

CHAPTER 1

Today's Centenarians—Celebrities and National Treasures

A Century of Wisdom

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People who have lived 100 years or more are here to share their experiences, having done and seen it all. They are also our living links to history and our role models for the future of aging. Their engaging spirit can help to shape the attitude of younger generations, especially Baby Boomers, who are looking toward their future years.



*“My golden years are like sparkling diamonds,”
says Elsa Brehm Hoffmann, 104.*

To celebrate her 100th birthday, Elsa bought a brand new car, “eggplant color, because it was a little different.” After giving herself a birthday gala for 150 friends and family, she took off on a two-week Caribbean cruise. On board she met another centenarian, John Donnelly, and his wife, Marian, who were celebrating their seventh wedding anniversary and his 102nd birthday. Meanwhile, Jack Borden, 101, was hard at work at his law firm in Texas, still handling a full caseload and loving every minute of it.

Centenarians are shattering the long-held stereotypes of life in later years, which is thought to be static, boring, and marked by disinterest in contemporary life. Today, we see active centenarians enjoying interests that are associated with much younger people, prompting us to think better of our future—30, 50, or 70 years from now. As with Elsa, John, and Jack, much of what we see in centenarians’ lives is surprising—for instance, the increasing number of people who are living independently at 100 and over, and the number of centenarians still driving competently. We see centenarians living full lives: dancing, falling in love, traveling, playing in a band, taking courses, giving lectures; using cell phones, computers for e-mail, browsing the Web, socializing on Facebook and Twitter; working, volunteering, and lunching with friends. We like what we see, but how do we get there, and what “secrets” do we need to know?

The centenarians with whom you are about to become acquainted share an indomitable spirit. They tell us what has worked for them to live successfully into advanced age and they share their “secrets” of business and life. Indeed, centenarians are the true experts on living long and living well, and on what it takes to do so. Others can study

them and turn them into statistics, but only they know what it is like and what it means to live for 100 years; only they can vivify the experience of reaching the century mark and beyond. Centenarians are here to share their hard-earned wisdom born of their experiences, and show us why it is worth the effort to strive to have the means to live a good life in old age.



“Think of it as mountain climbing,” explains Dr. Will Clark, 104, as he sits holding the hand of his wife, Lois. “Why do people climb mountains? Because they’re there. Because they can. Some people will be lost along the way, and it’s never going to be easy; but for those who reach the top, there’s no better view. So why give up on life? Why sell yourself short? There’s so much you can learn and do and enjoy. Life can be very fulfilling if you make it so. But you’ve got to want to do it.”

Centenarians such as Dr. and Mrs. Clark exemplify the positive attitude and other characteristics active centenarians have in common, the traits that have helped them to reach the century mark and enjoy a good quality of life at 100 and beyond. Lois, 101, says, “It’s not just how long you live that matters, but how well. People forget that, I think.”



“People ask all the time about how to live to 100,” Dr. Clark adds. “I tell them it’s easy: all you have to do is survive your 70s, 80s, and 90s, and that’s the hard part!”

This “Centenarian Spirit” will become familiar to you as you learn of the lives and lifestyles of the Clarks, Elsa, John, Jack, and many others in the following pages. You will see it in action: A love of life, which includes a sense of humor and a healthy dose of self-esteem; a positive yet realistic attitude; a strong religious or spiritual belief;

personal courage, because a lot of things can go wrong as we get older, such as those that require medical intervention. And, most important, a remarkable ability to renegotiate life at every turn—to compensate—to accept the losses and changes that come with aging and not let it stop them.



*“Keep good, keep busy, keep thinking about tomorrow,”
advises Carl Azar, 100.*

Carl’s thought could be the centenarian motto.

THE CELEBRITIES OF AGING: CENTENARIANS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Centenarians are the celebrities of aging. They draw the most attention and capture the spotlight; they are the trendsetters. Centenarians are influencing society in ways once not imaginable. Longevity itself is one of the greatest developments of the twentieth century. Now, well into the twenty-first, growing numbers of elders are going far beyond the once touted ideal of “aging gracefully” to a new standard of “aging excellently!” And Baby Boomers are eyeing this with glee. Today’s centenarians are changing the very thought of what’s possible in our later years.

“It was once standard journalism for local papers to report on the event of a person in the community who had reached the remarkable age of 100, giving a chronological biography of the person’s life, often mentioning the person’s close family members,” says Mildred Heath, 101, a longtime newspaper reporter. “It was standard fare. Nothing unusual, just what the person used to do. Today, there is more interesting copy because people who have lived to 100 and beyond are very often continuing to do things and to be involved with their communities, clubs, churches, and families. In the old days, a local resident who took a trip out of town for vacation or to visit relatives was noteworthy, and a little article made the weekly paper. Today, centenarians are

among those traveling to visit family and often just for pleasure. It's really quite an extraordinary difference."

