

CELEBRATING
100
MONTANA'S CENTENARIANS



HAZEL KELLEY



100

Hazel Kelley was born in Wellman, Iowa, on July 26, 1925. She married Wayne Kelley on December 1, 1945. Together, they cultivated a life on their Iowa farm, where she dedicated herself as a homemaker, raising their three children.

Following Wayne's passing in 2010, she made the move to Montana to be near her daughter.

When asked about her incredible longevity, she credits a combination of staying active, fortunate genes, a lifetime free of smoking, and the wholesome goodness of homegrown food. Of all her cherished memories, she considers witnessing the college graduation of her three daughters the most amazing.

Her creative spirit shines through her love for painting and tending to her houseplants, and she even continues to take painting classes, proving that learning and passion have no age limit!



DOROTHY SANTALA

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Dorothy Santala was born on October 15, 1922, in Minnesota. After earning her bachelor's in education from the University of Minnesota, she began her career teaching second grade.

Her world expanded when she married Eugene Santala. They were blessed with two sons and a daughter, and she wholeheartedly dedicated herself to being a homemaker and mother.

She reflects on her husband's 30 years in the Air Force, calling it a "wonderful experience" that enriched their family's journey.

Following her husband's stroke in Colorado Springs, they made the move to Billings, Montana, to be near their son. Her philosophy on longevity is, "there is no secret, it just happens if you're lucky."

Her guiding principle is a simple yet profound truth: "take life as it comes."



GUSSIE BALLARD SMITH

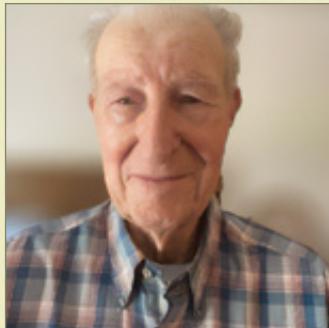
100

Gussie Ballard Smith was born on June 14, 1925, in Milligan Canyon near Three Forks, Mont. — where her childhood home still stands. A bright student, she graduated Salutatorian from Whitehall High School in 1943. That same year, she married William "Bud" Smith, and together they embarked on a remarkable journey, raising five children. She was a true partner, working alongside her husband to manage their ranch and outfitting business while nurturing their family. Family has always been the unwavering heart of all she does.

One of her proudest moments came in 2019, when the Montana Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame honored her family as the Great Montana Rodeo Family, recognizing their significant contributions to the sport. Another highlight was her time as camp cook for Bartlett Creek Outfitters, their family-owned business in the remote Bob Marshall Wilderness. From 1961 to 2003, she tirelessly prepared home-cooked meals, fresh bread, pies, cookies, and cakes on a wood-burning stove for guests deep in the wilderness. It was demanding work but incredibly rewarding. Her adventurous spirit endured; in her late 70s, she made her last trip into camp, riding horseback 26 miles to ensure hunters enjoyed unforgettable stays. Gardening brought her immense joy, cultivating beautiful flowers and vegetables, which she proudly canned well into her 80s.



HOMER CHRISTENSEN



103

Homer Christensen was born in Grass Range, Mont., on August 28, 1922. After graduating from Great Falls High School, he bravely served in the U.S. Army Air Corps, the precursor to today's Air Force. On July 7, 1943, he married his beloved Florence, and together they raised two children.

After his military service, he had a dedicated career at Gerber's of Montana, as a machinist and company manager. His passion for restoring antique cars led him to head the Great Falls Car Club.

Members still visit him, with one even bringing the Model-T he personally restored. He humorously shares his secret to a long life: "One wife, one job, and booze in moderation." He fondly recalls restoring a plane while stationed in India and flying it with friends to see the Taj Mahal, though marrying Florence remained the most amazing event of his life.



MARIE JENSEN TRODICK



100

Marie Jensen Trodick was born on the homestead outside Circle, Mont., on March 15, 1925. She graduated from Circle High School in 1942 and pursued her passion for healing, joining the nursing program at the Montana State College of Nursing. Soon after college she married Robert Trodick on September 17, 1946, and together they raised two children.

Marie gracefully balanced the roles as a registered nurse and a devoted homemaker. When asked about her secret to longevity, she shares a wonderful recipe: being one-half Danish, growing up as the only girl among four brothers, cultivating many friends and lots of laughter, always helping others, and playing plenty of cards and games. Her favorite quote, "use it or lose it," perfectly encapsulates her belief in staying both physically and mentally active.



VIRGINIA TOEWS

100

Virginia Toews was born in McClusky, N. D., on May 6, 1925. Her early path led her to the Tabor Bible Institute in Canada.

