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100 years old, and going strong

By Pippa Fisher



Diablo Foods Vice President Connie Collier (left) presents Margrit Getsinger (center) with a bouquet of flowers to mark her 100th birthday on a recent shopping trip with Lamorinda Village Vice President Don Jenkins. Photo Pippa Fisher

live with her daughter. She has her own second story loft apartment added on to her daughter's home and lives independently alongside her daughter who works in San Francisco as a senior vice president of Morgan Stanley.

Getsinger played tennis until she was into her 80s and says she has always maintained a healthy lifestyle, staying active, eating well, enjoying an occasional glass of wine, and credits good Swiss genes for a long life.

This gracious and inspirational lady must be doing something right. Although she lives with her daughter, she maintains her independence, grocery shopping every week with help from Lamorinda Village. She even takes French lessons at the Orinda Community Center.

Getsinger recently bought a walker frame, joking with Lamorinda Village Vice President and volunteer Don Jenkins as he drove her on one of their weekly grocery shopping trips to Diablo Foods how "I'd better get some exercise if I'm going to be 100." Although Getsinger reads on her Nook device and likes to keep up with news reports, she says reading is becoming more challenging now as the only thing slowing her down a little is declining eyesight.

Jenkins enjoys discussing world affairs with Getsinger on their drives to the grocery store and remarks on the wide circle of friends she has made since moving here. She stays engaged with friends and family and two very large Bernese Mountain dogs that keep her on her toes.

Looking back on the difference between life in Europe and the States, Getsinger says that life was more formal where she came from. "If you go out, you dress up," she says. There is an elegance about her that still draws comments wherever she goes. Reflecting that she will always feel slightly different than her American-born counterparts, she says, "Where you come from shapes you. I will

In 1919 Woodrow Wilson was president of the United States. In the same year Germany and the Allied nations signed the Treaty of Versailles, formally ending the First World War, Babe Ruth was sold by the Boston Red Sox to the New York Yankees for a record-setting \$125,000, and on Oct. 8, 1919, Orinda resident Margrit Getsinger was born in Switzerland. She will be celebrating her 100th birthday surrounded by generations of family in her home.

Getsinger, raised in Switzerland, met and married her husband, German-born Ralph Getsinger, after he was forced to leave Germany accused of "being a spy" as a result of his employment with the U.S. Foreign Service. Their daughter Joan was born in Bern. In 1945 the family left Switzerland for Michigan. They had two sons, John and Pierce, born in Detroit. Getsinger has four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

She lived in Michigan until 2008 when she moved to California following the death of her husband to

always be Swiss."

On the subject of how she keeps such a positive outlook on life she is adamant. "I work on being positive or else it makes me unhappy. I don't let myself feel as bad as I could."

Jenkins points out that as people age depression can set in. "It's easy to become a complainer," he says.

"And that's just boring to others," says Getsinger. "It doesn't change anything."

Getsinger is grateful for the assistance she receives from Lamorinda Village. She explained that in addition to weekly drives to the grocery store, she has used its help with decluttering drawers. "It is a wonderful organization," she enthuses, saying that her friends back in the Midwest are envious, as they don't have a Village network in that area.

Lamorinda Village is part of a nationwide, nonprofit organization whose mission is to build a community helping seniors live independently in their own homes for as long as it is safe to do so. Jenkins says volunteers help in many areas, from driving to handyman services and organized social events, to tax help and help with technical matters, giving as much or as little time as they can manage. With 35 people in the Lamorinda area needing regular assistance, they welcome new volunteers.

The Village is establishing a new Lamorinda Village Service Award in honor of Diablo Foods Founder Ed Stokes, a community leader and outstanding community volunteer himself who exemplified the Rotarian motto of "Service above Self." Stokes' son Dan Stokes and daughter Connie Collier are continuing their father's tradition of supporting worthy community charities.

The award will be presented on Dec. 6 at Lamorinda Village's Afternoon of Gratitude - an event with food and entertainment, to be held at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall to thank volunteers, member and supporters for their participation.

More information on the Lamorinda Village and how to get involved can be found on their website <https://lamorindavillage.org/>

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