Centenarians are sought out now because of their active lifestyles, not only for print media but also television features and specials, often centering around longevity. In the spring of 2008, for example, the ABC Barbara Walters Special, "Living to 150—Can You Do It?" aired on network television. In one segment, it featured five centenarians, four of whom are included in *Celebrate 100*: Elsa Hoffmann; Lillian Cox; Karl Hartzell, PhD; and Rosie Ross. The fifth centenarian, Dorothy Young, was a performer who lived in New Jersey, and was the last living assistant to the magician Harry Houdini. The others traveled from their homes in Florida and Arizona to New York to be interviewed by Ms. Walters, who mentioned the Special in her book, *Audition*, as being one of her favorites in her long career. She related especially to Lillian Cox, she said, because of Lillian's resilience.

After the taping, the group traveled by limousine to (then) Tavern on the Green, their choice, for carriage rides through Central Park and a lovely dinner. "The after-party was almost as exciting as the main event," Elsa observed. "But it was a thrill to be interviewed by Ms. Walters, and to be on national television. A few weeks later, a film crew attended my birthday gala and footage was included."

In December of the following year, Ruth Proskauer Smith, 102, and Captain Jose Grant, 101, appeared on a network TV special, "GO! New York." Ruth, a native New Yorker, was featured because of her active lifestyle and civic involvement in her later years. For two decades she has led a weekly seminar at the City College of New York about the Supreme Court for a group of retired professionals. As an intrepid New Yorker, she travels from her home at the Dakota by subway each week. Ruth's father was a prominent New York judge and lawyer, and confidant and speechwriter of Alfred E. Smith, four-time governor of New York and unsuccessful candidate for president. Governor Smith gave Ruth her first lesson in public speaking, when, while a student at Radcliffe College, she was called upon at the last minute to introduce him at a large political event. "I was so nervous," she says, "and I didn't want to do it. But he assured me to speak my mind and I would do fine. So I did, and have been doing it—successfully—ever since."



Centenarians with Lynn in New York

Joseph “Jose” Grant was included because of his continuing role in aviation and the jewelry business he founded in Stamford, Connecticut, after retiring as a Captain from TWA. He started flying as a barnstormer in the 20s and went on to become the private pilot for the King of Saudi Arabia in the 40s, and then joined TWA. He still frequently pilots his son’s private plane. Captain Grant returned to Saudi Arabia at the age of 99 and again at 101, to renew his acquaintance with the Saudi Royal Family; he helped to found their national airline in the late 40s. Recently, at 101, during the Oshkosh Air Show, actor Harrison Ford remarked “Jose was more like Indiana Jones than I was.” Jose’s advice to viewers of the show was: “Enjoy your life!”

Fitness magazine (Spring 2011) included four centenarians in an article encouraging healthy diet and exercise as a way to age well. Beatrice McLellan, 100, was disappointed she was not included, despite “pumping iron.” New Yorker Ruth Korbin, 101, was featured in an article in the November 2012 issue of *Pilates Style* magazine as possibly the oldest Pilates student at 101. Ruth looks beautiful and stylish in the two-page spread. She began Pilates when she was 85.

Dr. Frank Shearer, 101, of Washington state, a retired family physician, made the cover of *National Geographic* and a host of other print media because of his continued passion for water skiing and horseback riding (he was shown, also, in the background segment of the ABC Barbara Walters Special).

Verla Morris was featured in March 2012 in a syndicated newspaper article covering the release of the 1940 census data. Verla, an avid amateur genealogist and computer whiz and all-around active new centenarian, was interviewed for her opinion on the relevance of the release of the census data, which some people oppose as an invasion of privacy. “I think it’s a good thing,” she told the reporter, and went on to explain why she thought so, from her perspective; she was actually included in the data.

“If I can be of help to someone, encouraging them to get off the couch and get out and move, then I’m glad to do it,” Frank Shearer says. Garnett Beckman, 101, is always pleased to “help,” as she puts it. She has a lovely speaking voice and does a lot of radio interviews. Elsa feels the same motivation as Frank and Garnett, but also admits to enjoying the limelight. “I had to wait until I was 100 to become a celebrity,” she

says, “and I love it!” Lillian does, too, although she’s a bit coy about expressing it. “That’s part of my Southern charm, darlin’,” she says with a smile.

Rosie, 102, is miffed that he’s not the only centenarian musician being featured in the media, but he’s enjoying all the attention he’s receiving. Rosie has played a regular Friday night gig to a packed house at a supper club in Prescott, Arizona, for the past 20 years. “Total strangers come up and give me a kiss after a set and thank me for the good time they’re having. I’ve always liked the ladies. This is fun!” When asked how long he intends to continue, Rosie says, “As long as people want to hear Clyde McCoy’s ‘Sugar Blues,’ or ‘You Made Me Love You,’ I’ll live to play it for them.”

The major media interest in including centenarians as role models is substantive. These aren’t just social gatherings or birthday parties being covered. Elsa was again featured in a *U.S. News and World Report* article entitled “A Long Life: 7 People, Sailing Past 90 with Lots Left to Do.” Garnett has appeared in a *Christian Science Monitor* article, “Redefining Longevity” (April 2010).

These are just a few examples of what is possible in our later years if we not only live long, but age well; active centenarians no longer behave like people who are 100 years old. They say they are not feeling it, either. This is good news for Boomers—and everyone—that well over two thirds of our centenarians report that they feel significantly younger than their chronological age. Many say they feel 80 or less and a few mentioned they feel mentally between 25 and 30.

“The secret is to not act your age,” Marvin Kneudson, 100, offers.

