

World War II vet beats COVID-19, marks 104th birthday

December 4 2020, by Jay Reeves



In this photo provided by Holly Wooten McDonald, World War II veteran and

COVID-19 survivor Major Wooten holds a celebratory milkshake on his 104th birthday on Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020, in Madison, Alabama. Wooten was released from the hospital this week after contracting the illness caused by the new coronavirus before Thanksgiving. (Holly Wooten McDonald via AP)

An Alabama man who spent World War II repairing bomb-damaged trains in France recovered from a fight with COVID-19 in time to mark his 104th birthday on Thursday.

Major Wooten was physically drained and a little fuzzy mentally after battling the new [coronavirus](#) but appears to be on the mend, said granddaughter Holley Wooten McDonald.

"I'm just thankful that they were able to treat him so quickly and we were able to get him tested," said McDonald, adding: "It's amazing that a 104 year old survived COVID."

Madison Hospital shared [video](#) of Wooten wearing a [face mask](#) and waving while workers sang "Happy [birthday](#) dear Pop Pop" as he was discharged in a wheelchair decorated with balloons on Tuesday, two days before his actual birthday.

McDonald said her grandfather, who served as a private first class in the Army before going on to a postwar career with U.S. Steel in Birmingham, tested positive for COVID-19 on Nov. 23 after her mother—his daughter—got the illness.

He received an infusion of the newly approved monoclonal antibody therapy bamlanivimab but was physically drained the next day and had to be taken to the hospital by ambulance the day before Thanksgiving, she said.

"I don't know if that medicine just started working ... but within 24 hours he was better," she said. Wooten's blood oxygen levels are good now and his lungs are "clear as a bell," McDonald said.

She said her mother recovered from COVID-19, and so did a sister who developed the illness and had to spend a week on a ventilator.

The brush with COVID-19 was Wooten's second major health scare this year.

In the spring, he was hospitalized with serious heart problems and recovered, McDonald said. Wooten, a big University of Alabama football fan, received a video phone call from Alabama coach Nick Saban after that scare got attention on the [local news](#), she said.

"He was on cloud nine after that," she said. For Wooten's birthday, a company erected a yard display that included the Alabama athletics logo, a cake, candles and a patriotic hat.

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