A farmer — who would become her husband — proposed a move from North Dakota's harsh cold to Montana, promising she could go "anywhere in the world." She agreed, with one condition: "Not Montana." He convinced her it would only be for six months. She resisted, but ultimately they moved, and both fell in love with Big Sky Country.

Virginia reflects on how much life has changed, from walking to school barefoot as a child to the world we know today. She feels lucky to have been married to a wonderful "jack of all trades" man for 47 years.

A profound experience in her life was living within the Northern Cheyenne nation, where she was warmly welcomed, and she deeply valued the chance to learn their way of life.

Today, she continues to serve others, volunteering at the Women's Prison and helping the homeless at the Montana Rescue Mission.

Her secret to longevity: staying busy and trusting that "God has given me a beautiful life, and he is still working on me."



MICKAEL TEIG

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Mickael Teig was born on May 17, 1916, on the family ranch in Lebo, Mont. Mickael was the eighth of 11 children. Growing up with the majestic Crazy Mountains as his backdrop, he developed a profound love for the outdoors and a tireless work ethic.

A natural linguist, Mickael was fluent in both Norwegian and English by the age of six. He and his brother shared a remarkable musical talent, often entertaining locals with their accordion skills, learning new songs by ear after just a few listens.

In 1954, he married Bettie, and together they built a life ranching near Martinsdale and Nihill. For over five decades, they were devoted partners, working side-by-side with their Angus cattle and cherishing their land until Bettie's passing in 2007.

A lifelong Christian, Mickael continues to find joy in reading, especially mysteries, and keeping up with the news. Demonstrating his lifelong passion for learning, he even taught himself to play the violin at the age of 100!

His secret to longevity? He'll tell you it's "good Norwegian roots, hard work, and taking a good chew of snoose."



PATRICIA JOHNSON



100

Patricia Johnson was born in Lewistown, Mont., on March 17, 1925. After graduating from Fergus County High School, she pursued her passion for home and family, earning a degree in home economics from Montana State University in Bozeman. On October 8, 1949, she married the man of her dreams, Earl, sharing 54 wonderful years and raising five children together.

Patricia was renowned for her culinary magic, known for turning simple ingredients into delightful meals. Her children fondly remember always finding a special treat waiting for them after school, and she lovingly crafted most of their clothing as well. When asked about her secret to longevity, she humbly points to good genes, noting that all the women in her family lived into their late 90s.

Her playful spirit shines through her favorite farewell: "See you later alligator, after a while crocodile."



HELEN LYONS JANSSEN



100

Helen Lyons Janssen was born in Glendive, Mont., on December 3, 1925. The daughter of immigrants from Ireland and Germany who homesteaded on Bad Route, she graduated from Dawson County High School and pursued a business major at Dawson Community Junior College.

Helen began her career at the Exchange Bank in Glendive and later shared her knowledge by teaching business courses in Corvallis, Broadus, and Big Timber.

On June 26, 1949, she married Lew Janssen, embarking on a 70+ year partnership that brought three children into the world.

A dedicated rancher and homemaker, Helen is renowned as an excellent cook, preparing countless meals, especially

her beloved pies and breads for her family and the ranch's hired hands — often served with her "good" silver and China. Helen has been a vibrant presence in her community, contributing to the Red Cross, serving as a 4-H Leader, and actively participating in her church.

She is also a proud 76-year member of the Coalwood Ladies Aid. When asked about her longevity, Helen offers a practical mix of healthy living, good genes, and a little medicine and alcohol. She has stayed very active, walking a mile a day for the mail well into her 80s, come rain or shine.

She reflects on several "amazing" life events: the somber period of World War II when many boys entered the service after Pearl Harbor, and the painful disappearance of her Japanese friend during that time.

She also found living through the turbulent 60s and 70s with teenagers to be quite the experience and remembers the marvel of electricity and telephones arriving in homes.

The Janssen home has always been a hub of warmth, welcoming family, friends, and neighbors.

Helen stands as the cherished matriarch of a large extended family, nurturing a special bond with each member. Though her travels were limited to a single trip to Miles City before high school, she and Lew eventually explored all 50 states and several countries, embodying a life well-lived and widely experienced.



JOYCE ALBERTSON

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Joyce was born on September 9, 1922, in Livingston, Mont. She dedicated her career to shaping young minds, earning her Master's degree in Education from Northern College in Havre, Mont.

A true pioneer, she even started a kindergarten at Hawthorne School in Butte before it became common in public schools, where she primarily taught kindergarten and first grade.

Joyce is a proud mother of three. Her adventurous spirit led her to travel the world, visiting every continent except Antarctica over many years. As a member of Friendship Force, she warmly welcomed people from all corners of the globe into her home, fostering international connections.

