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Wednesday, July 11, 2007

## Turning 100 doesn't feel any different, nurse says

Melissa Hubbell News-Bulletin Intern; [mhubbell@news-bulletin.com](mailto:mhubbell@news-bulletin.com)

Los Lunas Imagine being born during a time when people still rode through town in buggies instead of rushing around in cars. Imagine a time before bubble gum, television and penicillin.

It was the year that the Hoover vacuum and Hershey's Kisses were invented and a man named Theodore Roosevelt was serving his second term as president of the U.S.

It was 1907, the year Los Lunas resident Eunice Amelia Sorrells was born. She celebrated her 100th birthday recently.

Sorrells was born in Oakland, Neb., the fifth child of Oscar and Emily Norberg. Both of Sorrells' parents were from Sweden and met while working on Emily's grandparents' farm. The couple had seven children, three girls and four boys, and raised their family on their farm.

As a child, Sorrells said, she enjoyed helping her family on the farm and spent a lot of time with her father.

"I spent an awful lot of time outside with my dad," she said. "I milked four cows every morning and every evening," she said looking over a picture of her family's old farm.

For fun, she jumped rope and loved to play the piano. Sorrells reveled in the instrument so much that she would walk three miles to get to her piano lessons. She said that she remembers breaking her arm the day the Titanic sank in 1912.

In 1923, Sorrells became the first woman in her family to graduate high school. She stayed in Oakland for three years after her graduation, working at the country school, teaching kindergarten through eighth-grade students.

She saved up the money she earned from teaching, and in 1926, she moved to Phoenix, Ariz., to attend nursing school at the Good Samaritan Hospital.

After completing the three-year nursing program, Sorrells continued working at the hospital. Even though she no longer had room and board, she was able to eat meals in the cafeteria as long as she worked a full day. This helped during the Depression when there was little to be had. Many young women from all across the country came to work at this hospital after the Depression hit because many other hospitals were forced to close due to a lack of funds. Some hospitals, like the Good Samaritan, were reopened by churches and able to stay up and running.

Not long after graduating, Sorrells met her husband, Joseph. He was a border patrolman, and they married in 1940. Sorrells got pregnant with her first and only birth-child, Joanne, shortly after the marriage but when Joanne was only 2 months old, tragedy struck the family and Joseph was killed in a gun accident at work. They were married a little over a year.

Sorrells became a single parent to her young daughter and 3-year-old stepson, Bert Sorrells. She was a single mom before it was a normal or socially accepted thing to be.

"She never remarried," said Sorrells' granddaughter, Amy. "She never even dated or considered it."

After the death of her husband, Sorrells moved to San Diego, Calif., with her sister and took a job as a public health nurse. Eventually, both her sisters and parents would join her to San Diego. She retired after 33 years of nursing in 1969.

In 2000, Sorrells came to New Mexico to be closer to Amy and her family. "She moved here to be closer to me," Amy said.

Sorrells is the only child still alive although all except one of her siblings lived into their late 80s or well into their 90s. Amy said that she does not know the reason for her family's longevity of life but attributes it to "clean living."

"She always went to church. Her faith was very important to her, and I know that really carried her through difficult times in her life," Amy said. "She always ate right and never drank or smoked."

Amy and her grandmother love to go for drives together, especially ones that end at the destination of ice cream. They celebrated Sorrells' 100th birthday June 30 at Senior Care in Los Lunas with family and friends.

"I never thought about turning 100," said Sorrells, laughing. "I don't feel any different."

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