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THIS IS YOUR LIFE: *Edna Johnston, who recently turned 103, celebrates Mother's Day with her grandson Bob Holman at their home in Interlaken. The silent-movie actress starred in Wharton Film Studios' productions made at Stewart Park (then Renwick Park) in Ithaca. The area nurtured a film industry around 1910.*

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California near the end of World War I, happy to leave behind the poor sunlight and cold seasons Ithaca had to offer.

However, movie executives were still interested in Johnston and offered to send her to New York City for acting lessons. But in 1922, she decided to stay home with her only child William and raise him.

Switching careers

After her second marriage and divorce from Ithaca J.C. Penney president Walter Johnston around 1938, Edna attended a nursing school operated by the Ithaca Hospital, in what is now the Ithacare Senior Living Center.

During World War II, she pursued her nursing career at Clifton Springs Hospital briefly and took a yearlong home care position for the New York governor's cousin in New York City. She finally moved to Syracuse and worked for the next 35 years as a private duty nurse at different nursing homes and hospitals, often staying up all night playing championship bridge games and then getting up for work at 5:30 a.m.

She retired at age 77 and moved to Interlaken in 1971 to help take care of her ailing sister Elizabeth, who died a few years later.

She still lives in Elizabeth's 1920s

house filled with dark mahogany furniture, porcelain figurines and a recently purchased baby grand piano. It's the same Orchard Street home she finally purchased two years ago.

Johnston's hand-knitted pillows carefully sit on antique couches and her cloth wall hangings lie against gold foil wallpaper. For her 100th birthday, she knitted three outfits for herself.

Her grandson Bob Holman, a home health care service worker, lives with her to help her around the house. Family members credit his inspiration and late night piano playing to why Johnston has lived so long. The only health hurdles she has had to conquer recently were two broken hips. Holman said other than that, she never sees doctors. She doesn't like them.

However, the silence that once provided her with so much joy and exposure in movies, now plagues her. After more than 100 years of speaking with patients, chatting with countless numbers of relatives and telling stories, her vocal cords gave out. Although she can't speak, she replies to spoken questions by writing short notes.

When the question "Was it fun being an actress," was written down for her, she shrugged her shoulders and sat still in her yellow velvet high-backed chair with pen in hand.

She fluttered her hands around a bit before deciding on her answer. "I just enjoyed it," she wrote.