

## **THIS MONTH'S FEATURES:**

### **TIME WELL SPENT**

Michigan Couple Sails into an Innovative Approach to Downsizing their Home

**PAGE: 10**

### **CAREGIVER TSUNAMI**

Inspirational Caregiving Expert Lynn Alexander Shares her New Book

**PAGE: 4**



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### THE BEST OF AGING

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## From the Publisher

Our launch last month of *The Best of Aging* was received very well in the community. I was overwhelmed with the positive feedback and support from the readers and advertisers. For those of you just opening us up for the first time, we are a monthly magazine devoted to celebrating and promoting the mature audience. Mature can be defined as a 100+ year old reader, a reader that is in their 30's or 40's that has experienced and gained wisdom from the many lessons that life offers, and everything in-between.

As a publisher and writer, my philosophy is to be interested in, sensitive to, and tolerant of other cultures, traditions, and ways of life. I am intrigued with the human spirit in all different shapes and sizes and believe that everyone has a story to tell. However, I don't believe in the philosophy of "political correctness" as it is generally practiced. Mostly it is practiced as a form of bringing everything down to the lowest common denominator. In other words, you are not allowed to promote the good and the virtuous amongst us in fear that it may diminish others.

In Marianne Williamson's book, *A Return To Love: Reflections on the Principles of a Course in Miracles*, she brilliantly says, "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light

shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

My son had a run in with the concept of political correctness gone awry a few years ago. He has been involved with soccer programs over the past ten years and advanced from a player to a referee and finally as a coach of a youth soccer team. As a coach, he wanted to boost the self-confidence in the players by awarding them with a special trophy at the end of the season. This trophy was paid for in part by the parents who could financially contribute and the rest was made up from my son. This was not a secret process as other coaches and parents had the same opportunity to coordinate a trophy for their players, yet none of them chose to take the time to do this.

During the award ceremony, which took place on the soccer field after the final game of the season, many of the players from the other teams noticed the trophies and were upset that they didn't receive the same recognition. Instead of explaining to the children that this was a good thing and that it was simply something the other parents and coaches chose not to do for them... you guessed it, the lowest common denominator was reached. Complaints to the soccer league officials were so rough that they had to institute a policy for the next season that disallowed trophies or gifts to participants.

When *The Best of Aging* has an article that promotes a particular person, place or tradition, please don't believe that our intentions are to diminish your beliefs or traditions. We welcome your stories and ideas for advancing the best in all of us.

As always, I hope you enjoy and achieve *The Best of Aging* in your life.

*Jeff Collison*  
Publisher, *The Best of Aging*

## Wise Guy

By Tait Trussell

If somebody calls you a wise guy, they may be right. But it's wise in the best sense of the word, not a derogatory crack.

New research indicates that, with age, often comes wisdom — as far as knowing how to handle conflicts and accepting change and uncertainties. "Age effects on wisdom hold at every level of social class, education, and IQ," researchers at the University of Michigan have reported in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Among the elderly there's no question that a small fraction are handicapped by dementia. But psychologist Richard E. Nisbett, lead researcher in a group of six scholars, said, "our results do indicate that the elderly have some advantages for analysis of social problems."

This finding may not surprise many seniors who —without prideful puffery— are dead sure that they show more competence for reasoning about social dilemmas and conflicts. Moreover, the study itself said: "The idea of age-related gains in wisdom is consistent with views of the aging mind in developmental psychology."

"We asked participants (nearly 300 people divided into three groups, aged 25 to 40, 41 to 59, and 60 plus) to read stories about inter-group conflicts and interpersonal conflicts and predict how

these conflicts would unfold. Participants read three newspaper articles describing an inter-group conflict with two strong groups opposing each other. The topics were immigration, ethnic tensions, and natural resources. They occurred in a fictional country. After the participants had read each story, an interviewer read out loud a summary of each story. Afterward, the interviewer instructed participants to talk about future developments of the conflict, guided by these three questions: "What do you think will happen after that?"; "Anything else?"; and "Why do you think it will happen this way?"

The researchers found that "older people make more use of higher-order reasoning schemes that emphasize the need for multiple perspectives, allow for compromise, and recognize the limits of knowledge." The study results "suggest that it might be advisable to assign older individuals to social roles involving legal decisions, counseling, and inter-group negotiations."

Some participants offered advice in addition to a prediction of the future. "We found that greater age was associated with more advice giving," the researchers concluded.

Lynn A. Hasher, a University of Toronto psychology professor, called the study "The single best demonstration of a long-held view that wisdom increases with age."



