

Verona Hiland, resident of the Carillons in Sun City, blows out the candles on her birthday cake. She turned 102 on Nov. 19. [Submitted photo]

## Sun City resident turns 102 years old

**V**erona Hiland celebrated her 102nd birthday on Nov. 19 at

GenCare Sun City at The Carillons, located on Royal Oak Road in Sun City.

Hiland had an answer for her Cedar Rapids, Iowa doctor, who advised her to "rest and relax." She said, "I am going to learn to swim!"

In 1953, at the age of 42, she did just that. In 1956, her continuing love of water inspired Hiland to obtain her certification as a water safe-

ty and life saving instructor.



**Micki Fischer**

Sun City can attest to many contributions by Hiland since her arrival in 1970.

Her passion for health and wellness through water exercise was most evident when she founded and led the Sun City Aquarians, Sun City's first water ballet group, 18

senior women with no prior water ballet skills.

This group continued to stay active, healthy and perform for 22 years, until 1992, when Hiland celebrated her

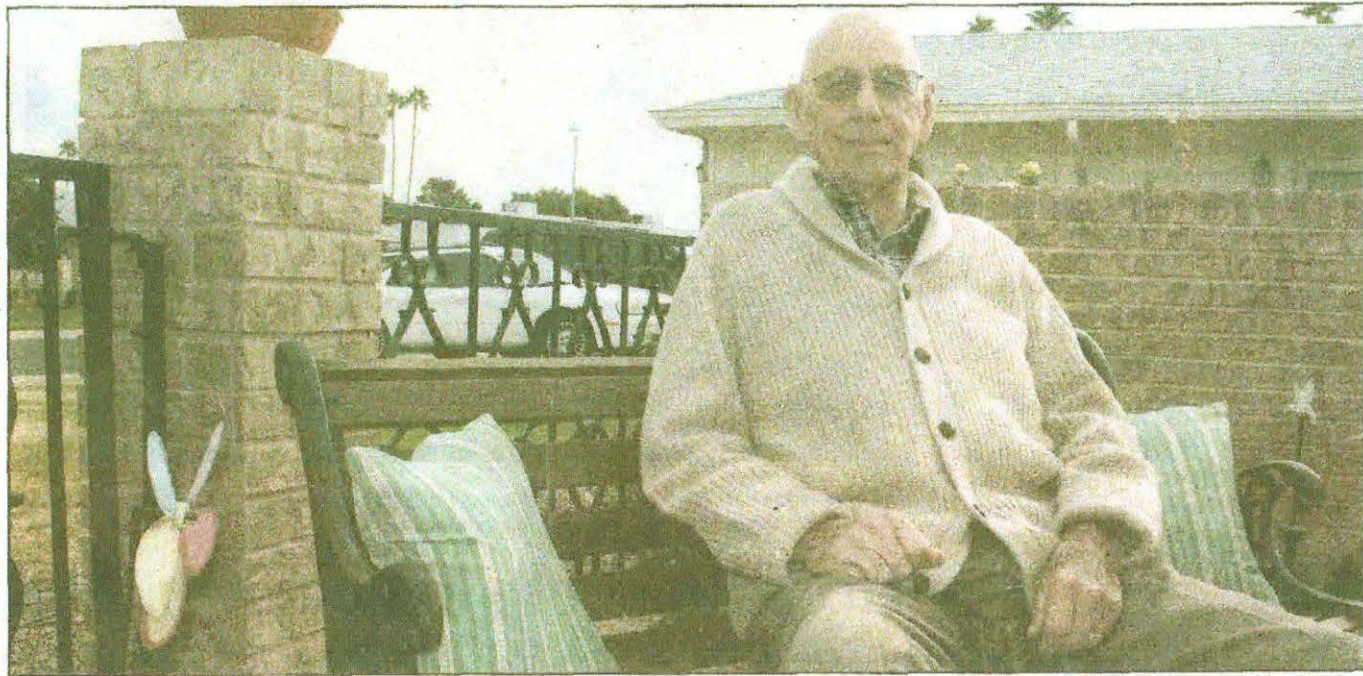
82nd birthday.

Hiland demonstrates the can-do spirit of living life to the fullest by participating in regular physical training activities and social events at GenCare Lifestyle/The Carillons.

She attributes her longevity to a well-balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables as well as her passion for swimming and exercising.

• Micki Fischer profiles Northwest Valley residents and organizations in Your Turn. Email Your Turn submissions to her at [mfisher@yourwestvalley.com](mailto:mfisher@yourwestvalley.com).

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Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

Sun City resident Gene Huey relaxes in his front yard. He believes common sense and a positive approach to life helped him survive into his 90s.

## Living to 90: Senior numbers climb

Residents tout activity, life approach as keys to longevity

**By Rusty Bradshaw**  
Independent Newspapers

A century ago, the average American lifespan was not much past 50. But today the senior citizen population is the largest age group, and more are living into their 90s.

