a 100-year-old," said Barbo, who is 86.

Her brother, Ardnal Nash, of Valliant, Okla., and others who were there all were surprised by Carroll's wish to ride in an airplane. But Carroll is a tough lady. She was the only triplet to survive birth, and her father could hold her in the palm of his hand. She was later a nurse at Pearl Harbor when it was attacked. She was returning from her night shift when the Japanese planes came. The explosions blew out the windows of the hospital on shore, and the wounded started coming in soon after. She worked for three straight days and nights to treat them. Doctors gave her pills to keep her awake, Nash said.

Getting her in the plane wasn't easy, but Carroll, who normally likes a long morning walk around the house, only took a brief stroll with her family to save her strength. The plane took off to cheers, and when she was in the air, she remarked it felt like a parade. When the plane landed, she immediately stuck out a foot, as if she was anxious to leave.

"It wasn't that bad, was it?" Holliday asked her.

"It wasn't bad at all," Carroll said. "Not bad at all."

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