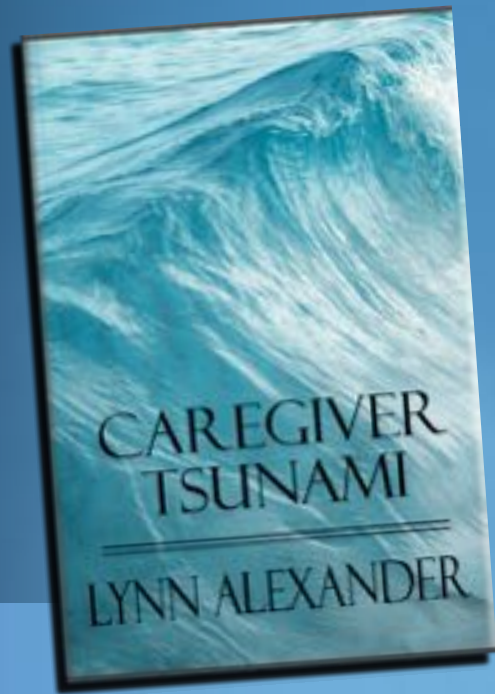
Older people make more use of higher-order reasoning schemes that emphasize the need for multiple perspectives, allow for compromise, and recognize the limits of knowledge.



## Who A

Nulla facilisi. In...  
sim feugiat. Pro...  
volutpat. Nullam...  
tas, eros pede varius...  
odio. Lorem ipsum dolor s...  
ing elit. Proin consetetur v... in uui. r...

# CAREGIVER TSUNAMI



## By Lee Thorsen

*Popular wisdom has it that “Those who can, do. Those who can’t, teach.” Popular wisdom never met Lynn Alexander because she can do both. The Best of Aging spent some time with Lynn Alexander and had the opportunity to discuss her fascinating 2010 book, Caregiver Tsunami. The Best of Aging is also thrilled that Lynn Alexander has joined the editorial staff and will be a monthly contributor on a wide variety of issues that face older Americans today. “Her depth of personal and public experience is amazing,” says Jeff Collison, publisher of The Best of Aging, “we are lucky to have her as a contributor.”*

There are an estimated 50 million caregivers in the United States today. The first of the baby boomers turned 65 in 2008 and the result is that we are in store for an epic tsunami of the number of caregivers needed to care for the aging population. Between 2000 and 2030 the 65-plus population in Washtenaw County is projected to grow nearly three-fold, from about 26,000 to nearly 73,000. At the same time, the total population is only projected to increase by 39 percent.

Ms. Alexander is a former State Commissioner for Services to the Aging in Michigan and former Director of the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging. She worked with the Michigan Office of State Employer agency to create a long-term care insurance benefit for State of Michigan employees, their parents, and grandparents. In conjunction, she developed the successful long-term care education campaign, which included focus groups and surveys, to educate the public on long-term care insurance. “During the campaign survey, I found that most people would take care of their parents but would not want their children to take care of them,” Ms. Alexander said.

In Caregiver Tsunami, Ms. Alexander educates, empathizes, and promotes the caregiver in all of us. She not only gives wisdom for caring for our aging loved ones, but for also allowing us to realize that it’s not just a matter of getting through the caregiver experience. It is a matter of experiencing the most fulfilling event of your life and helping your loved one to age well. This book is a quick, entertaining read based on true-life experience and full of helpful information. The author navigates the rough seas of providing care to a loved one with sensitivity, practicality, and intelligence with the added touch of magic and humor.