The centenarians in *Celebrate 100* will tell you it’s worth the effort to try to remain healthy and stay active. The fields of medicine, genetics, and technology are working overtime to come up with ways to make this feeling widely available.

Astrid Thoeing, 103, who is still working full time at her family insurance business in New Jersey as the office manager, says the trick is to not think you’re old. “I don’t feel old and I don’t think old.”



Leonard “Rosie” Ross



“Everybody wants to live to 100, but no one wants to feel old,” agreed centenarian twin sisters Lois Fisher and Eloise Rogers.

THE AGE OF CENTENARIANS: A MILLION OR MORE BY 2050?

Depending on the data source referenced, there are estimated to be between 55,000 to 80,000 current centenarians in the United States, with predictions ranging from 600,000 to over 1 million by 2050.

Over the past 20 years, the ratio of those in the United States 100 and over rose from 1 in every 10,000 people to 1 in every 6,000 people. As a result, centenarians are considered to be one of the fastest, if not the fastest, growing segments of our population. Eight out of ten centenarians are women. To put this in perspective, consider that in 2012, a newborn has a 29.9 percent chance of living to be 100; someone born in 1912 had only a 0.7 percent chance of reaching the century mark. And with medical and genetic advances growing at a rapid pace, good health in later years is becoming more the norm than the exception.

Supercentenarians

Those living to very advanced age—110 and over—have been on the rise as well, thus gaining their own subset as “supercentenarians.” Currently, there are an estimated 70 verified supercentenarians in the United States. No one has yet defeated the verified world record holder, Madame Jeanne Calment, of France, who lived to 122 years, 164 days.

It was our privilege to interview several supercentenarians, including the oldest, Besse Cooper, 116, who became the world’s oldest living person in 2011. She turned 116 in August 2012, only the eighth person in the world to verifiably reach this remarkable age.

Walter Breuning became the world’s oldest living man at 114.


The ever delightful Dr. Leila Denmark, also 114, has been a friend since turning 100.

Beatrice Farve, 113, was, at the time we met her, the second-oldest person in the United States. She was still selling Avon products until she turned 100 and drove her car until age 106.

THE WISDOM OF CENTENARIANS: AUTHENTIC—EXPERIENCE, NOT THEORY

What is best about centenarian wisdom and advice is that it is authentic: No theory—tried and true—they have lived it. Each has his or her own experience to share. They have learned about coping with life through every imaginable economic, political, social, and technological change. Their advice is timeless because the basics do not change: having enough money to live, buying a home, raising children, investing for the future. Some of their advice may be new to us and our way of thinking and differ from the way we handle our financial matters now, but timeless in the positive effect it can have on our future.

We talked to people with such disparate backgrounds as Irving Kahn, who at 107 was still working on Wall Street, to Porter Edwards, 105, who had lived all his life in South Georgia, and had earned the money to pay for the 40-acre farm on which he still lived alone by planting and picking crops.


“If I didn’t have cash to pay for it, I didn’t buy it,”
says Porter Edwards, 105.

Surprisingly, the amount of money people had amassed, or not, had no effect on their outlook. Again, it really boils down to the basics: do not spend more than you earn, make saving and investing an integral part of living; avoid getting in over your head with debt; don’t waste money paying interest on credit cards; and plan for your future—because you just might live to be 100.

“Don’t discount the possibility of living a long life,” advises Lillian Cox of Tallahassee, Florida. “I did, and it was my biggest financial mistake.” Lillian sold her

successful business at age 65 because she assumed that she wouldn't live past age 70. Her advice is relevant to today's generation of Boomers who are charging into their 60s in record numbers, and who are facing many difficult decisions.

Lillian's resourcefulness has allowed her to continue to maintain her own home and to live a fulfilling life; she's now 106. "But still, once money is gone, it's gone."

One important aspect of money that is often overlooked is the amount of stress it can cause on a person's health and life. Centenarians had a lot to say about that. They also offered advice on work and choosing one's career: if you can, do what you love, and you will be successful.



"If you're not pleased, change. Do something you enjoy," Joe Stonis, 100, advises.

Gordy Miller of San Francisco, the world's oldest sailor, confided that sailing was the thing he enjoyed and said he only worked so he could afford to sail. It was still his passion when we visited him at age 100.

While centenarians as a group were conservative about how they handled their finances, they were not so about career and work advice and felt strongly about making the most of one's work life and career path.




"If you don't like it, you'd better get out of it," advises Mabel McCleary, 104.

The overwhelming majority of centenarians experienced meaning, purpose, and fulfillment in their work, whether it was in business or corporate America, a factory or a farm, or as an entrepreneur, salesman, or homemaker. They felt it was important because so much of one's life is spent working.

A Good Life

In addition to the questions about money and work, which we fully cover in Chapters 3 and 4, we go on to ask questions about how we can live longer and fuller lives. After all,

active centenarians demonstrate that a good quality of life is attainable in later years. Along these lines, we asked, “How would you define the word *rich*?” There were various answers, of course, that ran from being a millionaire to having the love of family.


*“Being rich for me is living to 100! I feel like I’ve won a prize,”
 declared Gloria Posata, a new centenarian.*

For Rosie Ross, the answer came easily: “Having enough extra money to buy a new trumpet,” the musician said. It’s the first thing Rosie did when he arrived in New York City for the Barbara Walters Special.