The senior citizen age group grew at a faster rate than the country's total population between 2000 and 2010, according to U.S. Census

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information. Seniors increased by 5.3 million in the 10-year time span. Seniors comprise 13 percent of the total U.S. population. Among seniors, the fastest-growing group was 85-94, which increased 29.9 percent.

While the baby boomer generation — those born between 1946-60 following World War II as soldiers returned home — is a factor in the population increase, some Northwest Valley

residents believe, based on their own experiences, lifestyle plays a large role in more people living into their 90s.

Dottie Kraft, a Peoria Ventana Lakes resident, and Sun City residents Naomi DeVincent and Gene Huey all lived with nearly no major medical issues, a trend that continues today. All indicated staying active played a key role in avoiding medical problems. Ms. Kraft, 90, continues to swim and ride her bicycle. She was an avid skier until she gave up the sport at age 75.

"I raised seven children, and after the last

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## Living

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one was born I started doing exercise to Jack LaLaine (TV program)," she said. "I've stayed with regular exercise ever since then."

Ms. Kraft, who tries to always be busy with some physical activity, also walks a lot.

Mr. Huey, 90, began an active lifestyle as a youngster at home, and that intensified in the 1930s when he worked at a Civilian Conservation Corps fire camp.

"I learned a lot, and I never worked so hard in my life," he said.

Ms. DeVincent, 92, faced her biggest health challenges just two years ago when she fell at home twice, injuring her hips. But neither instance required joint replacement.

"It's still all original equipment," she said. "I do most of my own housework, and I can be as active as most people."

Ms. DeVincent also believes keeping her mind sharp has been a key factor in her longevity. She plays cards with friends and reads to keep her mind alert. While she has indulged in a computer and plays some games on the device, she does not overdo it.

"People today are too wrapped up in their electronic devices," she said. "People are not able to hold a conversation."

Ms. Kraft also does puzzles and reads to keep her mind alert.

"I usually read in bed until I'm ready to fall asleep," she said.

Ms. Kraft also keeps a positive attitude and is thankful for what she has, rather than wishing for more. She also continues to travel, having recently returned from Israel.

Ms. DeVincent said diet is also important. She has always eaten three meals per day and did not start eating meat until she was 16.

"We lived on a farm," she said. "There

was always plenty of milk."

Mr. Huey believes his positive attitude and approach to life have helped him survive. He related an incident in grade school in which he helped a young boy struggling in math. His teacher wrote a letter to his mother, praising him for his helpful approach. When his mother shared, with tearful eyes, her pride in the teacher's praise, Mr. Huey could not understand why all the fuss.

"I did that because I believed that was what you were supposed to do," he said.

Mr. Huey's approach to others has been to treat them as he would expect to be treated. He also never let stress pile up.

"Things came up, you take care of them, then you move on," he said. "I've lived through some ups and downs, but somehow or other things turn out."

Ms. Kraft also believes a relatively stress free life was helpful to her. All three residents had long marriages stretching past 50 years, and each credited their spouse for their support.

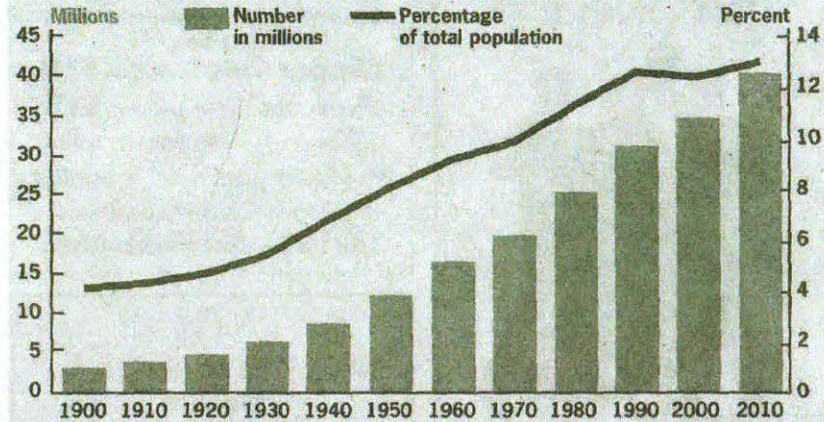
Common sense has guided Mr. Huey during his life. He credits his parents for his approach to life, saying they instilled those values in him.

"My parents were busy people, but if something happened and I needed their attention, I got it," he explained.

All three are concerned younger gen-

## Population 65 Years and Older By Size and Percent of Total Population

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial of population, 1900 to 2000 Census Summary File 1



erations are losing sight of the values that helped get them into their 90s. Mr. Huey believes for the most part there is not the same respect between parents and offspring as in previous generations.

"It is a little scary the way things are today," he said.

Ms. Kraft also believes people are too obsessed with their electronic gadgets.

"Pretty soon, the art of conversation will be lost," she said.

Ms. DeVincent acknowledges the inevitability of change, but still has concerns as she looks forward to more years of life.

"I know it is a changing world, but it makes me wonder what is coming," she said.

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