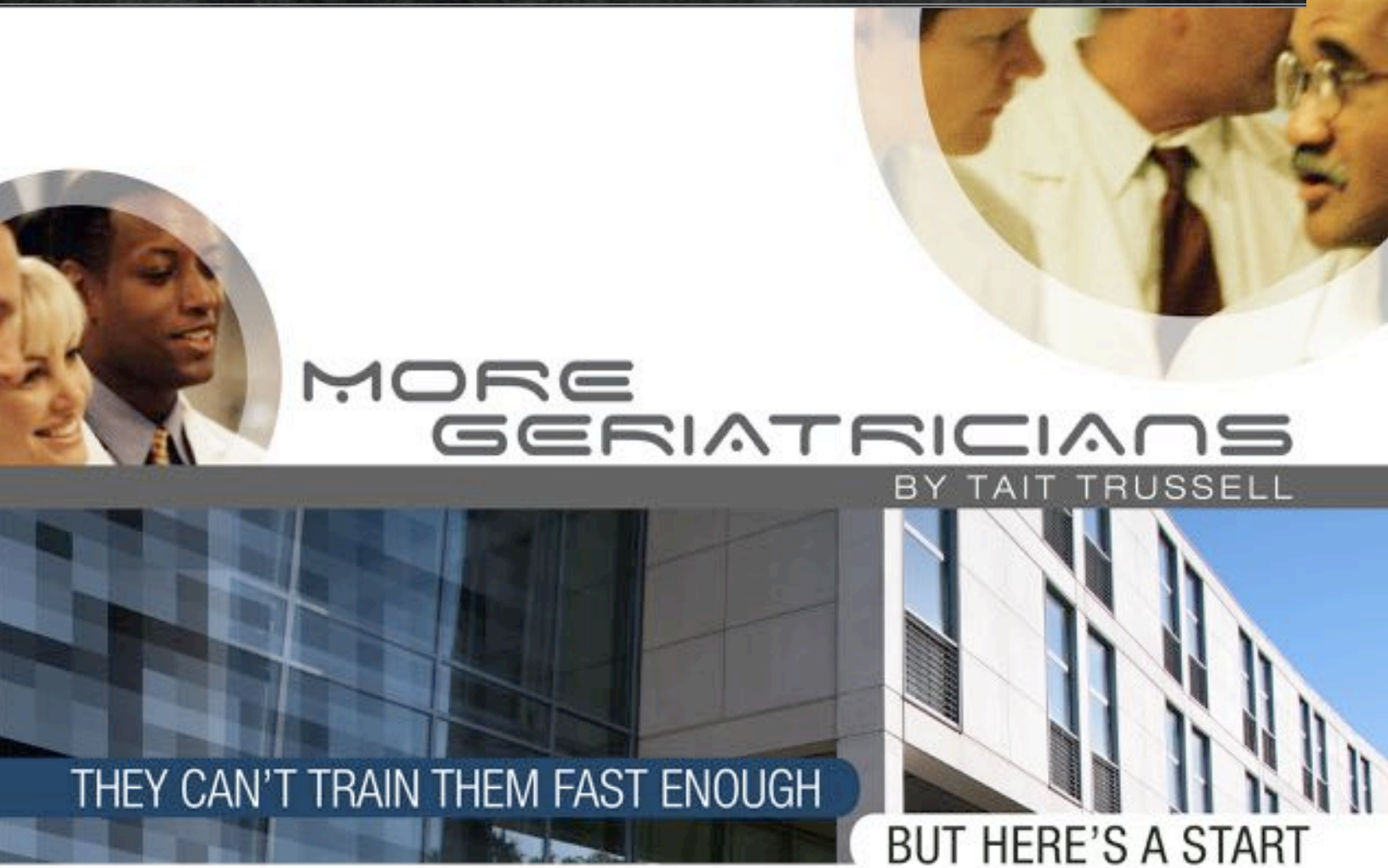
In addition to the great advice that you’ll get from the book, Ms. Alexander discusses the latest trends in housing. “Michigan is actually one of the states, along with privately-funded organizations like Presbyterian Villages Michigan, that has taken a leadership role in exploring the latest trends in senior housing,” says Ms. Alexander, “in fact, Michigan was the first in the nation to implement the Eden Alternative.” The Eden Alternative is a self-contained dwelling for seven to ten people and represents a total rethinking of the organization, architecture, staffing, and philosophy of care. For the elderly, this results in greater independence, improved health, and a better quality of life. Founded by Harvard-educated and board-certified

geriatrician Dr. William Thomas, he states “it represents a cultural change where people go to live instead of go to die.”

## *We Are In Store For An Epic Tsunami Of The Number Of Caregivers Needed To Care For The Aging Population*

In 2007, Ms. Alexander began Your Aging Well Advisor business to provide consulting on the social, emotional, and the physical aspects of aging to individuals and corporations. “Michigan needs to continue to be a leader in aging issues and hang onto their senior population,” says Ms. Alexander, “because if you think that the downsizing of the auto industry hurt us over the last few decades, then you haven’t seen anything like the loss of the economic force of our aging population.”

Caregiver Tsunami may be purchased at [BarnesandNoble.com](http://BarnesandNoble.com) or you may call 248-399-3311 for more information about the book, speaking arrangements, or consulting for your group or organization.



# MORE GERIATRICIANS

BY TAIT TRUSSELL

THEY CAN'T TRAIN THEM FAST ENOUGH

BUT HERE'S A START

Joan's mother is 84 and in a nursing home with a nasty assortment of health problems. "Asthma, which she has had all her life," says Joan as she anxiously lists the ailments. "Bowels not functioning properly, can't see very well, a thyroid condition, confusion."

The doctor at the nursing home refers Joan to a consulting geriatrician, rather than recommending that Joan see doctors specializing in her mother's various conditions. As you may know, a geriatrician is a physician who specializes in the medical needs of older people. Because so many old people have multiple health problems, the geriatrician determines how the array of ailments interacts.

"Our geriatrician gave us an excellent overview and a course of treatment," Joan said with relief. A geriatrician also knows about aging syndromes that don't fall into the areas of medical specialists. A geriatrician also knows about the latest in drugs to treat maladies of the aging.

Today, approximately 7,600 board-certified geriatricians are practicing in the United States. That's one of these specialty physicians for every 2,500 Americans age 75 or older. But, because of the wave of baby boomers beginning to swell the ranks of the aged, the ratio by 2030 is estimated to be only one geriatrician for every 4,254 seniors.

Enter AFAR. That's the American Federation for Aging Research. The organization, founded in 1981, has championed the cause and supported the funding of science in the field of healthier aging and age-related medicine. AFAR has created the Medical Student Training in Aging Research Program (MSTAR). Its purpose is to find ways and means of drawing more doctors into the practice of geriatric medicine and research. The program is financed through a private-public partnership model.

