

85 going on 25

TINA M. GOHR FEBRUARY 08, 2017



RED RIVER - Opening the door to Arlene Jadin's rural home is like a gateway to Alice in Wonderland.

Her foyer carries a lifelike painting of a tree with birdhouses hanging from the branches, faerie gardens are tucked inside drift wood and baskets, ceramics birds lay in nests and lots of lavish fresh greenery invites the outside in.

Proudly, there are still Santa Clauses of different dimensions, holiday trees created from grapevines and tiny mice in wreaths. The holiday treatments are too pretty to store in the attic just yet.

The lifelong professional seamstress has designed and fashioned nearly every inch of her home. It resembles a life-sized dollhouse. She is most noted for the mannequin Christmas tree in her living room that is cut and shaped into an elegant Victorian-era woman adorned with handmade delicate ornaments. To the left of the room is a very Victorian bedroom of forest green and mauve.

Jadin is 85 years old. She looks 65, drives and unloads a four-wheeler like she's 45 and emphasizes an active lifestyle of a 25-year old.

Jadin is described as a spunky lady. She describes herself as fun-loving, and laughs at her answer.

"I'm pretty active. I'm always planning get-togethers," she said. "I loved to play cards."

Jadin also hopes to maintain at 150 bowling average by season's end. She's a self-taught master gardener, a Red Hatter, plays the church organ and speaks fluent Walloon.

"I tell myself there is something I *need* to do today. I tell myself this every day," she said with a smile. "I enjoy making people laugh, too."

She has been residing in her home on County S in the town of Red River for 66 years, living by a simple philosophy — "Life is what you make of it. Enjoy every day to its fullest."

Jadin and her late husband, Darrell, raised six children: Bonnie (deceased), Barbie Cornette, Becky (deceased), Beverly Dalebroux, Betsy Jadin and

Barry Jadin.

There are winter birds perching on feeders right outside her windows overlooking a valley.

“The sunsets are beautiful out here,” she said.

On this sunny day, she talked of unloading wood from her four-wheeler for her wood furnace before sunset. She relies on the wood to heat part of her gas-fueled home.

Jadin invites admirers of her gardens as they drive past to stop and take a closer look. Her gardens are mostly perennial flowers with a large vegetable garden under English walnut, apple, peach and plum trees along with mulberry bushes. Her pantry and freezer are loaded with fruits and vegetables.

One of her family spring and fall pastimes is simply referred to as “Picnic in the Woods.” The decades-old tradition of picnicking with family and friends is perhaps one of her cherished activities. She has a photo album of several picnics to prove it.

For these picnics, Jadin hooks up her “Mule” (four-wheeler) to the wagon and follows the trails to a tree stump measuring three or four feet wide. She covers it with a tablecloth.

“It is so peaceful and beautiful in the woods,” she reminisced. “I begin by baking two loaves of bread in the morning. Then I slice bologna sausage and fry that up. Everybody brings something. Sometimes I make a plum pie.”

It all is washed down with peach-flavored champagne.

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