



Centenarians

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I got the idea for this article from my mother. During our weekly phone call, she mentioned that all of her old friends are dead. She also mentioned that she heard on the radio that there were 140 people in Utah that are age 100 or older. My mother (Dorothy Petersen) lives by herself in her own condo in Orem, Utah and is 98 years old and will turn 99 on November 8th of this year (2016). She has come down with a few health issues in recent months but our entire family is hoping that she will live to be 100 years old. I was in Utah in late July of this year to visit my mother, sister, other family members, and some of my old friends who are still kicking. I was there on my 76th birthday that was on July 23rd. My sister Linda and her husband Bill took me, my mother, and about a dozen other family member out to lunch at the Golden Coral Restaurant. The food was good and everybody had a good time. I was even successful in talking the group out of singing happy birthday.

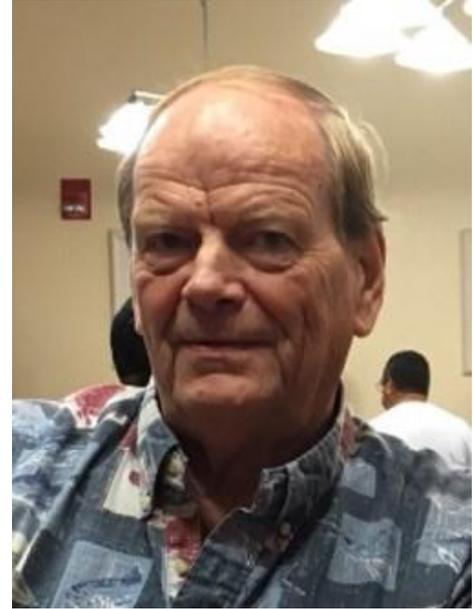
The three pictures on the next page were taken at the Golden Coral.

If you are young, you might not know what the word “Centenarian” means. Well, according to Wikipedia - A centenarian is a person who lives to or beyond the age of 100 years. Because life expectancies worldwide are far less than 100, the term is invariably associated with longevity. A supercentenarian is a person who has lived to the age of 110 or more, something only achieved by about one in 1,000 centenarians.

Even rarer is a person who has lived to age 115 – there are only 40 people in recorded history who have indisputably reached this age, of whom only Emma Morano-Martinuzzi, Violet Brown, Nabi Tajima and Chiyo Miyako are still living.



My sister Linda and mother Dorothy



Me on my 76th birthday



Here we are outside the Golden Coral (I should look happier on my birthday)

Here are some interesting statistics about Centenarians:

- The total number of centenarians worldwide is about 450,000
- The United States has the most centenarians with about 72,000
- Japan is second to the U.S. with about 60,000 centenarians
- Other countries with large centenarian populations include:
 - China – 50,000
 - India – 27,000
 - Italy – 25,000
 - Brazil – 24,000
 - France – 21,000
 - Germany – 18,000
 - Spain – 17,000
 - Great Britain – 15,000
- 83% of all centenarians are women
- The world's longest-lived people come from Okinawa, Japan



Okinawan Meal

The staple food in Okinawa is not rice – It is the sweet potato.

Top 10 countries with highest average life expectancy:

COUNTRY	BOTH SEXES	FEMALE	MALE
1-Japan	83.7	86.8	80.5
2-Switzerland	83.4	85.3	81.3
3-Singapore	83.1	86.1	80.0
4-Australia	82.8	84.8	80.9
5-Spain	82.8	85.5	80.1
6-Iceland	82.7	84.1	81.2
7-Italy	82.7	84.8	80.5
8-Israel	82.5	84.3	80.6
9-Sweden	82.4	84.0	80.7
10-France	82.4	85.4	79.4
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31-United States	79.3	81.6	76.9

As you can see, the U.S. may have the most centenarians but we are way down the list on average life expectancy. Hey, in less than one year, I will reach the average life expectancy for a man in the United States. This is getting scary!

The 10 countries with the shortest life expectancy can all be found in one continent, Africa, with the exception of Afghanistan. Short life expectancy in Sub-Saharan Africa is caused by famine, poor governments, war, non-availability of clean water, the existence of widespread AIDS, lack of education and healthcare awareness. In Afghanistan, the main reason for short life expectancy has been due to infant mortality and women not surviving through childbirth.

Country	Life Expectancy	Country	Life Expectancy
1. Chad	48.69	6. Central African Republic	50.48
2. Guinea-Bissau	49.11	7. Somalia	50.80
3. South Africa	49.41	8. Zimbabwe	51.82
4. Swaziland	49.42	9. Lesotho	51.86
5. Afghanistan	49.72	10. Mozambique	52.02

We may not be number 1 in life expectancy but we are lucky and blessed to be living in a great country like the United States of America. I'm sure glad I don't live in Africa or anywhere in the Middle East.

