

Remembers news of the Titanic

Silver Cross Mother has 'no complaints' at age 99

By Bill Hunt

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Bertha McCormick still remembers hearing about the great San Francisco earthquake and the sinking of the Titanic.

McCormick was born on the second concession of Thurlow Township, Jan. 31, 1900.

Yesterday she celebrated 99 years of living, with all its hills and valleys, among plenty of family and friends at her home on Reid Street.

Although she's approaching the century mark, McCormick's memory for dates and events is remarkable.

"I remember the newspaper coming to our house when a big earthquake in San Francisco (struck)," she said when asked of her earliest recollections, "and I was 12 when the Titanic went under, and I remember that."

After finishing Grade 8 at S.S. 4 Spencer school in Thurlow, McCormick went to work at 16 as a nanny for Fred and Margaret Lee, who lived in Belleville's east end. She moved to Toronto but eventually returned and married Joseph McCormick when she was 20. The couple had seven children (including one that died in infancy).

During the Depression, Joe was laid off from the railway and they moved north to St. Ola off Highway 62, where it was less expensive to live. McCormick recalls they paid \$7 a month for rent. She grew and preserved her own vegetables, raised pigs for meat, and made her own butter, until the times improved.

To the best of her knowledge, McCormick is the last Silver Cross mother in Belleville. She lost a son, John, on the HMCS Trentonian after it was torpedoed, Feb. 22, 1945, in the English Channel.

Joe Sr. died in 1963, the same year her son, Joe Jr. was killed



Intelligencer photo by Bill Hunt

Bertha McCormick, 99 on Sunday, stands in front of a few family photos in her Belleville home.

in an airplane crash in Quebec. After that she began taking in boarders and still rents space to two people in her house, where she's lived since 1950. A homemaker prepares her meals and a son visits from Toronto each weekend, but otherwise she gets by on her own.

"I've still got all my marbles — (so) why not?"

McCormick used to knit and crochet, but her hands no longer allow that. Today she enjoys reading historical novels, watches television and reads the newspaper daily. She's also a member of St. Michael's Catholic Church.

For her birthday she received 60 novels. "They'll last me 'til

I'm about 105."

Family members are spread far and wide and the growing number of grandchildren is hard to keep track of. "Last time I counted there was 18." There's also 12 great-grandchildren.

So what's she planning for the millennium? "I think I'll go over and get in touch with Clinton," she said with a laugh.

After living through two world wars, an economic depression and the premature deaths of three children, McCormick's outlook is still bright. "I've accepted everything I've lived through...I have no complaints. I've been well taken care of."