

# A country girl marks her 100th birthday

## North Carolina native Bertie Stanley met the challenge of NYC with aplomb

by **Michael Gannon**

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“One hundred of anything is a lot.”

Bertie Stanley would know. Two weeks ago the retired Department of Education administrator celebrated her 100th birthday surrounded by family members and residents and staff at the Margaret Tietz Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Jamaica Hills.

Stanley grew up in North Harlowe, NC, on what now is the eastern edge of the Croatan National Forest, the oldest of three girls. She would move to New York after graduating from Shaw University in Raleigh.

“I majored in social studies,” Stanley said.

She married her high school sweetheart, Aubrey Stanley, who was a college basketball player of note at North Carolina Central University.

“He was so tall,” Stanley said. “He worked for the postal service in Manhattan. He was promoted to management.”

They had two daughters, one of whom was present at her party with her two grandchildren. Another daughter is deceased.

Moving to New York raised some



**Bertie Stanley recently turned 100, and her family and friends were joined by residents and staff of the Margaret Tietz Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Jamaica Hills.**

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new challenges for the couple.

“I was a country girl, not a city girl,” Stanley said. “There were a lot of adjustments. The winters were terrible.”

Some things, however, were not that different from the Jim Crow South, even if they were not codified in law by New York State.

“Education wasn’t what I first wanted to do,” she said. “But it was one of the only things available for a Black woman.”

Residents of Southeast Queens,

Stanley and her family also were denied the opportunity to buy a home in Nassau County.

As in many two-career households, it took some balancing, but like everything else, she and her husband made it work.

“I never left my children alone,” she said.

Her personal interests include sewing, crocheting and needlework. Stanley remembers the first time she crafted a pair of argyle socks after seeing them after the move north.

“That was a challenge,” she said. “I was a country girl. I’d never seen them before.”

As for her entertainment preferences, she was never a fan of jazz — I like the classic songs” — but saw a lot of Broadway and musical performances in Manhattan with her friends from work.

“Once a month we’d go in and see a show,” she said.

A resident of Margaret Tietz for about a year, Stanley is a member of the Presbyterian Church of Saint Albans, and she said the church community hasn’t forgotten her, paying a recent visit.

“They brought me flowers,” she said. “They were so lovely.”

Along with her sash and tiara, Stanley’s birthday was celebrated, of course, with a massive cake. She enjoyed it, but it still is not her favorite dessert.

“I love apple pie,” she said. “With vanilla ice cream.”

And with both the Mets and Yankees in the playoffs, she also has a favorite.

“The Yankees,” she said. “My husband liked them and I’d go along. 📺