Here is a fact that I bet you didn't know. Okinawa, Japan has the longest living people but there is a region in Italy call Sardinia that has the highest percentage of people who are 100 or older. Yes, in the Mediterranean Sea, there is an island paradise rumored to have a different kind of "air" that grants longevity into the people who live there. Scientists have been trying for years to discover the secrets of why these men and women live such long lives. With a population of 1.65 million, Sardinia has confirmed to have the world's highest documented percentage of people who have passed the century threshold. It is one of the few places in the world where there are more men centenarians than women. At least 380 of Sardinia's current population have reached the 100 years old mark -- the corresponding ratio is astonishingly 20 times greater than that found in the United States.



Sardinia, Italy (Look for the red star in the middle of the map)

The world's top scientists are still trying to figure out why the people of Sardinia, Italy live so long. Well, here is my theory – It is the wine! They produce a great red wine in the Sardinia region called Cannonau (a very hearty and potent wine). It is said to contain more antioxidants than any other red wine. Most families make their own so it contains no preservatives. They drink a glass or two with lunch and dinner. A traditional toast in the Sardinian culture means, "May you live to be 100 years."

Just in case you would like to know how many centenarians live in a specific state, here are the U.S. statistics:

State	Total Population	No of 100+	% of 100+	State	Total Population	No of 100+	% of 100+
Alabama	4,780,000	760	.016%	Montana	990,000	176	.018%
Alaska	711,000	41	.006%	Nebraska	1,828,000	502	.027%
Arizona	6,400,000	835	.013%	Nevada	2,705,000	205	.008%
Arkansas	3,000,000	582	.020%	New Hampshire	1,318,000	233	.018%
California	37,300,000	5,930	.016%	New Jersey	8,792,000	1,770	.020%
Colorado	5,030,000	595	.012%	New Mexico	2,060,000	285	.014%
Connecticut	3,575,000	931	.026%	New York	19,380,000	4,607	.024%
Delaware	900,000	147	.016%	North Carolina	9,536,000	1,405	.015%
Florida	18,805,000	4,092	.022%	North Dakota	674,000	222	.033%
Georgia	9,690,000	1,143	.012%	Ohio	11,538,000	893	.016%
Hawaii	1,362,000	310	.023%	Oklahoma	3,753,000	547	.015%
Idaho	1,570,000	222	.014%	Oregon	3,833,000	679	.018%
Illinois	12,832,000	2,420	.019%	Pennsylvania	12,704,000	2,512	.020%
Indiana	6,485,000	1,085	.017%	Rhode Island	1,054,000	248	.024%
Iowa	3,050,000	848	.028%	South Carolina	4,627,000	660	.014%
Kansas	2,855,000	628	.022%	South Dakota	815,000	241	.030%
Kentucky	4,340,000	597	.014%	Tennessee	6,347,000	941	.015%
Louisiana	4,535,000	595	.013%	Texas	25,148,000	2,920	.012%
Maine	1,330,000	300	.022%	Utah	2,765,000	145	.007%
Maryland	5,775,000	912	.016%	Vermont	626,000	134	.021%
Massachusetts	6,550,000	1,522	.023%	Virginia	8,004,000	1,192	.015%
Michigan	9,885,000	1,730	.018%	Washington	6,726,000	1,057	.016%
Minnesota	5,305,000	1,212	.023%	West Virginia	1,854,000	274	.015%
Mississippi	2,968,000	543	.018%	Wisconsin	5,687,000	1,181	.021%
Missouri	5,990,000	1,168	.020%	Wyoming	564,000	73	.013%

● Most

● Least

■ Average Percentage = .0175%

Okay, is there anything interesting in all these numbers? Yes, I think so.

- As we could have guessed, California, New York, and Florida have the most centenarians. Actually, I thought Texas would have more centenarians than they do. I guess cowboys don't live long lives.
- The state with the fewest centenarians is Alaska. Alaska also has the lowest percentage of centenarians. Life is tough in "The Last Frontier" state.
- The five states with the highest percentage of centenarians are North and South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, and Connecticut. They say the air is clean and the water is pure in those parts of the U.S.

- Hawaii is well above the average percentage of centenarians. If we didn't have the VOG, we would be right up there with Sardinia, Italy.
- I was surprised to see Utah with such a low percentage of centenarians considering the large number of LDS church members in the state who are known for living clean healthy lives. But, I have a theory on this situation that also explains why Nevada has such a low percentage of centenarians (See explanation below).

In 1941, after the Pearl Harbor attack, our government determined it needed a remote chemical warfare testing facility. They chose an area in western Utah and built Dugway Proving Grounds. Testing commenced in the summer of 1942 with toxic agents, nerve gas, biological "germ" weaponry, flamethrowers, chemical spray systems, nuclear warfare weapons, antidotes for chemical agents, protective clothing, and radioactive fallout.



**Dugway Proving Grounds –
Toxic gas testing**

**Tooele Army Depot –
Nerve gas storage site**

The government spread radioactive dust via artillery shells, bombs and airplane spraying. Radioactive materials would be burst and scattered in a way designed to contaminate enemy battlefields. In 1959, the Air Force secretly conducted what amounted to eight intentional nuclear reactor meltdowns at Dugway. When radiation clouds left the detector range, they headed toward the old U.S. 40 highway (now I-80 Freeway) and the state line community of Wendover. Radiation wasn't the only problem – Dugway was also host to at least 1,174 open-air tests of chemical agents spreading nearly a half million pounds of nerve gas agents into the winds. In 1968, a release of VX nerve gas killed 6,400 sheep in Utah's Skull Valley.