Those who know Joyce can attest to the beautiful yard she always maintained at her Great Falls home. When asked about her secret to a long and vibrant life, Joyce credits a unique combination; virtually no medications, daily walks, enduring friendships, a deep faith in God, and a good dose of stubbornness!





MARY MARQUEZ SIERRA

101

Mary's story began in Los Angeles, Calif., on September 7, 1924. After earning her diploma from Garfield High School in 1943, she joined the WWII effort, working diligently in an airplane factory. Her professional life included a long career in banking, but her heart truly soared during two decades of missionary work across Hawaii, Mexico, and Browning, where she established a much-needed food bank.

A profound highlight in her life was the blessing of her daughter's ability to have children, a joy amplified by the birth of twins. In the 1980s, when her daughter relocated to Montana, Mary eagerly followed to lend her support to the growing family.

In her fifties, Mary unearthed a vibrant artistic talent. She embraced painting, sharing her gift by teaching children and later organizing popular art classes at her senior community. With a generous spirit, Mary has consistently channeled her creativity into philanthropy, selling her art and hosting yard sales to benefit others.

She credits her remarkable 100 years to a healthy lifestyle, marked by abstinence from drinking and smoking and a steadfast commitment to engaging in enjoyable activities.



MARGARET McNAMARA

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Born in the bustling heart of New York City on September 13, 1921, Margaret McNamara has lived a life filled with love, loss, and new beginnings.

After graduating with her nursing degree from Queens General Nursing School, she married John O'Neil. Sadly, her time with John was cut short when he lost his life on Omaha Beach in Normandy, France in 1944.

After the war, a new chapter began when she met William McNamara. They married and moved to William's hometown of Long Beach, Calif. But a visit to help a friend sparked a new adventure. William returned home to Margaret from a trip to Montana and declared that they should move there. In 1947, they made the journey and planted roots in their new home.

Margaret, a person of deep faith, feels fortunate to have been raised in a city as diverse as New York. A true "melting pot" of people and cultures, the city shaped her perspective on life.

Her favorite quote, a simple yet powerful reminder, is one she has carried throughout her century of life: "Keep the faith."



HELEN GRANMOE

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Helen Granmoe was born in Glendive, Mont., on January 25, 1920. She graduated from Dawson County High School in 1938 and earned her teaching certificate from Montana State Normal College in 1940.

On January 1, 1941, she married George Granmoe, and together they built a loving home, raising six children. Helen was a devoted homemaker, an active community volunteer, and deeply committed to her Catholic faith.

When asked about her incredible longevity, she credits lots of exercise, a well-balanced diet, and good genes. Her independence is truly inspiring.

Helen lived in her own home until the age of 103! She continues to walk every day, and if the weather keeps her inside, she makes sure to get her laps in the hallway.

Helen's deep devotion to her faith shines through as she still attends church, sings in the choir, and quite literally practices the Golden Rule every day.



PHYLLIS WHITE

100

Phyllis White was born in Chalgrove, Oxfordshire, England on August 11, 1925. At just 16, she bravely "fibbed" about her age, claiming to be 18, so she could join the British Army Territorial Service.

Stationed at Hastings on England's southern coast, Phyllis was part of a vital team tasked with intercepting German planes. Her role involved determining the height of the enemy aircraft for the gunners, who then shot them down into the English Channel.

After four years of dedicated services, she married Norman Palmer in 1945. In 1950, they ventured across the Atlantic to the United States to be closer to her sister.

Phyllis quickly established herself as a meticulous professional, working as a bookkeeper for the Arkansas Democrat Newspaper, never making an error. Later in life, she made her home in Montana with her daughter.

When asked about her longevity, Phyllis simply points to good genes, noting that all her siblings lived to be over 90.



KATHLEEN NORINE



100

Born in Kandiyohi, Minn., on September 14, 1925, Kathleen's life journey brought her to Montana alongside her husband, Quinton, due to his work.

Before that, she built a career as a secretary after graduating high school. Together, Kathleen and Quinton raised three children. She fondly cherishes her memories of all the kids playing together on their lawn.

When reflecting on the most amazing events she's witnessed, Kathleen speaks of the remarkable evolution of electronics, from their earliest forms to the advanced technology we see today.



MARY MENG

101

Mary Meng was born in Illinois on August 16, 1924. After graduating high school, she found her life partner in William Meng, marrying him on June 9, 1945. Their loving union brought two children into the world. She built a career as a secretary. Eventually, she moved to Montana to be near her son.

For Mary, the most amazing events of her life were the births of her children.

Her wisdom on longevity comes from two pillars: exercise and her cherished quote, "Love the Lord with all my heart."