Often, our centenarians equated being rich with having good health: “I don’t care about being a millionaire. I am a millionaire now—I’m healthy,” says Bernando LaPallo, 107.


“If you have your health, you have everything,” says Rosella Mathieu, 100.

Many centenarians agree and emphasize that one of the most important things a person can do in his or her life is to take good care of their health. In Chapter 2 we explore lifestyle choices people can make on their way to becoming a centenarian and take a look at what’s on the horizon in genetics and medicine that will help us all live longer, healthier, and better lives.

But for now, we need to focus on the things we can control.

NATIONAL TREASURES: UNIQUE—INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY

As our eldest citizens, centenarians are our national treasures. There is no one else like them. Individually and collectively, they represent the wisdom, wit, and spirit of America’s last 100 years and more. This status and their contributions to the building of America as we know it are being recognized on local, state, and national levels.



Manuel Vicente Osorio

Manuel Vicente Osorio became a naturalized citizen on the day before his 101st birthday. He was the first Arizonan and the 11th person in the country to become a naturalized citizen at 100 years old or older.

*“It was one of the proudest moments in my life;
it was my lifelong dream to become an American citizen,”
says Manuel.*

In 2012, Arizona and New Mexico each celebrated the 100th anniversary of its admission to statehood. Arizona used the celebration of centenarians as a centerpiece of its anniversary activities by hosting luncheons throughout the state honoring centenarians in their local areas. In Phoenix, on Statehood Day, February 14, the Arizona Centennial Celebration was kicked off with a luncheon honoring the 66 centenarians in attendance. The Centenarian Spirit was on full display.

We met Art Fortier as we stepped off the elevator at the Sheraton Hotel ballroom in downtown Phoenix. For a few minutes we were not sure if he was one of the honored guests or one of the attending family members. Dapper in a dark blue suit, crisp white shirt, and red tie, Art was grinning from ear to ear. “It’s great to be here,” he said, as we made our way through the crowd to the registration desk. It was only when he was given a boutonniere that we were certain he was a centenarian.

Finding that we were not seated with any of the centenarians, we set off to visit the other tables where centenarians and their families were gathering. To our delight, we soon found several centenarians we had interviewed for this book three years earlier. We spotted Maynard White and his daughter, Diane; Maynard was engrossed in conversation with Ralph Wilson, the centenarian seated to his left, comparing the current economic problems with those of the Depression era. We learned from Louis Reitz that he was still living in his own home, playing the organ in his living room, and riding his

bicycle around the retirement community. Lucille Myers was still living in her apartment and volunteering at the senior center.

Teddy Schalow, a former switchboard operator at the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York City, and its oldest retiree, demanded to know, "Where have you been?" We said we had been in the East and recently had lunch at the Waldorf. "How is the place?" she asked. "That was some bash they threw for me at the hotel on my 100th birthday."

We were surprised when soon-to-be-100 Verla Morris gave us her e-mail address instead of her telephone number and said, "Keep in touch." Another centenarian maneuvered skillfully between the tables on her scooter. If anyone ever doubted that active centenarians could and would keep pace with life and technology, they are wrong. And if anyone ever thought that they would outgrow their enthusiasm for life, love, and enjoyment as they aged, here was living proof they were mistaken.

Walking hand in hand through the throng, one couple stood out—he in a bright red sport jacket and she in a red skirt with a festive white blouse. "Happy Valentine's Day," she said to everyone they passed. "Happy Statehood Day," we said when we caught up with them. We mistakenly assumed the gentleman was the centenarian until his bubbly wife interrupted, saying, "I'm the centenarian! I robbed the cradle—he's 95," and off they went.

Back at our table, we enjoyed watching the video presentation of centenarians who were not at the event. One had been a Navaho Code Talker during World War II. It was interesting to hear, in his own words, how he and other Native American recruits developed the method of battlefield communication so instrumental in America's success in the Pacific.

As the program was nearing its end, we stood along a side wall, looking out over the crowd as they sang the centennial song, "I Love You, Arizona," each waving a small Arizona state flag in time to the music. In front of us was a centenarian flanked by her daughter and granddaughter, who had flown in from New York especially to attend the event with her grandmother. As the centenarian raised her arm to wave the flag, the sleeve of her jacket slipped back, revealing a series of faded numbers on her forearm—the tragic markings of a Holocaust survivor.

We were reminded, as we watched her, of Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl's renowned work, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Simon & Schuster, Inc., New York, 1959, 1962, 1984), in which he, also a survivor of the Holocaust, argues that life is unconditionally meaningful and that one's sense of purpose is adaptable. "We create meaning through choices and actions as we move through life," he writes. "Meaning unfolds along with the changes in the life cycle. . . . Life can be meaningful by being an example to others."

It is instructive to recognize how much this generation of centenarians has lived through and witnessed. They are a diverse group of distinctive individuals, not only because of the lives they have lived, but also how they are living and continuing to recreate their lives at 100 and beyond. They are impressive, not only in their numbers, but in their health, vitality, activities, and interests. Every centenarian brings special knowledge from his or her life. This collective experience presents a kaleidoscope of America's history over the past 100-plus years, made up of the same events, but each represented by a slightly different story. The richness of this experience is mirrored in every centenarian throughout the country, and is the hallmark of *Celebrate 100*.