Dugway also conducted at least 328 series of open-air tests of biological "germ" weapons during the Cold War. Some tests used agents that cause such diseases as anthrax, botulism, the plague, tularemia and Q fever. Trust me - you don't want to catch any of these diseases.

Nerve gas and other toxic chemicals are stored in metal canisters which are inserted into large metal cylinders located in underground bunkers. There are thousands of these bunkers located at Tooele Army Depot and the close by Desert Chemical Depot. The United States government has enough nerve gas stored there to kill everybody in the world several times.

Along with all of the chemical and biological testing being done at Dugway, the Nevada Test Site (65 miles Northwest of Las Vegas) conducted 930 atomic and nuclear bomb tests (both above and below ground) from 1951 to 1992. Most of these tests were done when the winds would most likely spread the radiation toward Utah. Hey, our government thought it would be better to kill a few thousand people in Utah instead of killing millions in Las Vegas and California.



Atomic and nuclear bomb testing in Nevada (1951 through 1992)



**John Wesley Petersen
(1953-1960)**

Make no mistake about it, tens of thousands of people in Utah got sick and thousands died during and after these tests. It is unknown how many people actually died but it is estimated that over 100,000 cases of cancer were caused by the radiation fallout. Most of the deaths were from leukemia and other cancers. My younger brother John Wesley Petersen died of leukemia on January 17th 1960 at age 6. My family lived in Pleasant Grove, Utah and we (especially my mother) are positive that his death was caused by the radiation fallout from the nuclear bomb testing in Nevada.

Now you know why there are not too many centenarians in Utah (and Nevada).

UTAH CENTENARIANS ARE HONORED

SALT LAKE CITY—Gov. Gary R. Herbert and First Lady Jeanette Herbert individually honored Utah’s residents 100 years of age and older at the 29th Centenarian Celebration on August 28, 2015. 53 of the total 142 statewide centenarians attended the annual luncheon with their families at the Viridian Event Center in West Jordan, Utah.



Utah Centenarians Honored by Governor at Annual Celebration

“The centenarian club is the most exclusive club in Utah,” Gov. Herbert said. “It is an honor to celebrate with them today. They truly are the greatest generation and serve as a reminder of our state’s proud legacy. They offer rich wisdom and perspective gained to what is truly important in life.”

Today’s centenarians witnessed incredible changes in history, including the creation and public implementation of indoor plumbing, electricity, radio and television and the production of the automobile and airplane. They also experienced several of the world’s pivotal events and milestones like World Wars I and II, and the Great Depression.

With the aging population in Utah, the state is projected to have 1,400 centenarians by 2050 or about the size of Duchesne, Coalville or Kamas. The oldest living man in Utah attending the celebration was Walter Bailey, 103, from Weber County and the oldest living woman attending was Beatrice Payne, 106, from Utah County. Currently, the oldest living man in Utah is Evgeni Safonov, 106, from Salt Lake County and the oldest living woman is Grace Simkins, 106, also from Salt Lake County.

So, what is the secret to living to be 100 years old?

- Here is my answer – “Don’t get sick and try not to get hit by a big truck!!”

Seriously, let’s use a little common sense and list things we all know will help keep us healthy:

- Eat a healthy diet
- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water each day
- Coffee and tea are good for you
- Keep a healthy weight (i.e. Don’t get too fat or too skinny)
- Don’t smoke
- Gets some kind of exercise every day (Walking is good for you)
- Avoid stress
- Laugh and be happy
- Drink 2 or 3 three alcoholic drinks every day
- Have more sex
- Get 7 or 8 hours of sleep every night
- As you get older, take more naps
- Get married and have kids (Married men live longer than single men)
- Get regular medical and dental care
- Think and exercise your brain (It’s no fun to live to 100 if you have Dementia)
- Having a supporting family and good friends
- Living in a safe community and a good neighborhood
- Having enough money to meet your needs
- Saying your prayers – Be thankful for what you have and help the less fortunate

Here is one that several older women stated:

- Avoid men



Jessie Gallan, Scotland's oldest woman before she died in March at the age of 109, was blunt. Gallan told the British Tabloid Daily Mail that the key to her success was eating porridge and avoiding the opposite sex. "My secret to a long life has been staying away from men," she said. "They're just more trouble than they're worth."

Well, that might be true for some men!

All of the above suggestions are good but difficult to do on a regular basis. Actually, you could do all of those healthy things and still die at age 62. The real key for living a long life is your genes and your luck. If most people in your family tree are healthy and live to a ripe old age, then the chances of you doing it too are high regardless of your lifestyle. If you are unlucky and get a life threatening disease (or two), chances are you won't be around too long.

Okay, it is time for a toast. Go get that bottle of red wine you have been saving for a special occasion. Get a glass and pore a large amount of wine into it. Are you ready? I will make the first toast – “May you live to be 100 years.” Bottoms up everybody.

Hey, this works for those people living in Sardinia, Italy!

I hope my mother makes it to 99, 100, and beyond.

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