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Happy 103rd birthday Sylvia

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Sylvia Stevens has had 103 years to tire of people — about 25 years longer than the average American woman — but, it still hasn't happened.

"I've always loved people, and I still do," said Stevens, who celebrated her 103rd birthday Wednesday with a party for friends and family at Defiance's Brookview Healthcare Center.

Born in Swanton to Lorana and Robert Bloomer, Stevens was one of seven children. She married Harold "Pal" Stevens, and worked for him as a secretary while he built his business, Stevens Auto Service, in Defiance.

"The business got so big that I ended up having to stay home with the kids," Stevens said.

She had two children of her own, and held various jobs, including one at a box factory, and another assisting a Swanton-area doctor.

"I had to help (administer anesthesia) and I thought, 'I can't do that to someone,' but if the doctor thought I could, I figured that I could, so I threw back my shoulders and did it."

Daughter, Betty Batt, 81, said staffers at Brookview are delighted by Stevens, because she is "just so



Sylvia Stevens, 103, sits in front of her birthday cakes, while her great-grandchildren stand behind her at Brookview Healthcare Center in Defiance. Standing, from left are: Kayla, Logan, Brock and Bryce Bailey.

sweet."

"For her age, she is very positive and good-spirited," said Autumn Salyers, therapy director at Brookview. "She asked, 'How old am I going to be?' I said, 'I think 103,' and she said, 'Oh isn't that just awful? Or wonderful I guess, depending on how you look at it...'"

But that's just her — she's very funny and optimistic."

In her long life, Stevens was active in her church, and as president of the Defiance High School Band.

"Oh I'm active," Stevens said. "Maybe I was a little too active for my husband."

Batt said that until Stevens was 92, she was still scaling the 17 steps down to her retirement home near the river in Florida, Ohio.

It was there, Batt added, that her mother found one of her biggest passions: eagle watching.

"She lived across from (an eagles' nest), and cars full of people would line the streets to watch them," Batt said. "They even sold eagle sweatshirts. She made an album of pictures and writings that were in the paper — she would write to the *Crescent* and tell them all about the eagles. They would come right across the river and sit on a branch outside of her window."

Stevens also was known for the hundreds of fabric-covered boxes she made and gave as gifts.

"She even gave some of them to the aides in the nursing home," Batt said. "We all have about 10 of them."

Today, Stevens has five grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren (among them, professional baseball player Chad Billingsley) and six great-great-grandchildren.

She claims no secret to longevity, and insists she wasn't even particularly health-conscious, but instead credits family and a positive attitude with getting her to 103.

"I've had a good life — I've loved life, and I think that's why I've lived so long," said Stevens, moving her eyes across a roomful of packed tables. "I didn't know I was this blessed."