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A holiday of a lifetime for 100-year-old Betty thanks to Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines has made a dream of a lifetime come true for one centenarian who celebrated her milestone birthday on board with four generations of her family.

Betty Wright was joined by 13 relatives on board *Bolette* for the seven-night Scenic Summertime Norwegian Fjords cruise and described it as an experience “far beyond my wildest dreams”.

Speaking from her cottage in Filey, near Scarborough, she said: “I’m a great believer in families being together and doing things together.

“We try to spend as much time together as a family as possible, but we are spread geographically across the world so to have all four generations

together can be logistically challenging.

“We knew that we wanted to mark my birthday on 26th June but I can’t fly anymore and so we looked at alternative options. I have only ever been on a cruise ship twice before and it’s always been a dream of mine to do something like this with my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Fred. Olsen made it happen. In fact, they went above and beyond to make it an experience of a lifetime.

“It truly surpassed all expectations and none of us will ever forget it. It’s created the most precious of memories for the whole family.”

The team at Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines arranged a surprise upgrade for Betty from her single cabin to a Premier Suite, filling her room with balloons and scattering petals on the bed. She was treated to a private tour of the Bridge to meet the Captain, presented with three cards with messages from all the 645-strong crew and had a champagne breakfast and dinner party on her big day.

A 100-themed birthday cake was freshly baked by the ship’s galley and was given the seal of approval by Betty, who spent her life working as a baker and achieved a City and Guild’s certificate for her expert cakes and breads.

She said: “I have never seen a cake like it. It took my breath away. But then, so did a lot the entire cruise.”

Sammie Firbanks, Entertainment Manager on board *Bolette*, said: “Betty was an absolute breath of fresh air and we were thrilled to make this an experience she and her family will never forget.”

Betty was joined on board by her daughter Janice and husband Steve who live in the UK and her son Chris and wife Walla who live in Minnesota, USA.

Also onboard was Chris’ daughter Christy and husband Tyler and Chris’ sons Jeff and Ned and their respective wives Amy and Laura Belle as well as Laura Belle’s mother Lori.

Finally, Ned and Laura Belle’s children – Brennan, eight, and Hanley, five, completed the party.

Chris said: “We took a lot of planes, trains and automobiles to all be together on the ship and it was beyond a shadow of a doubt, one of the most incredible experiences any of us have ever had. There is something wonderful about multi-generational holidays and Fred. Olsen really pulled out the stops here to make this as special as possible.

“Mum has had a wonderful life. She lives, and her philosophy of life is, to be content with what she has and what life deals to you – never asking for more. In reality though, she deserves so much more – she’s an amazing woman and to be truly spoilt like she has been on this adventure made her smile constantly. It meant the world to us all.”

Betty was born in Cleethorpes in June 1923 but grew up in Hull where she trained as a baker and cake decorator. The war broke out when she was 16 and the city was badly affected by bombs, with Betty spending “almost as much time in an air raid shelter as I did in the bakery”.

During the war she became ill, and her doctor suggested she move closer to the coast to recuperate so she relocated to Filey, a seaside town in North Yorkshire where she met her future husband, Stan Wright.

They married when Betty was 26, having son Chris a year later.

She said: “We had a very happy life and we made family the centre of everything. When Stan died seven years ago, I remained in my cottage by the sea and to keep my independence, I Zoom with my family every single Sunday and we do whatever we can to spend time together.”

Chris moved to the US when he was 28 to work for the NBA and Major League Soccer and over the years Betty and Stan visited him and his family 27 times, each time staying for an extended period of time to celebrate Christmas, 4th July or Spring Break.

But after the pandemic Betty was advised not to fly again and this prompted granddaughter Christy to plan her wedding in 2022 to be held in London just so her grandmother could attend.

It was at this wedding that the family started to discuss how they would mark Betty’s 100th birthday.

Chris said: “She has been on a cruise once before with my dad and then again with my sister and I knew how much she had loved it. We also knew how much she loves Norway. That’s where the seed of an idea began.

“We couldn’t believe there was the exact cruise she wanted to go on that coincided with her birthday.”

He added: “One of the most magical moments for me was when we checked in at the terminal and an announcement was made to everyone that Betty was in the building, and everyone applauded. I also will never forget her face when she saw her room or when she got to meet the Captain.

“The staff were just unbelievable, and mum fell in love with them all. I think the feeling was mutual though! She has that effect on people!”

Throughout July and August, there are upper berth offers on a selection of sailings departing from Liverpool, Newcastle, Rosyth and Dover. Prices start from £99 per person for a third and fourth guest when sharing with two full fare paying guests in selected grades. Terms and conditions apply.

For further information on Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, visit the website at www.fredolsencruises.com Book online, call Reservations on 0800 0355 242 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 6pm, Saturday 9am to 5pm, Sunday 10am to 4pm), or contact your ABTA travel agent

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