

SPECIAL SECTION: SENIOR LIVING

## Bernice Spivek

"I was pretty hot stuff — let me tell you.

"My father always called me his draft dodger baby because if it weren't for me, he probably would have had to go to war." The war Bernice Spivek is referring to is World War I. Born in Chicago in 1917, Spivek says that the Great Depression still marks her earliest memories. "It was a horrible time," she says. "Men were jumping out of windows. We didn't have enough to eat. My mother would give me 10 cents to buy a nine cent loaf of bread, and that would be our supper."

World War II would change her situation. Spivek met a man, fell in love, and was soon married. "I was fortunate to marry a man who adored me. Not many people can say that," she says. Soon after their wedding, however, her husband, who had enlisted in the Army, was sent overseas. "My aunts threw a bridal dinner for me, and then he left and I wept for a long time," Spivek remembers. It is a sacrifice she would willingly make again. She is obviously — and rightfully — very proud of her husband. "He was one of the first men to arrive at the Dachau prison camp," she explains. "When he saw the horror, he arranged a funeral and forced the townspeople to dress in their Sunday clothes and come pay their respects. A picture of him at the ceremony now hangs in the Jewish Museum (Milwaukee)."

After the war, Spivek went to work. "I wasn't very qualified, so I didn't hold most jobs for a long time," she says. "But then I became an assistant for the woman who was the first female professor at the University of Chicago. I stayed with her for 15 years."



Bernice Spivek

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A mother of two, Spivek has been living at Ovation Chai Point Senior Living since 2002. She was still driving when she first moved in, and even today she is still fairly self-sufficient. "Well, I do have to have someone put on my shoes and socks, and I have someone that comes in to make me breakfast and clean up," she says. "I can still cook, but it's so nice to have others do it for me and I like going down to eat my meals with others."

Spivek says her secret to long life is that she's been good to her body. "I did smoke for 20 years, but I quit. And I was never a heavy drinker," she adds. "My mother suffered from ulcers so she cooked very plain food. She almost never made fried food, and I often wonder if that made a difference."

What has age taught her? "I am a big believer in the expression, 'It takes two to tango.' You have to learn to give and take. If I didn't like someone, I just stopped being around them. And, above all, don't lie," she advises. "You have to have a good memory if you lie. It's just too exhausting."

## Howard Doepke

"I don't sit on my tail watching TV," says Milwaukeean Howard Doepke.

Scheduling an interview with Doepke wasn't easy. He was busy during the first three times I suggested, and when we finally agreed on a time, I was warned I'd have only an hour, as his personal trainer was arriving at 2 p.m. This would not usually be so remarkable, except for the fact that Doepke is 102 years old.

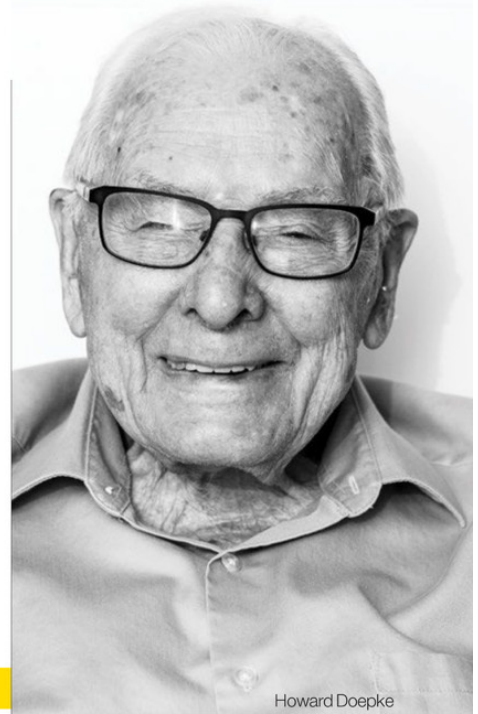
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— Howard Doepke

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Howard Doepke

Like so many men of his generation, Doepke, who received a degree in education from UW-Whitewater, was called to war. Thanks to his education, he was assigned to a medical battalion — part of which was called a holding unit, for Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army. Many of the injured came through Doepke's hands. "My unit got them fixed up enough to continue to fight or to return home," he recalls. Doepke was the evacuation officer, coordinating the soldiers coming and going, and in total, more than 39,000 men passed through his hands. He received a Bronze Star for his service. "It seemed worthwhile to help these guys get on their way. Many had lost a limb, but were still happy because they were going home," Doepke adds.

After four years of service, Doepke himself returned home and enrolled in school at UW-Madison. He planned to complete his master's degree in chemistry and education and met his wife while living in Madison. Soon the couple moved to Wauwatosa, and he began a career as a chemistry and physics teacher and later as a guidance counselor at Wauwatosa East High School. After 32 years of teaching and counseling, he retired in 1980.

Doepke has been living at Alexian Village since 1984. Although his wife passed away in 2015, incredibly he is still in the same independent living facility apartment they moved into more than three decades ago. Aside from his personal trainer, he keeps a busy schedule. He maintains an enviable collection of plants, and every Tuesday he works a shift

SPECIAL SECTION: SENIOR LIVING: PROMOTION

as a volunteer in the gift shop. "I still follow all the local sports teams and read the papers every day," Doepke says. "Although I don't like that all the news is negative. Good news is news too."

He notes that some interesting things come with age. "The other day I was in Walgreens, and the pharmacist asked my age. When I told her, suddenly four people in line behind me began to applaud, and one of them wanted to take a picture with me," he recalls fondly. "Two years ago, when I celebrated my 100th birthday at the Brewer game, I was introduced to the crowd, and my picture came up on the big screen. Everyone was cheering. It's funny that just by being alive I have become a bit of a celebrity."

Doepke attributes his longevity of life to a number of things. "Careful eating," he says. "I have always kept my weight under control. And I think the fact that I worked with teenagers most of my life helps. Their ideas and energy kept me young. I also think having a positive outlook and being happy is very important. That is why, when I was a guidance counselor, I always told my students to choose a profession they like. You have to have fun, otherwise life is not that great." **M**

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