

Ken-Ton centenarians celebrate milestone birthdays

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by VICTORIA HILL Reporter



Tomasina Cammarata marks her 100th birthday Contributed Photo

Wheatfield Commons residents Tomasina Cammarata and Howard Biondi have reached milestone birthdays.

Mrs. Cammarata celebrated her 100th birthday on June 27. She is the daughter of Michael and Angela Scalzi, both of whom emigrated to the United States from Italy. She is the oldest of seven children; during WWII she worked at Curtiss Wright Corp., making parts for airplanes to assist the war effort. She became engaged to John Cammarata, who served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. They married in 1948 and had three daughters. She has five grandchildren and six great-granddaughters.

“She cherished her family, her family always came first,” said her daughter, Mary Denam. “She was a stay-at-home mom and looked forward to taking care of her kids and grandkids every day. Her family was everything.”

There were family gatherings at her house every Sunday, with lots of cousins and extended family. Her husband passed away when he was 57 years old.

“My mother was widowed for a large portion of her life, after my father passed, she had to take care of herself and become very independent,” Denam said.



Howard Biondi celebrating his 102nd birthday Contributed Photo

Her daughters characterize her as a very loving and thoughtful person, who always had a lot of friends. Mrs. Cammarata was very religious and held high morals. She loved to travel to Europe, and bake for her family. Each year during the holidays, she would bake cookies for family members and friends.

Mrs. Cammarata stays busy and is active at the events at Wheatfield Commons. She loves participating in painting, arts and crafts, bingo and enjoys bus rides to get ice cream. She celebrated her milestone birthday with cake, friends, family and entertainment by John Rena.

Mr. Biondi celebrated his 102nd birthday on June 25. He was raised on the East Side of Buffalo, one out of eight children. He attended School No. 6 and Hutchinson Technical High School, and dropped out of school as a junior to travel to California to fight forest fires with the Civilian Conservation Corps. In 1943, he was drafted into the Army and served during World War II. He spent three years in New Guinea and the Philippines as a technician fourth grade, with the 496th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Gun Battalion. He was discharged in 1946 and was interviewed for a U.S. Library of Congress report on the experiences of WWII vets.

After returning from World War II, he worked for A&P for 30 years as meat manager, and cut meat for a small shop after he retired. He has donated over 14 gallons of blood to the Red Cross.

His wife, Theresa Marianccio, passed away in 1984 from breast cancer. The couple had three children; he has a granddaughter and two great-grandchildren.

He was very involved in church and received the St. Joseph Award for recognition of lay volunteers. He was on parish council, chairman of the parish Catholic Charities, and president of St. Vincent de Paul group. He was a member of St. Rose of Lima church for over 60 years. He attended Mass every morning, until the time he moved to Wheatfield Commons.

He was an avid golfer, playing until he was 94. He was president, vice president and on various committees at the Buffalo Golf Club. He is still an honorary member and is there every August for the Howie Biondi invitational played at Grover Cleveland Golf Course.

“He is larger than life,” said his daughter Karen Macdonald. “He always has a positive attitude and looks for the good in people and situations. Even at 102 he says he makes the most of what happens in the day. He is loyal, honest and never asked for more than what was given to him or what he earned.”

Mr. Biondi always put his family first; and is characterized as being very social and loves talking and being with people. His daughter said that he always has a story to tell, and lives by many sayings: “All things in moderation, except prayer,” “Don’t eat too much, don’t drink too much and go to church on Sunday,” and “Some days you get the bear, some days the bear gets you!”