



An Original “Girl Friday” Celebrates 107 at Roosevelt



With a lightweight crown adorning her silver locks for much of the day, Anne Johnson marked her 107th birthday on April 21 at Middlesex County’s long-term care facility, Roosevelt Care Center at Edison. “I was queen for a day,” she decreed.

The highlight of the festivities came during a celebratory meal out-on-the-town, where Johnson’s nephew filled the role of gracious dinner companion.

The daughter of Italian immigrants, this Roosevelt resident was the youngest of six children born to the Brigante family of Plainfield. “I’ve lived what I’d call a normal life,” she said. In her formative years, Johnson left Plainfield High School to attend business college. By the age of 18, she had graduated and was already navigating the daily grind as an office secretary.

That era’s working female secretaries, who decades later would be coined “Girl Fridays,” were coveted for their reliable nature and ability to handle a wide range of office duties. Still, Johnson, along with her fellow female office managers, was very much a rare breed in the early 1920s. “I was alone, and I ran everything,” she recalled.

At 40, Johnson met and married her husband, Alfred Johnson. While she never had children, by exchanging vows, she did inherit stepchildren and a family all her own. "But they're all gone now," she said.

In time, Johnson both moved to and began working out of Bound Brook. Decades later, she left her long-time employer, a chemical company, opting for retirement. She settled into Roosevelt just a few years back and has delighted staff with her wit and stories ever since.

As for the secret to longevity, Johnson doesn't have much of an explanation, other than to say: "I kept pretty busy."