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Ben Strack/Herald

‘And if you should survive to a hundred and five . . .’

Selma Stone, who turns 105 this month, danced during a birthday celebration in her honor at the Sandel Senior Center on Aug. 10, as friends serenaded her with “Young at Heart,” the Johnny Richards-Carolyn Leigh pop standard made famous by Frank Sinatra. Story, Page 11.

Young at heart and ‘ready for more years’

57-year Rockville Centre resident celebrates 105th birthday at Sandel Senior Center

By **MATTHEW D’ONOFRIO**
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“She’s as hard as stone,” aide Mariane-la Bassett said, knocking loudly on a table and putting her arm around Selma Stone, a Rockville Centre resident who was excited to turn 105 on Aug. 17.

Stone celebrated her birthday at the Sandel Senior Center on Aug. 10, surrounded by family and friends, whom she referred to as “the young people.” They brought her cards, baked her treats, told her they loved her and rubbed her for good luck.

“They want to know my secret,” Stone said, adding that she hopes they too live to 105. “It’s being supported by loving family and friends and appreciating that the best things in life are free. ... You have to be happy with what you have.”

Stone was born in 1918 and grew up in Brooklyn. She attended Brooklyn College and worked as a legal secretary before marrying her late husband, Harry Stone, on June 12, 1960 on her cousin’s front lawn in Valley Stream.

The next year, they moved to Rockville Centre, where she worked weekends at her husband’s hardware store, Judith Plaza Painting and Hardware, in Valley Stream. She was later a stay-at-home mother to three children: Judith, Michael and Allen, the latter of which has died.



Ben Strack/Herald

CHRIS O’LEARY, LEFT, director of the Sandel Center, stood alongside Selma Stone, who turns 105 on Aug. 17, as she addressed her friends during a birthday celebration last week.

“I love Rockville Centre because the people here are proud of their community,” Stone said. She was the president of the local Brandeis University National Women’s Committee chapter; an active member at Congregation B’nai Sholom-Beth David and the former editor of Fran-

cis F. Wilson Elementary School’s newsletter. Some of her favorite memories though were watching her children graduate from South Side High School and taking them to the playground at the Recreation Center when they were young.

But when winter came each year,

Selma and Harry, whom she met on a blind date, would vacation to Europe. Her favorite country was Spain.

“When we would go off to school, she would go off and play golf!” laughed her son, Michael. He said his mom enjoyed golfing at Eisenhower Park and Bethpage State Park, as well as swimming at Long Beach Pool, but often took him and his siblings to museums and operas. Her daughter, Judith, described her as a “strict” mother, but one who always prioritized family.

Michael said his mother is the “leader of the Conga lines” when it comes to parties and celebrations and dances with her walker, which she calls “chair dancing.” At her bash at Sandel, her fellow seniors sang “Young at Heart” by Frank Sinatra to her, which includes the line, “And if you should survive to 105, look at all you’ll derive out of being alive.” While being serenaded, she got up from her chair and started dancing, kicking her legs like a Rockette.

Afterwards, she thanked the staff at the Sandel Center and told her friends they might start playing “spin the bottle” during game time. She curtsied and shuffled back to her table as someone in the room shouted, “We love you, Selma!”

“I’m very happy to enjoy this long life,” Stone said, smiling ear-to-ear, “and I’m ready for more years.”