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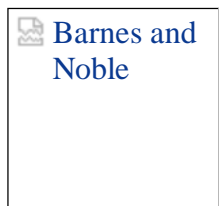
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WORLD NEWS

S T O R Y P A G E

World's oldest person dies at 122

August 4, 1997

Web posted at: 9:47 a.m. EDT (1347 GMT)

[ARLES, France](#) (CNN) -- Jeanne Calment, believed to be the world's oldest person, died Monday at age 122, according to her retirement home. No precise cause of death was given for Calment, who died in the retirement home where she spent the last 12 years of her life.



According to her birth certificate, Calment was born on February 21, 1875, about 10 years after U.S. President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. She entered the Guinness Book of Records in 1993 as the oldest living person whose birthdate could be authenticated by reliable records.

Over the years, she became the biggest attraction in Arles since Vincent Van Gogh's visit to the town in 1888. She met Van Gogh as a girl, when the artist came to shop at her father's art supplies store, and remembered him later as "dirty, badly dressed and disagreeable."

She outlived her husband, Fernand Calment, who died in 1942, four years before their 50th wedding anniversary. She also outlived her only child, a daughter who died in 1934, and her only grandson, a doctor who died in 1963.

She also outlived a lawyer who hoped to take possession of her apartment. She lived mostly off the income from the apartment, which she sold cheaply more than 30 years ago to Andre-Francois Raffray with the understanding that he would take possession of it when she died.

He died more than a year ago at age 77 after paying \$184,000, double the apartment's market value, for the property; his family was required to keep making the payments.

Though blind, nearly deaf and in a wheelchair, Calment remained spirited and mentally sharp until the end.

That was clear to those who attended her 121st birthday, when she released her CD, "Time's Mistress," which featured her reminiscing to a score of rap and other tunes.

At 85, she took up fencing lessons. At 100, she was still riding a bicycle.

And when she finally gave up smoking two years ago, her doctor said she quit not for health reasons, but because she could no longer see well enough to light her cigarettes, and didn't want to ask someone to do it for her.

Calment credited her longevity to Port wine, a diet rich in olive oil, and her sense of humor. "I will die laughing," she predicted.

[Reuters](#) contributed to this report.

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