

90 plus

My goal was to photograph people over the age of 90 who are self-sufficient, something that I have wanted to do for quite a while.

My Aunt Marie was the main inspiration. She lived to be 91.

Every Sunday family would eat dinner at her house, which was the home place.

She would have three vegetables, three meats, iced tea and desserts.

Aunt Marie had no children and had never been married, but she loved her family.

I never got the chance or the opportunity to photograph her.

My other aunt turned 93 on April 6th. She continues to clean her home and prepare food every day, which she calls "a little something".

The people that I interviewed have so much wisdom and independent spirits.

Most of all I was impressed by their determination to be strong and to persevere through the aches and pains, despite the fact that mostly everyone they have known is deceased.

I would also like to dedicate this exhibit to Teddy Milton Miller, Jennifer Miller's father, who passed away recently at 98 years of age.

I had taken photographs of Teddy years ago.

He was an amazing person through spirit, intellect and wisdom.

They all were fascinating to me and I wanted to tell their story.

My questions to the 90 plus:

How do you keep upbeat and positive?

How does being 90 affect your life? How have you changed?

What is your motto or words of wisdom?

Did you ever think that you would see an African American President?

Jackie Liggins



Ivory - 94 years

I don't let nothing worry me. Because God don't make no mistakes,
whatever happens I just accept it.
I don't have any aches and pain, no medicine, sometimes I will take an aspirin
but I don't feel as though that's medicine.
There is really no change in being 90. I'm still going.
I go to church every Sunday, crochet, read a lot of books.
Prayer is the best thing in life.
My motto is to never give up and have faith in the good Lord
because he will work it out.
I didn't think we would see a black president but it's wonderful.
We have been down for so long and God just wants us to
get along - blacks, whites, Mexicans, everyone. God didn't want any prejudice.
I definitely think that he will get back in office.
Republicans and Democrats all they care about is money, money, money.
The love of money is the root of all evil.
God will provide for you, he will take care of you.
I don't love money and I get along just fine,
as long as I have a place to stay and food to eat.
I have always taken 10% and given it to the Lord because I have never been broke,
and God has always taken care of me.



George - 91 years

I like to read a lot, mingle with people as much as I can,
and look at a lot of the news channels.

I sent all of my kids to school.

My only issue now is my steps have gotten shorter and I can't run as fast as I used to.

Nor can I see as well but I am thankful to the Lord that I am still above the ground.

You know I thought I never would see a black president.

It's so sad that people won't come together.

He accepts so much and keeps on smiling.

My motto has always been to do unto others as you would have them to do unto you.

Watch the seeds that you sow because as ye sow so shall ye reap.

People don't love money but you can't do without it.

Look at it now, I didn't think that one day we would ever have to buy water.



Virginia - 92 years

My daily chores are cooking and doing the laundry.
I enjoy having daily activities, but I used to be very active.
So used to being married don't know anything else.

Being old and trying to do everything is a j-o-b.

I was a hairdresser for many years.

Now I have slowed down considerably.

Unable to attend church now but listen to several church programs on Sunday mornings.

Surprised in living to see an African American President,

I think that he is doing a wonderful job if they would just leave him be.

Unable to do things that I used to do, but I still wonder what I should do next.

My motto is trusting in the Lord and everything will turn out alright,
and I read my bible every day.



Martha - 91 years

I don't take any medicine, never have headaches.

I have never drunk alcohol or smoked in my life.

I used to cross my legs and do a handstand, but I can't do that anymore.

The good Lord just blesses me, I stay happy all of the time, plus I sing hymns.

