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A Century of Living

By Cathy Tyson



Homer Thiele with his wife, Patricia

Photos provided

Homer Thiele jokes that he was born just a few days after World War I broke out, Aug. 1, 1914, back when Woodrow Wilson was president. In his estimation, it's been a "wonderful life" with unimaginable changes over the course of 10 decades that all started in tiny Orofino, Idaho. Friends, family and neighbors celebrated his birthday with a get together at Atria, a senior living facility in Lafayette recently. He stays busy as president of the Residents Council.

When he was a toddler, his family moved to Grandview, Wash., a small town in the Yakima Valley. Thiele started mowing neighbors' lawns for the princely sum of 25 to 50 cents per lawn, and saved up enough to purchase a bicycle, which he then used as a paper boy, delivering three different newspapers per day, which earned him \$5 a week. He attended the University of Washington during the Depression, but "dropped out, and didn't have any money so I went to work as a junior clerk for American Mail Lines."

He eventually joined the Navy and worked as a supply, disbursing and commissary officer in Port Angeles, Wash., when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941.

He met his future wife Patricia Clapp, proudly reporting that she was the Apple Blossom queen of Wenatchee, on a trip home to Washing-

ton state. After knowing each other a total of 23 days, they married in 1944, because Thiele had to report to Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in short order. Thiele was 30, Patti was 22 at the time – they remained married for 68 years, until his wife's death in 2012. They had four children.

A variety of assignments moved the family to a number of bases, from Oakland to Brooklyn, to his favorite, a 15-month stint at Kwajalein Island, part of the Marshall Islands in 1956 – a minuscule atoll in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. "I really enjoyed it there," said Thiele. At that point he had risen to Lieutenant Commander in the Navy and had a young family that enjoyed the tropical lifestyle the island offered.

After eventually retiring from his naval career, Thiele worked for Cutter Labs in Berkeley. The family settled into a lovely home on Valencia Drive in Orinda, where they stayed for the next 17 years. During that time all the kids graduated from Miramonte High School. As empty nesters, he and Patti moved to Rossmoor, then to Atria, where she passed away two years ago.

Asked if he has any advice for reaching the century mark, Thiele replied: "I don't feel qualified," and shrugs. "I've tried to live a good life." Adding, "I've made a lot of mistakes, but lucky to be where I am."



**Submit stories and story ideas to
storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com**

"First Century Club" Members Have One Thing in Common: Staying Active

Submitted by Debbie Fuchs



From left: Anna Bowman, Ermina Dykstra, Margaret Dugan, Rita Stirnus, Ruth Kelly, Sara Alchermes, and Vera Miebergen
Photo provided

There's a running theme among those who are 100-plus years old: stay active and have a positive outlook on life. No matter their background, those in the First Century Club at Kisco Senior Living's Byron Park community in Walnut Creek have experienced more than 100 years each of good and bad times and have kept a bright outlook on life. There are seven members in the First Century Club at Byron Park, and a few others on the cusp of three digits: Vera Meibergen, 104, regularly participates three times a week in Tai Chi classes and attended water aerobics until she was 100; Rita Stirnus, 105, stays sharp by playing card games and other "brain games;" Ruth Kelly, 101, is former Miss Hermosa Beach, 1929; Sarah Alchermes, 100, is one of the original members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and is still very involved in the community through Grandmothers for Peace; Margaret Dugan, 104, is a great example of the power of maintaining close ties – she's a former first grade teacher from the Midwest, who had one of her former students travel to California just to visit her; Ermina Dykstra, 100, stays mentally active by enjoying a good mind game like Scrabble; and Anna Bowman, 100, studied at Yale School of Music and keeps her music skills sharp by continuing to play the piano. Kisco Senior Living communities offer independent lifestyle options for seniors, as well as licensed assisted living and memory care in some locations. For information, visit www.kiscoseniorkiving.com.



Samira Says

Samira Davi is a Nurse Liaison for ManorCare Health Services in Walnut Creek. Samira has over 10 years of experience working in health care in Contra Costa County, which has gained her a wide view of what is important to the health care consumer. She will be posting common questions and comments in each issue of the Lamorinda Weekly. You are welcome to contact Samira directly at 925.270.8766

Exercise Tips!

Staying active and fit is a great way to improve and maintain mental and physical aptitude. It is especially important during the later stages of life. As people get older they typically engage in less physical activity for a number of reasons including, fear of falling or general safety, a lack of transportation, and limited equipment or facilities. It is important to realize, however that exercise does not have to be backbreaking to provide substantial benefits. Walking, gardening, dancing, or swimming are great ways to get exercise- and don't take too much of a toll on the body. As people get older, they tend to lose physical performance in four main areas: strength, balance, flexibility, and endurance. Exercising for a short time every day can seriously reduce the rate at which these attributes diminish over time.

Some benefits of physical and mental benefits to exercising and staying active include:

- Better sleep!
- Enhanced brain activity!
- Improved blood pressure!
- It feels good!

Just like with any exercise program, it is important to make sure that certain precautions be taken prior to starting. Here are some tips for starting your exercise plan.

If you have mobility issues, try joining a class where there are supervisors who can help you. Make sure to do a 5-10 minute warm and stretch before every workout.

Try to exercise at least 3 times per week.

Make sure to drink enough water before and after exercise so that you don't get dehydrated.

Eat a healthy diet to support your exercise plan. Make sure to eat fruits and vegetables high in water, foods with protein to help rebuild muscles, and dairy or juices that contain calcium to sustain bone mass.

We at ManorCare Walnut Creek and ManorCare Tice Valley are happy to provide you with these exercise tips.

As always, we at ManorCare offer post-acute medical and rehabilitation care for those recovering from surgery, illness, or injury. The continuum of care provided by our experienced and committed team members (including physical, occupational, and speech therapist) helps our patients to successfully transition back to home.

Please feel free to call for additional information or to schedule a tour.

For more information please visit www.manorcare.com.

For a short video visit us on YouTube: www.youtube.com/hcmanorcare

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