CAMEOS OF TODAY'S CENTENARIANS

Elsa Brehm Hoffmann, Entrepreneur

Elsa has never let age stop her from accomplishing her goals. At 18, she brought the love of her life home to meet her parents, assuming that since he was from the same close-knit German immigrant community, they would readily give their approval for them to marry. Bill, 10 years her senior, had just started his own roofing business in Yonkers, New York. After he left, her mother voiced her disapproval, citing the tar under his fingernails as making him unacceptable. "Ma—that's money!" Elsa exclaimed.

They married, and Elsa worked with her husband to build a successful business, using the skills she had learned working for her father in the office of his bakery supply business. When their four children were grown, the couple began to spend the winters in



Elsa Hoffman

South Florida and soon bought a small hotel, catering to fellow “snowbirds.” When they moved permanently to Florida, they expanded and created a small resort, which became very popular. Elsa continued to run the resort after she was widowed at age 68, selling it in her mid-70s. With the proceeds and the money she had saved, Elsa bought a beautiful new condominium overlooking the inland waterway, and began investing in real estate.

“I’ve never actually retired,” the vivacious centenarian says. “I handle all my own finances and several rental properties, and I continue to invest when the market is right.” Elsa’s drive has allowed her to live a high-quality life in her later years. She travels frequently, usually taking one of her daughters along as her companion, has a busy social life with lots of friends, and loves her new car. “I enjoy being an example to others—if I can do it, they can, too,” she believes. “It makes me happy to hear people say I inspire them. I played golf until I was 98,” she says proudly.



John and Marian Donnelly

John Donnelly, Bon Vivant

“I was sitting in the dentist’s waiting room,” Marian begins, “when this man came over and introduced himself. I thought, ‘Who is this old guy?’ I was in my late 60s at the time. He asked me out—can you imagine! I didn’t want to hurt his feelings so I said yes, dreading a boring evening. But he picked me up in a sporty car, dressed in a sharp sport jacket, took me for an elegant dinner and then to the symphony in Sarasota. I offered to drive home—it was quite late—but he just held the passenger door open for me.

“That was the beginning of a whirlwind romance. We married in eight months and I moved into his large apartment at an upscale retirement center. John’s calendar is always full, and he plans meticulously. He has his office in the sunroom, and I’ve turned the second bedroom into mine. We each have our own computers.”

“I’ve always been fiscally prudent,” John says, “and now I’m enjoying the benefit. But I had a chance to make a sizeable investment by buying an annuity when I was 90, so I took a risk and bet on myself.

It's paid off very nicely." Of course, John is quick to point out that his decision was well informed. "As a retired stockbroker, I have the experience to know what I'm doing. I handle all my own affairs. I enjoy going out, staying active, and being able to afford to entertain my family and friends. Marian had never been to Europe, so we spent three weeks there celebrating my 100th birthday, a couple of months in advance."

The same summer, John received a call from a producer of the *Tonight Show*, inviting him to be a guest. "That was really a surprise. I was sitting in my office one afternoon working on my bills. I was 99, about to turn 100 in the fall. I think they were interested in me because of the medals I've won playing table tennis. I am the oldest champion in the country and have been attending all the Senior Games, both nationally and in Florida, for years.

"They flew Marian and me to Burbank, California, and put us up in a nice hotel—all expenses paid (I wouldn't have gone otherwise). We had a great time. I played table tennis—he called it ping-pong—for a couple of minutes with Jay. Marian was seated in the front row, and they turned the camera on my bride. We'd been married for four years at that point, and I said we were still like newlyweds. That got a laugh from the audience and a skeptical look from Jay, but it's true."

Jack Borden, Lawyer

For Jack Borden, work and community service are their own rewards. "I always wanted to be a country lawyer," Jack says, sitting behind his large desk piled high with papers and files, "and I've been at it for over 70 years and counting. I have no intention to retire—they'll have to carry me out of here." As if to prove his point, on his desk is a small plaque that reads: "Old age and treachery will overcome youth and skill." Many of his clients are second and third generation. "Jack was my father's lawyer," one of his clients tells. "He's trusted by our family and we're lucky to have him around."



Jack Borden

“The law is a great profession,” Jack says, in his easy-going, relaxed manner. “You can be a lawyer as long as people come to you for advice. If I didn’t come to work every day, I think I’d be gone in six months. I enjoy helping people, and if I had to come in a wheelchair, I’d do that, too.”

Interspersed with his legal career, Jack has served a four-year term as Parker County, Texas, district attorney; a four-year term as his town’s mayor; and spent four years with the FBI during WWII, because he was refused enlistment in active duty due to a vision problem. When the war was over, Jack returned to Weatherford, Texas, and became a founding member of the Sheriff’s Posse, a group to which he still belongs, although he points out that he no longer rides a horse. He has been a member of the Masonic Lodge for 70 years.