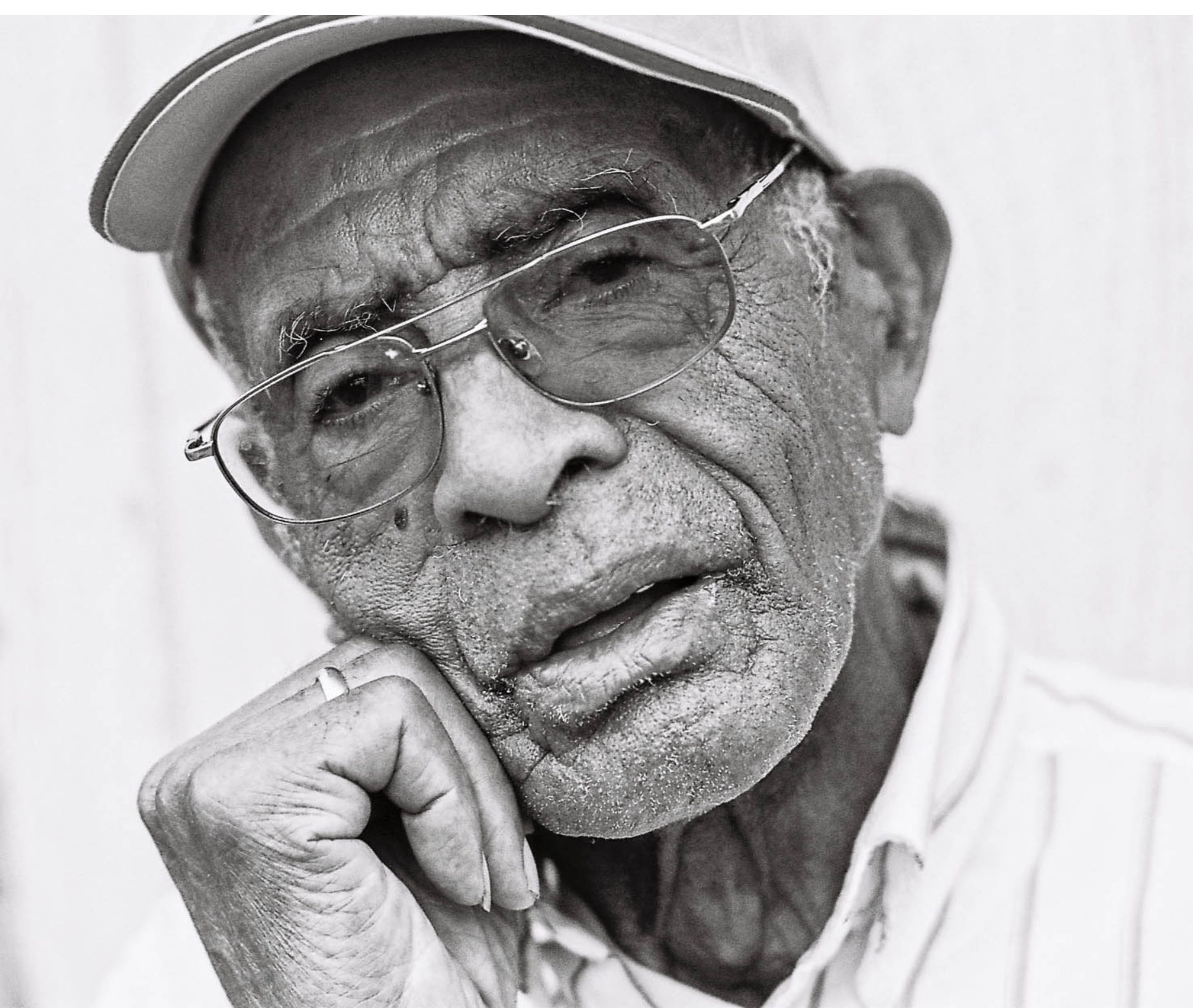
I have raised 8 children, 5 boys and 3 girls, one child passed away in January.

Never worked in the mill, I always kept children.

My motto is treat people nice,

and if the devil lived next door I'd speak to him and keep going.

Someone used to say you live here and learn, die and forget it all.



Jessie - 91 years

I basically try to keep my mind occupied by working in the garden and attending church.

I have had 4 operations, and I only had to slow up just a little bit.

I had no idea in the world that I would see a black president.

I really think a lot of him and I hope that people will go out and vote him back in office.

My motto is to be honest, treat people like you want to be treated,
receive a good education so you can get a good job,
and put your Faith in the good Lord.

I would have been married for 72 years. I had a good marriage and
that means a whole lot. Me and my wife had a sweet marriage.

If I could I would have passed away and let her live.



