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Helen DeTour of Jamestown (center) turned 100 on Feb. 25 and celebrated with a birthday party attended by friends and family on Feb. 27.
Photo by Andrea von Hohenleiten



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Island resident celebrates 100 years

By Eileen M. Daly

On Wednesday Feb. 25, Helen DeTour turned 100 years old, but it hardly put a crimp in her style. She still lives by herself, still plays bridge once a week with her friends and still maintains the positive attitude and quick wit that has been with her all of her life, according to her friends and family.

DeTour plays bridge every Tuesday afternoon in the community room at Pemberton Apartments. Her bridge partners include: Ruth Shaver, 69, Mary Feigelman, 89, Fran Mackabee, 80, Betty West, 81, Shirley Long, 84, Lucile Newman, 79, and Mary Murphy, 87, but don't let their ages fool you, this is one lively bunch.

When asked by one of her friends what the most memorable day of her long life has been DeTour responded, "Well, today's pretty good."

Mackabee pointed out that DeTour is "always positive. She has a good attitude and is always happy."

In fact, DeTour suggests staying positive as one way to insure a long, contented life. "Be happy, live one day at a time and get up every morning, that's important," DeTour said.

Feigelman chimed in with her own suggestion, "It's the Wheaties! Every morning with a little skim milk," she said.

DeTour also had some positive recommendations for managing

conflict. "What's good for me may not be good for someone else. You can dislike something, but you don't have to hate anyone. Tolerance is important," she said. The only thing she has little tolerance for is television. "I'm not interested in TV. Everyone is interested in everyone else's problems instead of their own," she said.

DeTour was raised in Great Barrington, Mass. in the Berkshires. According to her only child, Tom DeTour, Helen moved to Jamestown in 1994 in order to be closer to her grandchildren.

"My wife, Christine, and I found jobs in Rhode Island and moved to Jamestown in 1975," he said. His father, and Helen's husband of 32 years, passed away in 1983. "After my father passed away, she had nothing to tie her to Great Barrington so she moved here to be closer to her grandsons."

Helen has two grandchildren, Michael DeTour, 28, and Daniel DeTour, 26. "As the kids got older, she wanted to see more of them," her son said.

He also spoke of his mother's positive attitude, "She has a great attitude and she is an incredibly strong woman who won't let anything stop her. She's had cancer twice and there was never any doubt that she would succeed," he said. According to Tom DeTour, that positive attitude was present throughout his childhood. "She's a great mother. She's always been

a great mother and she's always been such a positive person," he said.

As far as the effects of aging are concerned, DeTour doesn't let it get her down, "I don't hike anymore," she said, "or play golf anymore, but that's about it."

Her son said, "Her vision is not what it used to be. She has glaucoma and has lost most of her peripheral vision, but she is still an avid reader."

Helen DeTour worked for the phone company for 32 years before retiring. "I worked in the traffic department, but I did a lot of different things. I was an operator, an instructor, I even worked in sales for a while," she said.

DeTour, who has lived at the Pemberton Apartments since 1999, was honored there with a party in the community room last Friday. Ronald J. DuPont, executive director of housing, said that every resident of Pemberton Apartments and Pemberton Place were invited to the event. Senate Majority Leader, M. Teresa Paiva-Weed and state Representative Deb Ruggerio attended, DuPont said, and a citation from Congressman Patrick Kennedy was presented at that time. DeTour has already received a citation from Senator Jack Reed at a family celebration last week, DuPont said. A citation from President Obama has been requested, he said.



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