Along with this service, philanthropy in his community has been one of the great joys of Jack’s life. The well-being of children has always been closest to his heart. Jack and his wife, Edith, lived the life of a two-career couple long before it became popular. Edith was a professor at the local college and was also a lawyer. “She was my equal in every way,” Jack recalls fondly. “We never had children of our own, so we loved everyone else’s and tried to take care of those in need.” Jack and Edith established scholarships to the local college and were instrumental in the development of a local children’s medical center.

At the age of 95, Jack was voted Citizen of the Year by the Weatherford Chamber of Commerce. Given his resume, one might think it was about time. But Jack shrugs it off and says it gives him bragging rights to be Citizen of the Year at such advanced age. He is the co-host of a local radio show at well past 100, and continues to serve as a greeter at his church, which he has done for most of his adult life. At 102, he was named America’s Outstanding Oldest Worker. But his greatest honor came that same year when a new road through town was named after him. It was a blustery, cold day, but Jack was determined to cut the ribbon opening the road.

In response to the question, “What is the best thing about being 100,” Jack replied: “To share with others what the past has taught me. It’s also a bonus that my brother, C.B., has now hit the century mark, too.”

Jack credits a positive outlook on life as one of the factors contributing to his longevity, as well as his desire to continue working. Overall, though, he says, “I think one of the reasons I’ve lived so long is that I love life. That’s really the important thing.”

Dr. Will Miles Clark and Lois Clark, Centenarian Couple

It’s difficult to be serious when describing Dr. Clark and his wife, Lois, because their joy and merriment in life and in each other is contagious. They met when Lois joined Dr. Clark’s dental practice in Iowa, as a hygienist and his assistant. “I knew the minute I hired her that my bachelor days were about to come to an end,” Will says, smiling



Dr. and Mrs. Clark

broadly. “So we married and did the usual things—kids, house—and everything was going along smoothly until my 38th birthday when I received a telegram ordering me to report for active military duty in two weeks. They were sending me to the Pacific theatre. Imagine my surprise at this unwelcome gift! It was the last possible day that I could be drafted. We were distraught but resolved. There was nothing that could be done. Eventually, I ended up in California, waiting to ship out any day. When Lois found out that I was still in the country, she packed up the kids and immediately drove to the base to spend the last few days together. Turns out, we had several weeks. I was amazed—no one else’s wife did that, that I knew of. That’s my Lois!”

Lois continued to keep their life running for the next three years, until Will returned. Eventually, they retired to Arizona. “We love to travel,” Lois says. “Will is a very good driver. We have a van. Sometimes we’ll be sitting at the breakfast table reading the paper and get the idea we should go someplace—our son lives in California, our daughter in Colorado—and off we go, just like that.”

One of a very few centenarian couples, Will and Lois are devoted to each other and loved their independence, living in their own apartment. Then one morning Lois slipped getting up and was wedged between the bed and a night table. “Will tried to free her and injured his back. They finally were able to call 911 and both spent several grueling months recovering from their injuries in a rehab center. “We were determined to return to our apartment for our 76th wedding anniversary,” Will said, “although our son wanted us to move to a retirement center. I made sure Lois, who has never exercised, did all of her physical therapy, and we made it about three days before the celebration. Our children and their families came and we had a lovely time.

“Soon after, though, our son began pestering us to move, so we made it impossible for him to find a place we would agree to—we told him we had to have a place that would accommodate our king-size bed. Darned if he didn’t find the perfect place! We took one look at the brand new apartment with a view of the mountains outside of Tucson, and a doorway to the bedroom large enough to fit the bed, and we said, ‘Let’s move.’ I have a parking space for the van, and we can have our meals in the dining room if we choose.

“After we were settled in, I took up the computer,” Will continues. “I hired a young man who comes once a week to give me instruction, and I work at it on my own every

day. I enjoy sending e-mails, and it's amazing how I can look up things I didn't think I needed to know. We still enjoy traveling, and our son and his wife come to visit often; we always go and see something new. This past visit we went to the Roosevelt Dam, just because we'd never seen it before. We also went back to my dental school reunion in Iowa—boy, were they surprised to see me!”

Lois takes all the credit for being able to afford to live in their retirement community. “I was always very frugal with money,” she explains. “Will, not so much. He would say, ‘buy a new dress,’ and I’d say, ‘I don’t need a new dress’—so I’d save the money.” “With Lois being stingy and tight, we have a little nest egg now,” he said, smiling.

Don and Kay Lyon—Just Cruisin’

“All days are happy days,” says Don Lyon, 102. Don grew up in Carson City, Michigan, and graduated from the University of Michigan in 1929.

“I was lucky to get a job; things were pretty rough during the Depression. Young people today don’t know what a depression is. The economic problems we are going through now are not nearly as bad. Those in my generation spent our 20s and 30s just trying to make it through, let alone get ahead.”

With his degree in electrical engineering, Don was able to get a job with General Electric, based on the recommendation of one of his professors. “I moved to Cleveland. People all around were out of work.”

Don stayed for a time, but when his father became ill he returned home to run the family flour mill. “The mill had been in our family for three generations and no changes had been made. It was obsolete. I made a lot of improvements so it could be sold. I then used the money to buy up three farms in the area, and I had several acres of top land.” Knowing nothing about farming, Don hired a professional to help manage and run the farms.