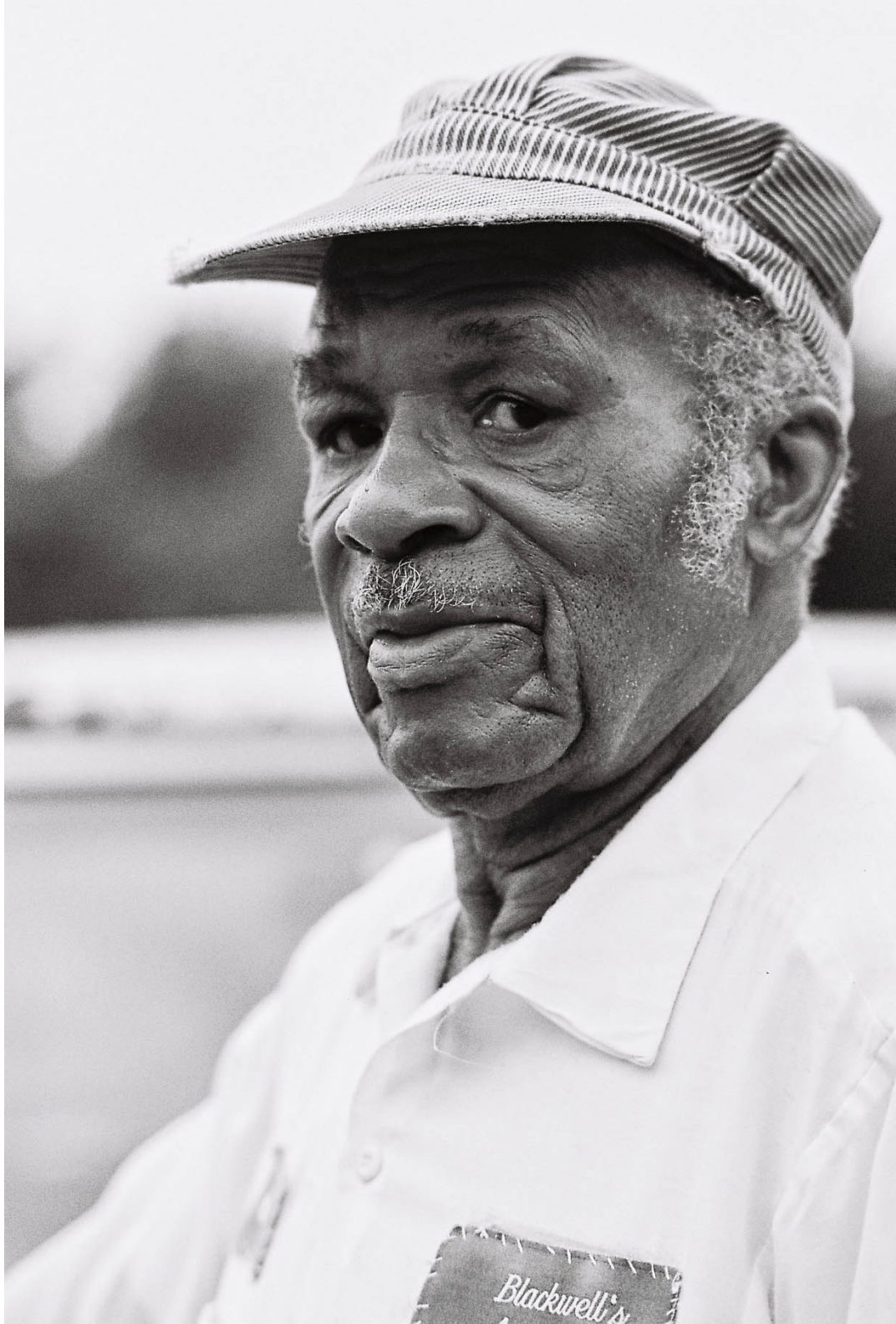
Viola - 94 years

I can tell since this past year I am slowing down.
Also I don't remember quite as well as I use to.
I could hear as well as a young person. Sometimes I heard too much.
With persistence, determination, faith in God I never quit.
I was left alone to raise nine children by myself.
My husband passed away right after we had purchased a farm.
Then his brother had purchased a farm next to ours,
and he also passed away the following year. So I also purchased that farm.
I have 96 acres. We farmed that land with corn and tobacco.
Sometimes they would say "Mrs. Viola you have more corn than the men."
We were always blessed with good crops.
Also each month I made 2 payments on my house and 2 payments on the farm.
I sewed quilts, and clothing for my children.
I would have even made shoes for my boys if I could.
I always tried to give my children good advice,
and to know the difference between good and bad.
The way the world has changed hasn't bothered me that much.
I am thankful to see a Black President.
I hope he gets back in and continues to be healthy,
because I am not thinking about going nowhere.