AFAR announced recently a new \$220,000 grant from MetLife Foundation. This grant will enable about 40 more medical students to be exposed to geriatrics. The students will take part in research, education, and clinical training program in age-related diseases at the National Institute of Aging's training centers and some of the country's top-notch research institutions and academic facilities. The scholarships are short-range—from 8 to 12 weeks. But this brief training is expected to raise the students' interest in going into geriatric medicine or age-related research.

Dennis White, CEO of the MetLife Foundation said in announcing the grant, "We are pleased to fund this program, which helps physicians in their early years of medical education receive mentoring and training in the field of geriatric medicine. AFAR's effort to attract more physicians to this field is important, particularly at a time when the aging population is increasing in our nation."

AFAR's website says "Studying aging requires two complementary approaches: studying the components of disease that are related to aging and studying the underlying mechanisms of aging and how they regulate the processes in our bodies." AFAR said it had provided grants to "more than 2,600 talented scientists...Aging research is likely to be the least expensive path to preventing and curing many diseases of aging."

A 2009 MSTAR student at Johns Hopkins University medical school, Amy Unterman, described how her MSTAR training helped confirm her career path. "Taking part in the MSTAR Program has helped give me a broad range of experiences that allowed me to see what I really liked. It turned out that the program solidified my interest in what I have loved all along—geriatrics."

Some seniors find it difficult to ask their family physician for opinions from other doctors. But AFAR recommends: "Do ask to see a geriatrician if you think the geriatrician's expertise can spot and treat a health problem you have that needs specific attention."

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## Serving Others With Dignity Beverly Gershowitz

By Lee Thorsen

*Serving Others With Dignity is a column that puts a needed spotlight on the efforts of so many people who volunteer their time to help others. We hope that this column serves as an inspiration and motivation to help others to experience the joy of volunteering. If you know of a person that deserves to be recognized for their contributions, please let us know.*



“I haven’t done anything special,” Beverly Gershowitz asked, “so why do you want to profile me?” After hearing about Mrs. Gershowitz from a few different people on her ability to connect with people and make a difference, my question back to Mrs. Gershowitz was, “Why wouldn’t I want to profile you? You are exactly the kind of person that we need more of in this world.”

Determination and a positive attitude are two characteristics that define Beverly Gershowitz. On Veterans Day, she turned 80-years old and has been volunteering her time at the Turner Senior Resource Center for the last few years helping others. Mrs. Gershowitz is a person that you just love to be around and she is always taking a proactive approach to whatever she faces in life.

**Q** How long have you been volunteering?

**A** It’s been part of my life since I was a young child. I grew up in New York during the Great Depression and in my generation women didn’t work outside of the home while they were raising their children. I volunteered for Hadassah and other organizations. Hadassah is a volunteer women’s organization and is the largest Jewish women’s organization in America. After my husband and I raised our four children, I entered the workforce until I retired a few years back. I took a few months off, but I knew that I wanted to volunteer at the Turner Senior Resource Center. I’m too much of a people-person to spend the rest of my life sitting in the house.

**Q** Why did you want to volunteer at the Turner Senior Resource Center and what do you like about it?

**A** For over 30 years, I had worked at the Turner Geriatric Clinic and learned a great deal about the aging process. During my time at the clinic, social work was integrated with medicine and it was one of the most educational experiences of my life. They had a lot of programs there that taught seniors who came in for medical care that they could be functional human beings as they aged. That was very important for people to see and it affected my whole outlook on the aging process. The Turner Senior Resource Center is vital, alive, and a wonderful place for seniors. I like getting others involved and active. I’m happy to be able to volunteer there.

**Q** What are some of the biggest obstacles that you have run into while volunteering and as you’ve aged?

**A** The attitude of some of the younger people. They automatically look at you and think that you are feeble-minded. I may have a difficult time moving as fast as I could when I was younger, but I am not demented. I’ve also had to accept my own limitations. You do what you can. You make the best of what your physical condition is and just keep going.

**Q** For those who are looking to volunteer their time and energy, where would you suggest they start?

**A** Think about what it is that you’d like to do and then get out there and get involved. The best thing that happens to you is that you’ll stop feeling sorry for yourself. Just because you are older doesn’t mean that you have to stop doing things. Take ownership of your life and don’t just sit back and wait for someone else to take care of things for you as you age.

**Q** Volunteering makes a big difference in a person’s health and attitude. What inspires you to keep on going?

**A** I am determined to hang around for as long as I can and enjoy life. I keep active every day with exercise, family, friends, and volunteering.



Take ownership of your life...  
don’t just sit back and wait  
for someone else to take care  
of things for you as you age.

