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FROM THE EDITOR

By [Michael Stone](#) | [Email the author](#) | July 29, 2011

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Will You Live for 100 Years?

There are some simple ways to make yourself a living part of history.

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About seven in 1,000 people live to be a centenarian, or someone who is at least 100 years old, according to an estimate [in the academic journal Science](#).

You have a 50 percent chance for every year beyond that, and living from 100 to 110 "is like tossing heads 10 times in a row," James Vaupel, director of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock, Germany, told *Science*.

Well, Besse Cooper must have a doubled-headed quarter.

Cooper, the oldest person in the world, lives in a nursing home in Monroe, Ga. She was born on Aug. 26, 1896, meaning she's about to celebrate her 115th birthday. Unlike her 114th birthday, it'll be a "quiet" celebration, her 75-year-old son, Sidney, told me by phone.

He said she's not too good of hearing, but she'll sometimes be interested in a convo.

"She'll talk, but she'll talk on her terms," he joked.

Sidney said his mother, a retired teacher, remembers traveling on a houseboat built by her uncle and father, helping women vote for the first time, and reading about the Titanic sinking in the newspaper.

Cooper even recalls farmers blowing up dynamite to celebrate the turn of the 20th century.

The key to her longevity was tending to her big garden and being outdoors, Sidney said. To keep her mind active, she did crossword puzzles and read a lot—activities that were recently forced to the wayside because of poor vision, he added.

Though not yet a centenarian, Estie Norris, the oldest member of the [Powder Springs Senior Center](#) who just celebrated [her 96th birthday](#), offered her own methodology in January behind racking up the birthday candles: "To always keep busy, keep doing something."

Cooper, Norris, and the rest of those climbing into the 90s and 100s should be celebrated for their longevity—if for no other reason than the history they’ve recorded with their eyes or the will they have to keep chugging along. And if you too wish to join their ranks, you could practice what they all seem to have in common.

Here is a list Harvard Medical School put together in its article "[Living to 100: What's the Secret?](#)" on what centenarians do and don't do to keep their hearts pumping.

- Don't smoke or drink heavily
- Those who did smoke didn't do it for long
- Gained little or no weight during adulthood
- Don't overeat
- Eat many fruits and vegetables
- Get regular physical activity for as long as their bodies will allow
- Challenge their minds
- Have a positive outlook
- Be friendly and stay close to family and friends

"Many researchers think that people could add up to a decade to their lives if they emulated the centenarians," the article says. "And, from what we know so far, they aren't doing anything mysterious. They're simply following the standard health commandments: don't smoke, keep trim, get exercise, manage stress, and avoid social isolation."

Will you be preparing to celebrate your 115th birthday someday? Following the lead of those who have reached their own age milestones will help you beat the odds.

And who knows, year after year you could be flipping heads and the papers will read: "Powder Springs Woman, World's Oldest Person, Celebrates 150th Birthday."

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Remember Pearl Harbor -- Keep America Alert!

(Now deceased) America's oldest living Medal of Honor recipient, living his 101st year is former enlisted Chief Petty Officer, Aviation Chief Ordnanceman (ACOM), later wartime commissioned Lieutenant John W. Finn, U. S. Navy (Ret.). He is also the last surviving Medal of Honor, "The Day of Infamy", Japanese Attack on the Hawaiian Islands, Naval Air Station, Kaneohe Bay, Oahu, Territory of Hawaii, 7 December 1941.

(Now deceased) 'Navy Centenarian Sailor', 103 year old, former enlisted Chief Petty Officer, Aviation Chief Radioman (ACRM, Combat Aircrewman), later wartime commissioned Chief Warrant Officer Julio 'Jay' Ereneta, U. S. Navy (Ret.), is a thirty year career veteran of World War One and World War Two. He first flew aircrewman in August 1922; flew rearseat Radioman/Gunner (1920s/1930s) in the tactical air squadrons of the Navy's first aircraft carriers, USS LANGLEY (CV-1) and USS LEXINGTON (CV-2).

Visit my photo album tribute to these centenarian veteran shipmates:

<http://news.webshots.com/album/123286873BFAAig>

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