RICHARD MINER

101

Richard Miner was born in Tacoma, Wash., on December 19, 1924. After high school, he joined the Army Air Corps, courageously piloting B-24 Liberator Bombers through the skies of World War II.

After his military service, a new chapter began on June 11, 1960, when he married Hilda, and together they raised a family of three children. His professional life as an accountant led him to make Montana his home.

When reflecting on his long and full life, he attributes his longevity to a "good genes and God's grace." His guiding principle, "never give up," speaks volumes about his resilient spirit.



ESTER BROSSEAU

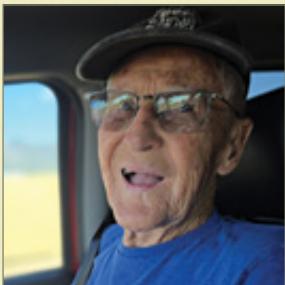
102

Ester Brosseau was born in Plentywood, Mont., on March 25, 1923. She graduated from Saco High school.

She and her husband, William Brosseau, created a wonderful family, raising two daughters and one son. She dedicated her life to being a devoted housewife, homemaker, and mother.

Her philosophy for a long life is a simple one: "just keep on living."





MARTIN LEIBENGUTH

100

Martin Leibenguth was born on July 21, 1925, in Allentown, Penn. After graduating from high school, he served in the Air Force. A day before his twentieth birthday he married the love of his life, Virginia "Ginger." The two shared a beautiful life together, celebrating 66 years of marriage before Ginger's passing.

Martin spent his working years in retail. His company transferred him to Montana in 1972.

When asked about the most amazing events in his long life, Martin says there have been eight. The first was marrying his beloved wife, and the other seven were the births of his children — four girls and three boys.

He attributes his long life to "loving the right woman and good bourbon."

Martin lives by the mottos "live for tomorrow" and "keep your hands and mind busy." Even at 100, he continues to stay active and engaged through his pottery and by spending time with friends and family.



ELIZABETH ANN SMARKER STIMAC



100

Elizabeth Ann Smarker Stimac, known to all as Betty, was born on October 21, 1925, in Calvert, Mont. She grew up on a farm south of Great Falls, where her childhood was filled with fond memories of visiting family and friends.

Without a phone or car, she and her family would get around by horseback, a testament to the simpler times she remembers so well. Betty attended the one-room Betts and Calvert elementary schools before heading to St. Mary's High School in Great Falls, where she lived with host families to complete her education. A music lover, she joined the Glee Club in high school and continued to enjoy music throughout her life.

After graduating, Betty attended Volkman's Beauty School and later became a beautician. She also took

on a unique role as a telegraph/phone operator for the Great Northern Railroad, a job that allowed her to travel to different stations across Montana. She recalls how she would hand orders on a pole to train engineers as their trains sped past the station.

Betty's life took a wonderful turn when she met Lawrence Stimac at a Catholic Singles Group in Great Falls. They married in June 1953 and built a life together, raising their two children in Butte, Billings, and finally settling in Great Falls. In addition to being a devoted homemaker, Betty helped her husband with their Fuller Brush business.

Her adventurous spirit shines through in her love of travel, camping, fishing, and dancing. She especially cherishes the fishing trips with her family on the Smith River. Among her favorite memories are the three times she attended the World's Fair with her husband and children — in Seattle in 1962, Spokane in 1974, and Vancouver in 1986.

A woman of deep Catholic faith, Betty loves going to church. She is blessed with five grandsons, and she enjoys attending their many events, from sports games to concerts. When asked about her secret to longevity, she says it's all about staying busy, taking care of her garden and flowers, and walking. Her favorite quote is a simple, yet heartfelt wish for everyone she meets: "Stay well, and have a good day."



RICHARD BLOSSOM

101

Richard was born on March 9, 1924, in Great Falls, Mont. A proud member of the second-to-last graduating class of Fort Shaw High School, he was one of just six students in his class.

In 1943, Richard began his brave service in World War II. He served until 1945 as a paratrooper, sniper, and demolition expert. He recalls his first parachute jump in Fort Benning, Ga., from a C-47 with 12 other jumpers. Dropping from just 100 feet, the jump to the ground took only 30 seconds! In France, he and his fellow soldiers once put 6,000 men on the ground in just 90 seconds.

After the war, Richard returned home and built a successful 40-year career as a highway construction Supervisor and part owner of Hilde Construction Company.

On February 2, 1958, he married the love of his life, Isabel, and together they raised two sons.

Richard credits his long, remarkable life to staying active and having good genes. His twin brother lived to 98, his sister to 100, and his other brother to 104. What a legacy!





DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES

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Helena



September 15 - 17