# TIME WELL SPENT Downsizing With Attitude

BY LEE THORSEN

*Years ago it was great to send the kids upstairs so that you can have some well-deserved quiet time. Now with more quiet time and your kids on their own, the thought of climbing the stairs along with all of the other demands of maintaining a larger home begins to weigh on your mind and body. Being proactive instead of waiting and letting others make the decision for you, could end up being the best choice that you make as you continue through the aging process.*

Mike and Margaret Zimmerman were living in a bi-level home with an attached indoor heated swimming pool on six acres of steep, rugged land. “The last of our four children left for college in 1999, when I was 55-years old, and Margaret and I began to think about downsizing” explains Mr. Zimmerman, “but we knew that we had to put some upgrades on our house to make it more marketable and to make a plan of what we needed in

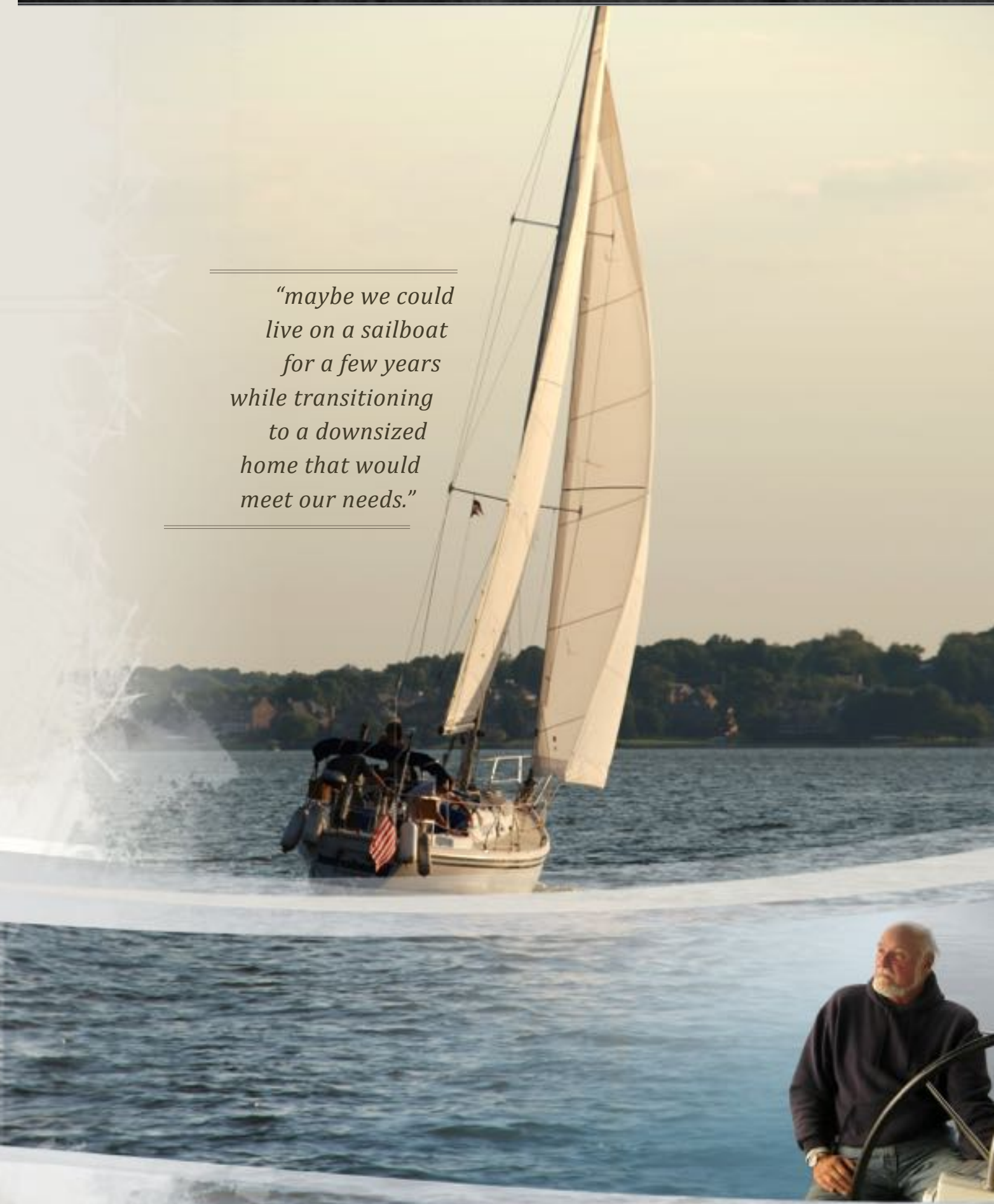
order to live comfortably as we grew older in our next house.” A few years would go by while the Zimmerman’s, facing what most families face today, struggled with an aging parent. They filled an empty room with Mrs. Zimmerman’s mother and cared for her. They continued to improve their existing house, purchased land, and started designing the new downsized house plan.

In early 2003, they had a glimmer of an idea. Being sailing enthusiasts for many years, they attended a boat show and fell in love with a brand new 39-foot Beneteau sailboat. “We started to dream and new plans were hatched,” said Mrs. Zimmerman, “maybe we could live on a sailboat for a few years while transitioning to a downsized home that would meet our needs.” The Zimmerman’s ended up signing a contract for the sailboat to be delivered in June of that year even though they still needed to sell their existing home.

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*“maybe we could live on a sailboat for a few years while transitioning to a downsized home that would meet our needs.”*

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“Fate stepped in and accelerated our timetable,” said Mrs. Zimmerman. When they arrived back from the boat show, the phone rang with a buyer to their home, the deal was done, and now they had four months to vacate the house. Over the next few months, Mr. Zimmerman erected a 3-stall garage on their empty lot to store all of their stuff that they had accumulated over the years.