Mary - 93 years

I enjoy planting a few flowers and just enjoying life.
Everything is fine, I just can't get around like I use to.
I just hope and pray that President Barack Obama will get back in office.
My motto is continuing to have Faith in God and not Man.



George - 90 years

I basically didn't get any education when growing up and my parents separated when I was around seven.

A white sheriff driving a white horse and buggy picked us up and dropped us off. I remember him saying that your parents have given you all away. You better grow up to be good boys and good men, or I'm going to come and get you and lock you up.

I will always remember that day and his name - Pig Hamlin, Sheriff.

So I stayed with a few cousins, but I have been on my own since the age of 15.

In the spring of that year I moved to Calvin Hawkins and hired myself out and bought my own food.

With the blessings of the good Lord I can still drive and work on cars.

I actually started being a body man, working on vehicles in 1952, but I started with cars around 1938.

People didn't give you a vehicle, so when you wrecked you had to fix the car, and people would bring their cars to me for repair work.

Back then you could purchase a car for around \$500, that was in Hoover's day. So I went to New York and worked with a Jew and he brought me my first set of tools.

Then later on I went to school in Detroit for about 12 months, and eventually I had a shop in Detroit.

Basically, I feel pretty good. The only problems I have are my eyes. I am too young to fool with arthritis and as long as I can keep looking up I will continue to pray.

You see when a black person is in a high office, they haven't skipped anything.

President Obama is a smart man and we need to work together.

One thing about him, he hasn't done a lot of mudslinging, which means a whole lot. I have been married three times, married the same wife twice because we were married in the State of Michigan which was a common law state, and North Carolina would not honor a common law marriage. So now I have been married for 60 years.

I will continue to stay on my knees and keep looking up.



Etta - 95 years

Being upbeat and positive is just natural for me.

Being 90 feels young to me.

I am still able to do the same things that I did 20 years ago.

I exercise, dance and work with my flowers. I try to stay active.

You know what will be will be, just let go and let God.

Things have changed so, and thank the Lord that he's in charge.

They definitely want him out of the office basically because he's a black man.

I try to live each day and don't worry about what's going to happen tomorrow.

Just give me wisdom and God's going to take care of you.

You know me and your mother grew up together and we were somewhere and this Lady said "You are Saluda's daughter", so Ene said "No, I'm not Saluda's daughter."

Then she said "This one, that's Jim Wade's daughter" and I said "Oh that's me."

I didn't even know my mother's real name...because we always called her "Sis".

We laughed and laughed about that.

I just ask God to let me keep on living.



Chester - 91 years

Grandkids keep me positive. They ask me 100 questions.
Every move I make they want to know what I am doing now.
When I was in the hospital my grandchild got up in the bed and prayed for me,
and on that same night I came out of urgent care.
I have 14 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren.
My only problem is I can't see or get about as well, nor can I find a wife.
When I mention can she cook that's it.
When I was small I tried to join the church at the age of seven.
The preacher, Wylie Bradsher, wouldn't accept me.
But at the age of 14, that's when I joined church and found the Lord.
I didn't think I would ever see an African American President.
I joke with the family and at the senior center. I tell them that I am a Republican.
I get the biggest kick out of that.
Each day I just trust in God and it will be alright.



Katy - 91 years

I actually feel blessed to be here.

The Lord keeps me going.

He has blessed me to raise six children all by myself and two of them have passed away.

I farmed for a living and enjoyed cooking and sewing.

I still make preserves, wash dishes and bake strawberry pies.

Love to go shopping, because you can't get what you want if you don't go.

Use to love fishing. We would stay from sun up to sundown.

You know back in the day we couldn't vote but I am excited that we have a black president.

My children have always called me sis instead of mama, and

I have always taught my children to be good and respectful to others.

Lived for my children to get grown and now just waiting for the Lord.



Catherine - 99 years

I just love people.

