

‘Rock’ star – Church family celebrates 90th birthday with parade

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Sue and Bill Rock wave to well-wishers.

Posted By: [Jan Larson McLaughlin](#) April 8, 2020

By JAN LARSON McLAUGHLIN

BG Independent News

In this time of social distancing and virtual birthday parties, friends of Bill Rock wanted to celebrate the 90-year-old's milestone with him.

On Wednesday, Rock's family told him a "few friends" were going to drive by and wave. But as Bill and his wife, Sue, stood in front of their Bowling Green home, the cars kept coming.

Nearly 30 vehicles, plus a few bicyclists and walkers joined in the birthday parade in front of the Rocks' home.

As each car passed, Rock graciously thanked his well-wishers.

"I can't thank you enough," he repeated as he waved.



Bill Rock waves to friends in car parade.

The parade was organized by members of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Bowling Green, where the Rocks have been steadfast members for 61 years.

"I'm much surprised, and elated, and saddened," said Rock, who was recently diagnosed with lung cancer.

"These are all folks who mean a lot to me," he said. "It just makes me feel so good for the role I was able to play."

Rock, a retired European history professor at Bowling Green State University, has served his church in many roles. He helps with the weekly meals that serve more than 100 people every Wednesday. He serves in the men's group and Bible study group.

And despite the age gap, he is a rock star with the youth group at St. Mark's.

"They love supporting the youth," Cassie Yeager, the Next Gen director at the church, said of the Rocks. "They know everybody by name."



Parade of cars wish Bill Rock a happy 90th birthday.

As the parade of cars went by – some playing music, some sporting balloons, and many plastered with birthday messages – Rock pointed at one and noted his suspicions that the instigator of the parade was inside.

He was right.

Madi Schroeder, a senior at Elmwood High School and youth group member at St. Mark's, admitted to being the ringleader.

“Bill and Sue play a huge role in the church. We just wanted to give back to him,” Schroeder said.

“We just wanted to bring some joy,” Yeager said, noting that because of the coronavirus pandemic, church members haven't been able to show their customary support to a member facing a major illness.

Sue Rock stood next to her husband, waving as the parade rolled past.

“It's just beautiful in every way,” she said. “We feel so blessed.”



Sue and Bill Rock wave to friends from St. Mark's Lutheran Church.

Daughter Ann Elliott said she told her dad to expect a few well-wishers.

“We told him about five minutes before,” she said. “We said a couple people from the church wanted to drive by because of COVID-19.”

Elliott was not expecting the parade to stretch so far.

“I had no idea,” she said, smiling.

Rock's family planned to continue his birthday celebration with a meal of homemade lasagna and cake.

“This means a lot,” daughter-in-law Lori Rock said. “Their church means a lot to them.”

Elliott agreed.

“He loves his church family,” she said.

Clearly, the feeling is mutual.



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