After finding new living arrangements for Mrs. Zimmerman’s mom, selling a couple older vehicles to their children, and throwing furniture and 135 boxes into the garage, they moved aboard “Destination”.

They had just downsized from over 2000 square feet to approximately 350 square feet. “We initially told our friends this would either be a second honeymoon or lead to divorce court,” said Mrs. Zimmerman, “We had so many friends come to visit before we left on our adventure; Mike said it was like a funeral but you are still alive to see who comes!” Some folks thought they were going to sail over the edge of the earth or be attacked by pirates. Their kids thought they were being abandoned. A few friends and relatives were envious.

The Zimmerman’s spent ten months on the boat the first year, motoring most of the time through canals and inland waterways. They sailed around the mitten in the Great Lakes and across the southern shore of Lake Erie. They motored through the Erie Canal and the Hudson River. From New York City, they sailed down the East coast around NJ, up the Delaware Bay, and then ventured south again in the Chesapeake Bay past Annapolis to Norfolk. “We took lots of time to visit museums and places of interest along our route.” Mr. Zimmerman goes on to say, “We spent Christmas in Savannah and New Years in St. Augustine that year. The rest of that winter we spent in the Florida Keys.”

Life aboard a sailboat quickly taught the Zimmerman’s how much “stuff” they really needed, or didn’t need to live. The tiny galley had a mini-fridge, two-burner propane stove, and the tiniest oven – where they could only bake six cookies at a time! They had two tiny clothes lockers for coats and dress-up clothes, but mostly they rolled their jeans, shorts, and t-shirts for storage in two small drawers. They had shelter from the rain, plenty to eat, cell phones and for days, and sometimes weeks, they were isolated from all news and world events; but upon return discovered things really hadn’t changed. “Our kids even learned to solve problems on their

own,” explained Mr. Zimmerman, “and best of all we didn’t have a mortgage, car payments, utility bills, firewood to cut and stack, or a steep driveway to plow in the winter.” Winter dampness on the water was sometimes very cold. The tiny electric space heater would only work if they were connected to shore power. Shopping for groceries and supplies was always limited by how far you could walk and how much you could carry back. Daily chores became sessions of exercise.

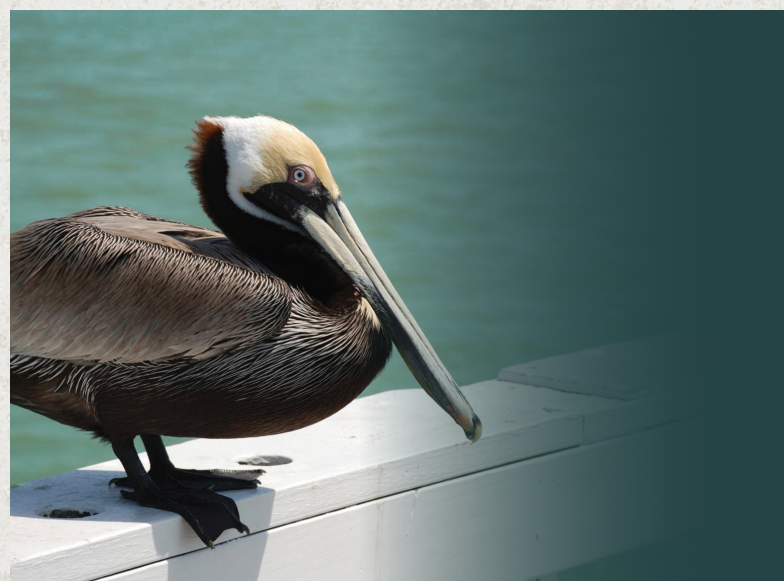
In subsequent years, they spent six months on the sailboat and returned to Michigan to continue building their current home. This is a 1600 square foot open-design ranch structure with many Aging in Place design considerations such as the interior doors being 36-inches wide for wheel chairs, low maintenance exterior, and best of all, no stairs. “Mike had undergone hip replacement and realized he’d need a home without stairs,” said Mrs. Zimmerman.

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) has created a Certification for Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) program that teaches professionals how to make homes safe and accessible for any age or ability, with an emphasis on aesthetically pleasing yet functional modifications. Professionals can help you transform your existing home or design a new home using many of the

