

100 candles decorate her cake

Woman has memories of farm life, 'Dirty 30s'

Edith Carman has seen a century of changes, but she has kept right up with them throughout a full and busy life.

Mrs. Carman will turn 100 on Monday and her family will honor her with an open house from 2-4 p.m. on Saturday at the Senior Center in Selden.

The third of five children of William and Daisy (Blythe) Brainard, she was born Aug. 4, 1904, on a farm which was homesteaded by her parents northwest of Selden. The Brainards came to Decatur County from LaMaille, Ill.

Her siblings included brothers Claude, Bill and Jesse, and a sister, Dolly, who later married Ira Wasson.

The children attended Vickers rural school a mile from their home, either walking or riding a horse. As a child, she said, she enjoyed being outside helping her father and brothers herd cattle.

"Life on the farm was always busy," she said. "I helped milk cows, but really hated washing the separator. We took our cream and eggs to Selden, and if the cream "held out", we would get a sack of candy."

Another daily chore, she said, was washing the lamp globes each morning.

"The kids now are lucky that they don't have to worry about that job," she said.

The girls helped their mother with gardening, canning, and baking, she said, and her parents butchered their own cattle and hogs.

"With no refrigeration, we canned all the meat," she said. "I also helped with the chickens, but I hated cleaning the chicken house."

She said that her mother taught her how to sew and crochet and she made many bedspreads, tablecloths and other fancy work, which she has enjoyed doing throughout her life, as gifts for her family.

"I remember well when my father bought his first Model T," she said. "When it wouldn't make it up a hill, the kids would get out and push."

She started dating C.C. Carman, who grew up in the same area. She said they went ice skating on a farm pond on their first date. They were married by a judge in Norton on Sept. 21, 1920, when she was only 16.

His parents were Joseph and Lena (Blythe) Carman and he had four brothers, Fred, David, Joe and Carol, and a sister who died in infancy.

"My husband was born on Christmas Day and his mother named him Christmas Carol. However, he never appreciated the name, so later chose to go by Carol C. or C.C.," she said.

The couple first rented a house in Selden and lived there all their married life. She said that her husband started out as an electrician and later went into banking, which continued to be his occupation until his death in 1975.

"Selden was a bustling community when we got married," she said. "We had a creamery, newspaper, two hotels, several grocery stores, a meat market, hardware store and lumber yard."

They had four children: Barbara Jean Spurgeon of Santee, Calif.; Carol Jeanette Hill of Selden; Theda Blythe McKee of Hoxie; and Stephen Craig Carman of Selden. "Their grandmother, Lena Carman, gave

all of the children their middle names," she said.

Mrs. McKee and Mrs. Hill said that their mother always raised a big vegetable garden and beautiful flowers. She always got her housework done early in the morning.

"After dinner, she often took her children on a hike out in the country, where they sometimes would build a fire and cook eggs. Otherwise, we'd just take along an orange and a sandwich," they said.

During the Depression and Dust Bowl era of the "Dirty 30s," their mother always took the children to the cellar when she saw a dust storm approaching. Even though she covered the table with a large sheet and the windows with wet towels, the girls said, they would still have to clean up at least an inch of dirt when a storm was over. Mrs. Carman often assisted as a midwife when doctors delivered babies at home.

She was an active member of the Selden United Methodist Church, the United Methodist Women and the Rebekah Lodge. She was known for her homemade pies and often told the children, "Don't touch those pies; they go to the church."

Her daughters said that it became a family tradition to ask their mother when they noticed she had made several pies, "Who died?"

Mrs. Carman was never idle, her daughters said, and never wasted time during the day taking naps. She still enjoys crossword puzzles and board games with her grandchildren and is sharp at both. She has never cared for television and listens to the radio just for the news.

She remained in her own home in Selden until moving to the Long Term Care Unit in Hoxie 18 months ago. She exercises daily with other residents, but when asked what she really enjoys about exercising, she replied, "None of it!"

She often goes out for rides and visits with her family and is especially happy when she can return to her home town.

Mrs. Carman has 18 grandchildren, 35 great-grandchildren, and numerous great-great-grandchildren. Her birthday party will include vocal solos by a granddaughter, Lynn Weick, and two great-granddaughters, Kelsey Hill and Brittany Ritter.

"Hard work!" was her quick and simple answer when asked how she has reached the age of 100.

**Story by
Mary Lou Olson**



ENJOYING SOME FUN while vacationing in Colorado, C.C. and Edith (Brainard) Carman posed for a "wedding photo."



EDITH CARMAN at age 17.



STILL ACTIVE AT 90, Mrs. Carman is shown when she still lived in her home in Selden.