

No secrets at 102, Bertha Shipton just doing what she does best

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Bertha Shipton, a resident of the Wheatfield Commons senior living community, will turn 102 this Sunday.

Robert Creenan



Sometimes the secret to a long life is just doing what you do best. For Bertha Shipton, that's simply playing the piano for whoever wants to listen.

The resident of Wheatfield Commons Senior Living Community will be celebrating her 102nd birthday on Sunday with family and friends on hand in the social room.

Daughter Maureen Badame said that no one in the family has lived this long, her mother herself not knowing why she was so lucky.

"Her brain doesn't want her to lay back and sleep," Maureen said. "She's always set and going."

Born and raised in Buffalo's West Side, Bertha grew up taking classical piano lessons, which she would play her whole life. While attending Grover Cleveland High School, she would play piano during all the school assemblies, with the principal even asking her to continue doing it even after she graduated.

After graduating in 1940, she worked for Curtiss-Wright during WWII and as a secretary for the J.N. Adams department store. Her first marriage to Peter Badame produced five children and owned three dry cleaning locations.

When Peter died, Bertha had to work two to three jobs to make ends meet. Even then, she found time to be part of the Parent-Teacher Association for Public School 38 in Buffalo.

Bertha then married Ted Shipton for 14 years until he died in 2006. The two bought a home in North Tonawanda and were among the lucky few who went to all four Buffalo Bills Super Bowl appearances in the early '90s.

Bertha still got to show her piano skills, giving lessons and volunteering to play for the Schofield Care residents in Tonawanda. Even while living at Wheatfield Commons for the past three years, she still performs piano during lunch and dinner hours.

“She can play any tune through the decades,” Maureen said, noting her mother doesn’t need any sheet music.

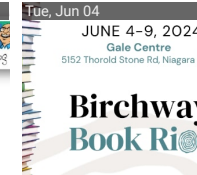

Bertha also enjoys going bird watching, golf on TV and being social with her friends and family, still sending out cards for birthdays, holidays, and other events. She also organized high school alumni events for her class, known as the Grover Gang, which is not active anymore since so many have passed away.

She has five children, 10 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren, which Maureen said have all been the most important part of her life.

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