Kay and Don Lyon

“When times got better, I sold them and that’s what gave me the money to make my start in life. During the early 1950s the stock market was going crazy. If a person had any money to invest, you could do very well.”

During WWII Don worked as a project manager in Detroit making instrumentation for aircraft, and then was offered a job in New York State, which he describes as his “dream job.” I moved to Rochester and took up boating as a hobby, first sailboats on Lake Ontario and Canandaigua Lake. I joined the Rochester Yacht Club. “I would stay on my boat on weekends—I had a great life there.”

Eventually, Don bought a cabin cruiser and all of his free time during good weather was spent on the water. In 1971, he retired and he and his wife moved to Florida. “The first thing I did was buy a boat, a cruiser, the largest I could get and still pull it on a trailer—it was about 20 feet. We traveled all over Florida on the inland waterways. People don’t think of that, of seeing Florida by boat.”

Meanwhile, Kay, a native of Columbus, Ohio, had retired to Florida with her husband in 1969. The couples belonged to the same church, and Don and Kay were widowed at around the same time.

“For a couple of years I didn’t go out, except to church,” Kay explains. “Don approached me, but I told him we could just be friends, and we were. Then one day after church, he grabbed me and said we should start dating. Soon he asked me to marry him, but I told him I wasn’t ready. After about a year, I said to him one day, ‘OK, let’s get married.’ The next day he took me to buy a ring. What I had never let on was that I had been smitten with Don from the first, even though he is 14 years older. Now, I admitted it. And I still am, after 21 years of marriage. Even now, if we’ve been apart, when I see him walk into a room I still get a thrill. It’s wonderful to know I love him so much, and he loves me.”

The happy couple had a big Greek wedding, and Kay introduced Don to her large, vivacious family, including her two children. “Now Don has two children and lots of grandchildren and nieces and nephews—they all love him,” Kay says with pride.

And Don introduced Kay to his other love: boating. “I had never been on a boat before,” Kay admits. “The first time, I asked him how he learned to drive a boat, and he said with disgust, ‘You don’t drive a boat, you pilot it.’ That’s how green I was.

But I learned, and we've had a lot of good times on large and small boats. We've taken 16 or 17 cruises."

"We've been all over," Don adds, "Morocco, a lot of exotic places. The last trip was to Greece."

"We had such a wonderful time," Kay says, taking over the conversation again. "I got to meet cousins. Don was impressed that I could speak the language, but I grew up speaking Greek because my parents were immigrants and that was the language at home. I had to learn English when I started school. On the way over we met a couple on the ship and became friends and exchanged addresses. When I happened to mention them to my Greek cousins, I learned that the woman and I were second cousins! What a surprise! I called her the next day at their hotel and said, 'Hello Cousin,' and we've visited each other here at home ever since. Life is full of surprises."

Don is a quiet, thoughtful man, a "deep thinker," as his lively wife describes him. Kay is gregarious and always cheerful. "We don't let things bother us," she says, "We enjoy life."

Don adds, "The last 20 years have been the best years of my life. We have each other, we like where we live, and we're doing all right."

A CENTURY OF PROGRESS: THEIR CENTURY

The twentieth century ushered in more changes than any other time in history, most of them progress, for example, women's right to vote; some epoch, such as Prohibition; some long overdue, such as the civil rights movement; some the result of threatening and challenging world events including two world wars; some the result of lack of regulation of the economy, for instance, the Great Depression.

In reviewing the past 100 years, centenarians have seen a technological revolution from vacuum tubes to digital transistors and ultimately the integrated circuit that drives today's small and highly complex electronic devices so prevalent in the modern world. These include the widespread use of computers and cell phones, calculators, microwave ovens, TV remote controls, VCRs, cable TV, air conditioners, all with varying degrees of sophistication.

This revolution has made possible such extraordinary achievements as putting a man on the moon and enabling the genetic research that is under way today to find keys to longevity, the “genie in the genes.”

Louis Rolland, 100, says he is “very interested in the new technology and gadgets that abound.” Jennie Skovich, 100, has fun playing video games, and especially likes Wii bowling. Lois Bowles, 100, enjoys surfing the web and corresponding via email as many centenarians also report.

Some centenarians, just like the rest of us, are more adept at learning technology than others, of course.

Nellie Masser is one centenarian who is not intimidated by technology and embraces it. “We’ve learned to use more devices in our lifetimes than there are today, albeit not as complicated as the computer. We went from an operator-based phone service and party lines to unassisted calling with a rotary phone. Then they came up with push-button phones, which were a big step for a lot of people. And portable phones—I saw a cartoon the other day where a young child asked her mother why the phone was attached to the wall at her grandmother’s house.”

“Looking back on it, we went from black-and-white silent movies to ‘talkies,’ and then to Technicolor. We went from music on records to tapes and then CDs. And we had the first televisions.”



*“I don’t know why everyone’s so surprised that I use a computer.”
Nellie Masser says. “After all, I just traded in my bingo card for a keyboard.
Now I check the stock market.”*

“In all aspects of life—personal, social, technological, scientific, medical, professional—there were changes within my lifetime,” Dr. Karl Hartzell explains. “It wasn’t just physical things and developments; customs and moral attitudes have changed, too.”

