

## Mesa man, 100, passes citizenship test

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Part one of Manuel Vincente Osorio's lifelong hope is finally over.

Yearning to become a U.S. citizen before he dies, Osorio passed the citizenship exam Tuesday morning in Phoenix. Part two will come soon when the 100-year-old Mesa resident and Peru native is sworn in.

"I've been waiting years to fulfill my dream of becoming an American citizen," Osorio told his examiner, Homero Guadagnino, after the test, the adjudications officer said. "And I can't wait to participate in the upcoming elections."

Osorio beamed when he walked out of the examination room, said Marie Therese Sebrecchts, Regional Media Manager for U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services.

"People in the waiting room were clapping," she said. "Mr. Osorio said everybody at the Mesa senior citizens center would be so happy and he couldn't wait to tell them."

In remarkable physical condition for his age, Osorio walks with a cane and is a regular at the Red Mountain Senior Center in east Mesa. His engaging sense of humor and assiduousness also belie the image of a centenarian. Sebrecchts said Osorio will be probably be scheduled to take the citizenship oath within 45 days, a ceremony that will most likely be held in a large room because of his wishes to make it a formal affair with guests. It may also be held before his 101st birthday on April 5.

"He was thrilled," Sebrecchts said. "I was honored to meet him and visit with him."

She also used the centenarian's passing grade to relieve anxiety by applicants waiting to take the exam.

"Any of you with worried looks on your faces ... this 100-year-old man passed," Sebrecchts said she told

them. Because of his age and length of residency, Osorio was granted an exemption to take the test in Spanish, his native language, she said. Applicants who are 55 or older and a permanent resident for 15 years or more are allowed to take the test in their native language.

Osorio was near 80 when he first took his naturalization exam in Phoenix. Speaking only Spanish at the time he failed to memorize enough answers to pass and didn't take the test again until Tuesday.

Applicants must correctly answer six of 10 questions to demonstrate they have the ability to read, write and speak English and have a primary knowledge of American history. As he took the exam, Osorio's granddaughter, Elia Valdivia, and son-in-law, Jesus Valdivia, looked on.

Osorio followed his daughter, Carmen, with whom he lives, and physician son, Raul Osorio, to America after retiring from a business he started as a young man that transported passengers by truck between Lima and Caraz. With little formal education, he learned to read and write after enlisting in the Peru army, Elia Valdivia said. His wife, Vitalia, died in 1974.

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