You can mistreat me if you want to but that's with you and the good Lord.

I always get good conversation by telling my age.

The only thing that I don't do now is keep babies. I just don't have the time.

I exercise on Monday and Wednesday every week.

I'm making arrangements to travel to Philadelphia.

Also, on my next birthday, the church is planning on taking me to the Holy Land and paying for everything.

The President can't change things by himself. You need help.

Seems as though they want to go backwards.

The main problem is because he's African American. They just need to work together.

I haven't really changed a lot.

Not many people have a daughter like mine; she really looks after her mother.

Raised 3 children and 2 have deceased.

I always loved Sunday school,

and I am the President of the Senior Group at church.

We had our class reunion and I am the only one living out of 22 students, but the reunion consists of several classes from our school.

I recently renewed my license for the next five years.

My motto is to treat everybody like you want to be treated.

Also do unto others as you would have them to do unto you.



Robbie 101 years

I try to eat right, don't drink or smoke.

Exercise in my bed, and that's about it.

Being able to take care of myself, and try to help other people, really means a lot to me.

Good that I was able to see a black president.

I think he's done a pretty good job.

Look at what he had to face and master,

but they are really trying to knock him down.

I raised three children and adopted a foster child that I had taken care of
when she was 16 days old.

I always told my kids no cussing, no drinking,
no running around at night where you are not suppose to go.

My adopted child was retarded and schizophrenic.

We had to place her in a home because I was unable to handle her,
but she still calls to check and see how I'm doing.

Now she seems to be doing okay. She is actually 51 years old now.

I had twin boys and one girl, 3 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

I guess you can call me old fashioned because I never wanted to smoke or run around.

God is my all in all, he's my everything.

I only take blood pressure pills and water pills, that's it.

I can kick up my heels as high as someone young.



Florence - 93 years

My daily routine consist of praying, watching a lot of church sermons on TV
and having my family around.

My age hasn't really affected my daily routine until the last few weeks after falling.

But I am still able to mop floors, clean the house and cook my meals.

I didn't think years ago that I would see a black President,
but a lot of things have changed.

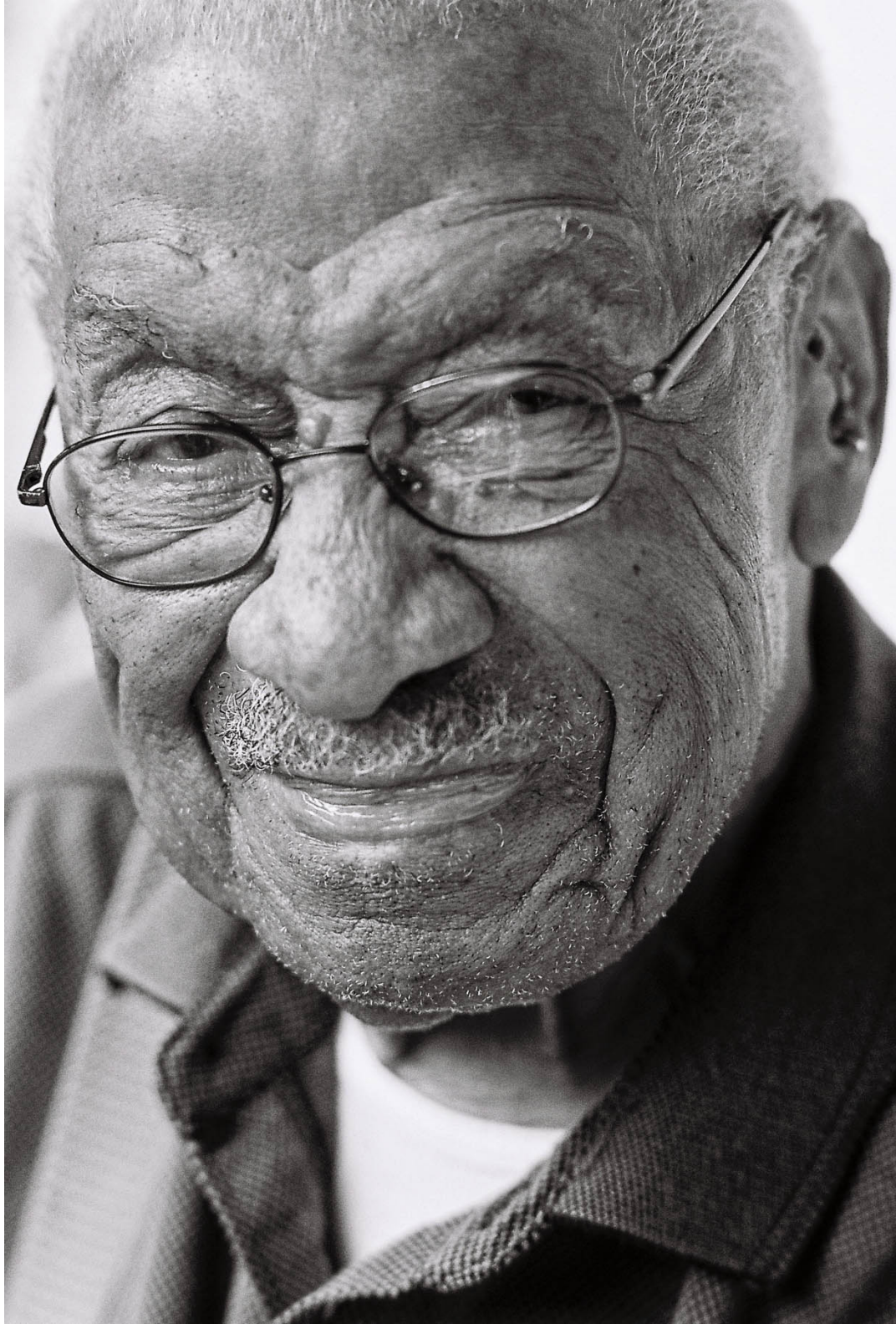
I haven't changed a lot though. I think I'm still feisty in spirit.

