

CELEBRATE

100

CENTENARIAN SECRETS *to* SUCCESS
in BUSINESS *and* LIFE

STEVE FRANKLIN, PHD *and* LYNN PETERS ADLER, JD

WILEY

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*To all the gracious, generous Centenarians and their lovely families
who shared precious time and priceless wisdom with us for the benefit
of current and future generations.*

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FOREWORD

I am a centenarian wannabe.

Reaching 100 is a great life goal because I have heard that not many people die over 100!

My good friend Steve Franklin and his colleague Lynn Adler have written books, articles, and given speeches all over the world, and *Celebrate 100: Centenarian Secrets for Success in Business and Life* is their best work ever.

Their combined videotaping, interviewing, and surveying of over 500 centenarians to capture their wisdom and advice about money, work, and life is a wonderful accomplishment. Working hard to share their priceless “secrets” and wisdom with the younger generation through this book is a great contribution to our society.

The English writer Samuel Johnson said that most people don’t need to be taught anything new—they just need to be reminded to do what they already know they should be doing.

For some of you, the wisdom and advice presented in *Celebrate 100* will teach you some “new” ideas that I hope you will put into practice if you want to live a long and prosperous life. For the rest of you, *Celebrate 100* will be an enjoyable “reminder” of what you already know you should be doing to live a full and productive life, no matter how long you live.

I hope you will embrace and practice the centenarian secrets about money, work, and life as you enjoy their interesting stories, witty comments, and observations from over a century of dynamic change and living life to the fullest.

As Steve and Lynn suggest, listen to them, learn from them, and laugh with them.

If you do, you just might make it into the Centenarian Club, too.

I’m planning on it!

S. TRUETT CATHY
Founder and Chairman
Chick-fil-A, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

Century-Old Questions . . . Century-Old Answers

“You can do anything you want if you just put your mind on it and start working.”

BESSE COOPER, 116, FORMER SCHOOL TEACHER

Many answers to the challenging questions of life today are found in the wisdom of those who have traveled this road before us. We seek answers to our troubling economy, answers to an uncertain future, and answers that will lead to financial security, emotional stability, meaningful relationships, enjoyable work, and living life longer, healthier, and “larger.” What if the answers, the secrets, to many of these challenges about money, work, and life could be found in the authentic wisdom and experiences from the past and present in America’s centenarians? And, what if we fail to capture that wisdom and experience—those secrets—and share them with the younger generation? We set out to find these answers by interviewing America’s oldest generation.

ABOUT *CELEBRATE 100*

Celebrate 100 is the distilled essence of over 5000 combined years of wisdom, wit, insight, perspective, and advice about life from over 500 centenarians who have lived it with determination, resolve, and excellence.

They come from all across our great nation and represent the many different cultures of our rich heritage, and they comprise all of our diverse socioeconomic strata.

They live in the country, the suburbs, and the cities. They have worked on farms and in factories, warehouses, offices, and in their homes. They have worked in government and in the private sector. They have been employees, bosses, and entrepreneurs. They have been married and divorced. They have laughed and cried—a lot. They have seen babies born and loved ones die. They are athletic and not so athletic. They are compliant and they are mavericks. They are conservative and they are liberal. They are religious and not so religious. They have served in the military and they have supported our troops. They have lived through the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, World Wars I and II, Elvis, the Beatles, the Internet, Cable News, space travel, and our current economic, social, and political challenges. They are givers—not takers.

They are witty and they are wise.

We traveled across America meeting with these special people whose ages ranged from 100 to over 116. We captured their goldmine of wisdom and advice through over 250 hours of videotaped interviews, extensive written questionnaires, and telephone interviews. They were born in 30 different states and in 13 foreign countries, creating a kaleidoscope of background, dialogue, and history. Many were themselves first-generation Americans.

Our centenarians were asked questions about money, work, and many aspects of life that confront every one of us. We asked them to share their wisdom, advice, and secrets about these issues from two perspectives: what they actually did that worked, or what would they recommend for the younger generation after a century of perspective, trial and error, successes and failures.

Since beginning this research endeavor in 2007 some of our centenarians have passed on to their next “chapter” in life as *Celebrate 100* goes to press. However, we write and refer to all of them in the present tense since they still are very much present in our hearts, and to represent their most recent age since our last interview, conversation, correspondence, or communication about them.

Showing up with cameras and a few inquisitive questions, we witnessed them become alive as artists who begin creatively painting a picturesque scene, musicians passionately playing their instruments, dancers gracefully flowing with their favorite movements, writers thoughtfully articulating well-spoken words, or athletes pressing

toward their goal with zest and determination. They light up as they reflect on memories, as they remember and put the pieces of life together in words we, the younger generation, are blessed and privileged to hear. Perhaps the gift of time we received from them, and gave to them, during the interviews, is the best kind of gift—a gift that encouraged wisdom to be shared that leads to a more hopeful future for us all.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

If you will dig deep into this goldmine and treasury of experiences, stories, anecdotes, poems, and prose, extract the nuggets of time-tested wise advice from each page, and daily deposit them into your personal lifestyle bank account, you will be richer, wiser, more joyful, more enthusiastic about life, and dramatically increase your personal chances for celebrating 100 years of life lived with gusto.

Listen to them. Laugh with them. Learn from them.

And you will live life—and you will love life—longer.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A project like this would probably take 100 years to complete if not for many devoted team members contributing generous time and talent throughout this journey to *Celebrate 100*. Each one of you has helped with your unique gifts to make this much more than just a great book. It is an awakening and awareness and celebration of life for everyone who seeks to live long and live well. We hope every one of you experience and celebrate the centenarian spirit each day of your journey into the exciting future.

Thank you with all of our hearts.

My wonderful wife, Elaine, for your tireless data tabulating and rich content contributions; all my beautiful children and grandchildren; Leo Wells for your enthusiastic support and encouragement; centenarian research team wannabes Nancy Daniel, Kendra Emigh, Doug Buce, Joe Colavito; Andy Stanley and Jeff Henderson for your encouragement and counsel on sharpening my 100 presentations; the awesome Northpoint and Buckhead Church replenishers for your priceless feedback; Tripp Crosby, Matt Garret, and team for creative context; Debbie Woodall for design ideas; all the Cathy family for your years of amazing generosity and support; Bill Heavener, Greg Suess, and Cynthia Manson for connecting us to create this book; and my two lifetime spiritual and barbeque buddies Robert Wynne (Joker 2) and Bob Day (Joker 3). You're the best!

STEVE



(continued)

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I also wish to acknowledge with sincere thanks the innumerable centenarians and their families over the years for their warm response to my efforts bringing and keeping centenarians “front and center.” And my twin brothers Brian and Marty Peters for their ever-present support, and posthumously, my mother, Evelyn R. Peters, who was always my steadfast advocate and best volunteer.

LYNN

CHAPTER **1**

Today's Centenarians—Celebrities
and National Treasures

A Century of Wisdom

THE CELEBRITIES OF AGING: CENTENARIANS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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

THE WISDOM OF CENTENARIANS: AUTHENTIC—EXPERIENCE, NOT THEORY

NATIONAL TREASURES: UNIQUE—INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY

CAMEOS OF TODAY'S CENTENARIANS

A CENTURY OF PROGRESS: THEIR CENTURY

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;