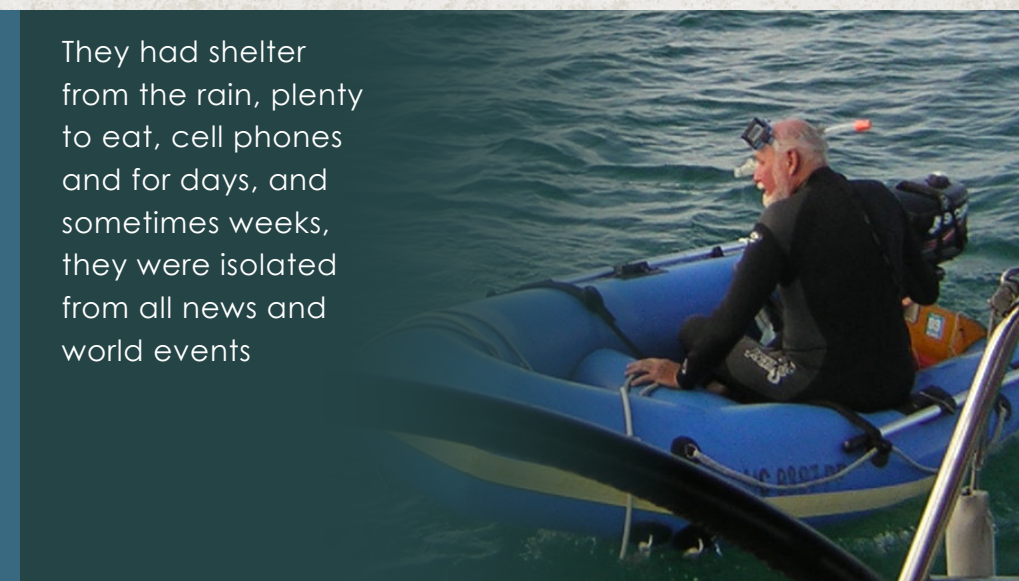


techniques that the Zimmerman’s used in designing their home. There are many qualified CAPS professionals in the area to help you. The NAHB website ([www.nahb.org](http://www.nahb.org)) has a comprehensive listing of local professionals.

The Zimmerman’s sold their boat in 2007, on Pearl Harbor Day, in Savannah, GA. “The new friends we made during our travels were truly the most rewarding experience,” says Mrs. Zimmerman, “and contrary to what most people think, being so close to your spouse for so long was truly enjoyable.



They had shelter from the rain, plenty to eat, cell phones and for days, and sometimes weeks, they were isolated from all news and world events







Sharing the workload and doing things together yielded much satisfaction. Mike took care of engine maintenance and stuff on deck, while I handled the electronic charts and VHF radio, as well as organized the storage below. We've experienced rougher weather on Lake Michigan than anything off the East Coast, and know to respect Mother Nature. The overall adventure was fantastic and will never be forgotten the rest of our lives."

The Zimmermans live comfortably in their Michigan home and feel that they have plenty of room as compared to their previous water-based dwelling. They recently found out that "Destination" is for sale again. Maybe they're thinking about downsizing again?

# What Is Christmas?

It is little children wide-eyed and full of wonder, giggling in time with their utter joy. It is an older couple holding hands and looking back over the multitude of Christmases that brought them to this day, surrounded by those giggling grandchildren and their own children who it seems not that long ago were children too. Check your travel agent and he will confirm that Santa Claus is coming to town. And thankfully he has no baggage limit. It is "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" reverberating from behind stained glass windows and even some moving from house to house bringing carols with them.

It is looking up at a million stars and thinking of one bright star that hung over Bethlehem those many centuries ago, and thinking of wise men and wishing there were more wise men all about, for wisdom is so much harder to come by than just knowledge.

It is a fir tree full and magnificent in a forest in Germany and the custom of mistletoe from Celtic Britain. It is Santa Claus still alive in the bright eyes of a young child bedecked in innocence.

It is the sights and sounds and bright Christmas colors that go with all the wrapping of gifts and maybe a toy train placed on newly installed tracks on a board painted green like grass. It is a new doll that no longer just cries but speaks in complete sentences and sometimes says "Thank You."

It is doors opened, as well as the hearts behind those doorways and friendships and family. It is when people think of Scrooge and know they don't want to emulate him. It is tiny villages and tiny twinkling lights and large-than-life appreciation of this very special day.

It is cookie crumbs and candles growing smaller but still burning bright and memories growing larger with one more Christmas to be filed away with joy.

It is the season for an abundance of "Oohas and Aahs" to match the glitter, gleam and glow of it all while we are wrapped in excitement along with the new scarf.

It is hugs and hearts beating a little faster. It is a stuffed bear under the tree that has made his annual appearance for years now along with Santa who is holding up quite well since he too is decades old.

Christmas? Shout loudly of it and with joy. Speak softly of it with veneration for what it stands for. And yes, I hope the day has enriched you and that this column has stirred grateful thoughts within you. Therefore, a merry, holy happy Christmas to you and yours!

- By Neil Wyrick

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YOUTH CULTURE To The Age of Longevity



By Lynn Alexander

Why America has always been fascinated by the baby boomers (born 1946-1964)

in our culture. As babies they helped Dr. Spock become a famous pediatrician and author. Their teen years spawned many pop culture products such as Hula Hoops, transistor radios, Slinky's, board games and bell-bottom jeans.

Rock and Roll came to represent the "youth culture". The boomers are all grown up now and becoming seniors. However, our culture still holds onto its fascination with the "youth culture" the boomers helped to create. To set the record straight, let's take a look at the economic opportunities being created by catering to the boomers and their senior friends who are a bit older.