I always told my children and grandchildren to stay out of trouble and be honest.

Trust in the Lord and treat people as you would like to be treated.

I never thought I would be the one living the longest in my family.

When I start really thinking about it I really become sad,
just thinking that all of my brothers and sisters have passed.



Clifton - 97 years

Born and raised in the country part of Sanford, NC. We had a farm with mules and pigs.

Used to attend church and sing in the choir. I was a pretty good chirper.

Went to school at Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia,
a preparatory school for African Americans founded by Charlotte Hawkins Brown.

Surprised in seeing an African American President
but they are really trying to get rid of him.

I haven't changed that much, in fact I still feel young, except for my back.

Married since 1948. My wife is a little bossy.

She has given away my guns, best suits, hid my razors and knives.

I retired from the post office, but one thing that I have noticed
now is that we have too many vehicles on the highway.

People drive too fast. Don't take that early light
because another fool might take the light, so you need to just take your time.

My biggest regret is not becoming a school teacher.

We need God and education and pull those pants up.

Showing the back end of the behind shows nothing but ignorance.



Photos courtesy of
Jennifer Miller



Theodore Milton Miller, 98, passed away peacefully July 18, 2012

Teddy spent his youth in Baltimore and received a BS in Chemistry from Johns Hopkins University in 1935.

He had a long and varied career as a chemist.

He was involved with numerous research projects related to fish oil and food science, working for several companies, the state extension service and universities, and in his own home laboratory in Ocean, NC.

After the 1990 death of his wife of 40 years, he closed his laboratory and, at age 76, embarked on a series of travels with his golden retriever throughout the US, Mexico, Yukon, Alaska.

He eventually "landed" in Cow Head, Newfoundland, where he built a summer cabin and became a valued member of the community.

He wrote extensively about how to survive the loss of a spouse and remain productive, emphasizing the importance of "human contacts, nutrition, exercise and writing."

He chronicled his thoughts and travels in a book on his web site:

<http://www.wildegeestfoundation.org/>.

In 2004 he developed a research farm and test kitchen in Ocean, called Earthwise Farm.

He formed a private foundation to promote his philosophy of life and to continue exploring the benefits of high quality Omega 3 fish oil.



Jackie's Aunt Marie with Pinkie (l), Aunt Marie (r)



Jackie
at her 90 Plus exhibit
at the Skylight Gallery
in downtown Hillsborough, NC.
She is standing by her portrait
of her aunt Florence.



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