Hazen resident celebrates 105 years of life

BY DANIEL ARENS

Elsie Schrempf has seen and experienced many things over her long life, but she still greets the people she meets with a large smile, and likely an exclamation of “Right on.”

Family members gathered at Knife River Care Center (KRCC) Sept. 3 to celebrate Elsie’s 105th birthday, enjoying cake and reminiscing about the extraordinary life of the mother, aunt, grandmother, great-grandmother, and great-great-grandmother to many.

Elsie was born in 1911, two years before Hazen officially became a city. She has spent her entire life in the Hazen area, until she moved into KRCC in Beulah.

“I grew up in Hazen, was born in the hospital,” Elsie said.

Elsie and her husband, Jake, had four children. Three of them are still alive: Eunice, Beverley, and Gerald, while Ellen has passed. Eunice lives in Wisconsin, Beverley in New York, and Gerald in Hazen.

Beverley and Gerald were able to attend Elsie’s birthday celebration this weekend.

In addition to her children, Elsie has 11 grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, and eight great-great-grandchildren.

“Her favorite saying is ‘Right on,’” Gerald said.

Indeed, Elsie used the phrase fondly throughout this interview with her.

There were several memories Elsie remembered fondly.

“I had two horses, oh, yeah, they were very good,” she said, referring to her own childhood, when she would ride them toward the gate.

Elsie also talked about gardening, and growing potatoes and cabbage, as well as flowers.

When her children asked her what she enjoys doing at KRCC, she replied quickly: “Eating.” She also enjoys playing cards, notably whist and bingo.

“I used to run. I’ve been running all my life,” Elsie said, saying she also walked to the country school when she was growing up. She has been in a wheelchair for the last two years, but walked with her cane before that. Even now, she still pushes herself in her chair.

Elsie married Jake in 1938 and moved from the countryside outside Hazen into town after her children were old enough to begin attending school.

Posing for a photograph, Elsie Schrempf can’t resist the opportunity to swing her fist and exclaim, “Right on!”

Photo by Daniel Arens