In his self-published autobiography, *My First Hundred Years: A Look Back from the Finish Line*, Waldo McBurney, who lives in a small town in Kansas, enjoys a reputation as America’s oldest beekeeper. Recounting the changes in modern conveniences over his century of life, he said, “I grew up on my family’s farm, where life was a lot of hard

work. I had a wise and thrifty mother, who would run circles around Martha Stewart in the housekeeping department. She taught me to count my blessings and to appreciate the modern-day conveniences as they came along. Her personal favorite was the electric washing machine.”

“Some of us remember the early radios,” a centenarian remarked. “A neighbor had the first one on our street and sometimes in the early evening he’d set it up on the porch and folks would come and set up chairs on the front lawn to listen. There weren’t many programs then. His wife often served lemonade to the ladies and there was beer for the men.”



“As a youngster, I fell in love with baseball and radio. I built my first radio at the age of nine. It worked! That was really exciting.”
says Charles “Cliff” Kayhart, 100.

In the popular comic strip *Dick Tracy*, his two-way wrist radio first appeared in 1948. Fascinated, scientifically inclined kids built crystal set radios and marveled at getting one station clearly in their headset. Now, a little more than a half-century later, these same “kids” can conduct a video call with their grandchildren anywhere in the world on a handheld device, in color, for free.

Foreshadowing all of these technological advances, a decade or less before our centenarians were born, Charles Duell, a lawyer, Commissioner of the U.S. Patent and Trade office (1889–1901), and a member of the New York State Assembly, predicted in 1902:

“In my opinion, all previous advances in the various lines of invention will appear totally insignificant when compared with those which the present century will witness. I almost wish that I might live my life over again to see the wonders which are at the threshold.”

CHARLES DUELL, “THE FRIEND,” VOL. 76, 1902, P. 28

Mr. Duell was really insightful, considering all that has been developed since his forecast.

A Century of Innovation

Following are but a few examples of the innovations of the past century that we take for granted today:

1900	Modern escalator invented.
1901	The first radio receiver successfully received a radio transmission.
1902	Willis Carrier invents the air conditioner.
1903	The Wright Brothers invent the first gas-motored and manned airplane.
1905	Albert Einstein published the Theory of Relativity ($E = mc^2$).
1907	Color photography invented.
1908	Model T first sold.
1910	Thomas Edison demonstrated the first talking motion picture.
1918	Super heterodyne radio circuit invented (every radio or television uses this).
1922	Insulin invented.
1923	Traffic signal invented.
1924	Dynamic loudspeaker invented.
1926	Robert H. Goddard invents liquid-fueled rockets.
1927	Complete electronic TV system invented.
1928	Scottish biologist Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin.
1929	American Paul Galvin invents the car radio.
1930	Scotch tape patented by 3M engineer Richard G. Drew.
1932	Polaroid photography invented by Edwin Herbert Land.
1933	Stereo records invented.

1934	First tape recorder for broadcasting invented.
1935	Robert Watson-Watt patented radar.
1936	First electric automatic washing machines.
1937	Chester Carlson invents the photocopier, and the first jet engine is built.
1939	Igor Sikorsky invents the first successful helicopter.
1940	Modern color television system invented.
1941	Aerosol spray cans invented.
1942	A turboprop engine is designed.
1944	Kidney dialysis machine invented.
1945	Atomic bomb invented.
1946	Microwave oven invented.
1947	Charles Yeager broke the sound barrier.
1948	Velcro® invented.
1950	First credit card (Diners).
1951	Power steering invented.
1952	First patent for bar code.
1953	Transistor radio invented.
1954	Oral contraceptives invented, and Ray Kroc started McDonald's.
1958	Laser invented.

1959	Internal pacemaker and the microchip invented.
1960	Halogen lamp invented.
1962	Wal-Mart founded by Sam Walton.
1963	Video disc and push-button telephone invented.
1965	Compact disc invented.
1966	Electronic fuel injection for cars invented.
1967	First handheld calculator invented.
1968	Computer mouse invented.
1969	Neil Armstrong first man on the moon.
1971	VCR and videocassette invented.
1972	Word processor invented.
1973	Ethernet (local computer network) invented.
1975	Laser printer invented.
1976	First landing on Mars.
1977	First commercial Concorde supersonic flight London to New York.
1977	Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) invented.
1978	Artificial heart Jarvik-7 invented.
1981	IBM-PC invented.
1984	Apple Macintosh invented.

1985	Windows invented by Microsoft.
1987	Disposable contact lenses invented.
1988	Digital cellular phones invented.
1990	World Wide Web created.
1991	Digital answering machine invented.
1993	GPS satellites and positioning.
1995	DVD players and movies.
1996	First digital (filmless) cameras introduced.
1997	Wi-Fi technology.
2000	iPod introduced.
2003	First hybrid cars.
2004	Facebook launched.
2006	Electronic book readers introduced (Kindle).
2007	iPhone introduced.
2010	iPad introduced.
2011	Digital music sales outpaced CDs for the first time.
2012	Speech-operated devices in accelerated development; iPhone Siri is released as part of the iPhone 4S.
2013	Heart-powered (no battery replacement needed) pacemakers are being developed.

The balance of the twenty-first century should offer no less a spectacular array of significant advances that will help to enhance everyone's quality of life.

