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Michigan March/April 2026

25TH BIRTHDAY OF THE U.S.A.



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what a wonderful tea time with sugar and spice and everything nice.

### Big Surprise

Twenty women from the retirement community, plus friends and relatives, came to honor Erna. But the big surprise was that her oldest daughter and grandson had flown from California to Michigan to help celebrate this milestone. How I wish I could have flown in from Washington State.

As usual, the women could select a teacup and teabag and brew their favorite tea. But today, wearing her crowning tiara, Erna reigned as queen.

As the ladies sipped their tea, they chatted and honored Erna. "You are such a blessing." "Thank you for adding fun and humor to our retirement community." "You bring the best treats to our gatherings." "We love and appreciate you." Erna was all smiles, feeling treasured and blessed.

### Special Memories

Later Erna reported by phone, "The party was a lot of fun and very special!" At her apartment, she was surrounded by the party decorations and cherished the memories of a wonderful time.

Young at heart and very talented, my sister Erna has had a memorable life and has blessed many. She wrote a Bible study guide for the book of Acts and coauthored a musical, *Who Is My Neighbor?* Most recently, in 2025, with the help of her daughter Lois, she published a book.



Erna's book (the cover is her HS graduation photo), lemon crinkle cookies, and flowers

Strong in her faith and wanting to showcase God, He Was Always There: A Book of Stories and Miracles by Erna Craven records events from her life, including our father's miraculous release from a Russian prison years before her birth.

After coming to America in 1929 with their two sons, her parents, Nicolai and Helena Siemens, added six girls to their family. I am blessed to be the youngest. Over the years, I've enjoyed many happy occasions and teatimes with my family and friends.

So how would you celebrate a special event or milestone birthday?

However you make merry, I recommend rejoicing with family and friends over a cup of tea!

Lydia E. Harris enjoys serving tea to family and friends. Her books include: *Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting*, *In the Kitchen with Grandma: Stirring Up Tasty Memories Together*, and *GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids*. All are available at amazon.com or can be ordered through local bookstores.

### From Lydia's Recipe File: Lemon Crinkle Cookies

Delicious, soft, and lemony

Ingredients:

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup (1 stick) softened butter
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 tsp. lemon extract
- 1 tbsp. lemon zest
- 2 eggs
- 1¾ cups flour
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- ½ to 1 cup lemon curd, homemade or purchased (optional)



Lemon Crinkle Cookies

Directions:

- In a large bowl, cream together the butter and granulated sugar until light and fluffy.
  - Stir in vanilla extract, lemon extract, and lemon zest.
  - Beat in eggs, one at a time.
  - Mix together the flour, baking powder, and salt.
  - Add the dry ingredients to the creamed mixture. Do not overmix.
  - Cover dough and refrigerate for one hour.
  - Preheat the oven to 350° F.
  - Shape dough into 1-inch balls and roll them in powdered sugar. Place them two inches apart on a parchment-lined cookie sheet.
  - Bake for 13–15 minutes until edges are lightly brown and tops do not look wet.
  - Cool on the cookie sheet for 2 minutes. Then transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely. Recipe makes about 3 dozen cookies.
- Variation: For a burst of fresh lemon flavor, sandwich two cookies together with a teaspoon of lemon curd just before serving.

Optional variation: Sandwich two cookies together with cream cheese frosting. If using cream cheese frosting, store cookies in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

## A Milestone Nine-TEA-eth Party

By Lydia E. Harris

Colorful streamers, balloons, and tablecloths waited to welcome the senior ladies who met weekly for tea and treats in the community room.

But this time they gathered to celebrate my sister Erna's nine-TEA-eth birthday. The rose and gold floral-print napkins and paper plates said: "90 Fabulous." Her three daughters and grandson had arrived early to prepare the setting.



### Tasty Treats

The buffet table held a delicious array of foods, including cranberry brie bites, a variety of crackers, and a charcuterie board loaded with an assortment of cheeses, meats, and colorful dried fruit. But the main feature was a homemade gluten-free three-layer vanilla cake with strawberry cream cheese frosting, topped with two large candles: a nine and a zero.

Other treats included homemade cranberry nut triangles, chocolate chip cookies, jam thumbprints, and lemon crinkle cookies (see recipe). Oh my—



My sister Erna wearing her tiara at her 9-TEA-eth party.



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**All glory to Him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are His before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time!  
Amen.**

Jude 1:25 NLT

**The faithful love of the LORD never ends!  
His mercies never cease. Great is His faithfulness; His mercies begin afresh each morning.**

Lamentations 3:22-23 NLT

**They sang, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God forever and ever! Amen.”**

Revelation 7:12 NLT