The 60+ in age population is growing by leaps and bounds. Many are retiring or consulting and have a great deal of leisure time as well as the urge to spread their wings. One of the fastest growing types of vacations is

that of adventure travel. Although the new seniors still love to visit grandchildren, they also like to go rock climbing, travel the rapids, and go parachuting. Global travel provides the backdrop for these escapades.

To match their new lifestyle many seniors are choosing senior residences for companionship and ease. These provide jobs; everything from cooks to maintenance staff to accounting and fiscal personnel along with administrative positions. These staff members and residents become new customers for retailers and restaurants as well as the service industry.

Businesses that cater to seniors are also contributing to our communities in a philanthropic manner. For example, Home Instead Senior Care sponsors "Santa For A Senior" which provides gifts for seniors during the holidays. Presbyterian Villages of Michigan and other senior living communities have created foundations that help seniors remain in their own homes. The Wayne State

Institute of Gerontology, while a renowned research institute, also conducts health and wellness programs in partnership with a cadre of senior services professionals.

The demand for products and technology to meet the changing needs of the boomers is booming (all puns intended). And they are moving on to Wii™ games from their traditional board games. Alert systems built into shoes for Alzheimer's patients to state of the art video conferencing between parents and long distance adult caregivers are all the rage. A simply designed grab bar to allow folks to pull themselves up or lower themselves into bed allows for maintaining independence.

The baby boomers will continue to impact our society as never before. Innovations will be created to meet their needs and boomers themselves will create many of these. Individuals have created some of the greatest artwork, poetry, music and technology over the age of eighty. So let's view this "coming of age" as an opportunity to move from the Manufacturing and Information Ages to the "Age of Longevity" ...an opportunity for all.

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Lynn Alexander is known as Your Aging Well Advisor, an advocate for seniors and speaker on aging well and caregiving. A former Michigan Cabinet official, State Commissioner on Aging and executive for Oakland County, she recently authored "Caregiver Tsunami". Lynn Alexander may be contacted by visiting her website at [www.YourAgingWellAdvisor.com](http://www.YourAgingWellAdvisor.com) or by calling (248) 972-4993.

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*Celebrating Ageless Attitude*

# THE 100s

Ellenora Mason

By Lee Thorsen



*“The 100’s” is a feature that focuses on different events or subjects in history and gathers the insights and experience from a person over the age of 100. If you know of a person that is over the age of 100, please let us know.*

Ellenora Mason spent her early years both in Chicago, Illinois and on a family farm in Hart, Michigan. She is 103-years old and is bright, lively and is a great example of what Ageless Attitude is all about. *The Best of Aging* had an opportunity to meet and travel back in time with Mrs. Mason on some subjects that are just as important today as they were in the early 20th century.

## The Great Influenza (1918-1920)

Ellenora Mason was 11-years-old when the outbreak of the world’s deadliest plague hit. Mrs. Mason remembers it well. “Entire families were wiped out and it was a time of great fear. Yet, somehow, our family was spared from the devastation.”

In John M. Barry’s book, *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the 1918 Pandemic*, he states, “Before the worldwide pandemic faded away in 1920, it would kill more people than any other outbreak of disease in human history.” In fact, estimates from Epidemiologists say that it caused at least fifty million deaths worldwide, and possibly as many as one hundred million. Normally influenza chiefly kills infants and the elderly, but in the 1918 pandemic roughly half of those who died were young men and women in the prime of their life, in their twenties and thirties.

Mrs. Mason’s father was a very athletic man and was suspicious of medications. So much so that he did not want his children to be inoculated from the diseases of the day. “Fortunately, the school required inoculations

or you could not attend,” Mrs. Mason explains, “medications have come a long way and, having lived through this tragedy and seen first-hand many of the terrible diseases that are only words to most people today, I value what modern medication has accomplished.”

## Communications

“Why does everything have to be so fast?” asked Mrs. Mason. When Mrs. Mason was growing up, she had a neighborhood phone and it was located in one person’s house or business. A call would come in and someone would run the message to the intended person. “We had a lot of social groups, like the Freemasons or the Odd Fellows, where we would meet face-to-face and communicate,” explains Mrs. Mason, “but now people are just out-and-out plain rude and this, I believe, comes from not knowing how to communicate.”

One study at UCLA indicated that up to 93 percent of communication effectiveness is determined by nonverbal cues. Nonverbal communication ranges from facial expression to body language. Gestures, signs, and use of space are also important in nonverbal communication.

Mrs. Mason is well aware of the speed of today’s communication and even of a lot its terminology and devices. “My great grandchildren keep me updated on the latest technology and pretty soon I think that everyone will be talking computer-talk,” says Mrs. Mason, “but they are missing the face-to-face communication.” Mrs. Mason is happy with her television and telephone and has no desire to get on the computer and tweet with other people. Maybe it’s the unstressed, slower paced attitude or the ability to actually listen and give reflection on something that someone has said before responding. Whatever it is, her lessons are worth recognizing and replicating as they have kept her going strong for 103 years.



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