

EXERCISE Makes the Case for Retired Lawyer's LONGEVITY



In a child's world, turning "double digits" is a big deal. Spring Hill RECenter patron Noble McCartney commemorated an even bigger deal on May 11 when he turned 10 times 10, or "triple digits." Family, friends and his personal trainer were all on hand when they surprised McCartney with a birthday party at the RECenter the day before the big day.

"Now I know why you made me come in here," he said with the glee of a child delighted by a surprise. "How thoughtful you all have been. Unbelievable!"

The retired lawyer has been around since World War I, when Woodrow Wilson was president. McCartney's 100th birthday is especially noteworthy when you consider the life expectancy for U.S. men was just 36.6 years in 1918 – the year McCartney was born.

"I'm a former swimmer, and I swam non-stop for 45 minutes to an hour every day for years," he said as he reflected on his longevity. "I think that's why I'm still here."

McCartney has survived a lot in his 10 decades – the Great Depression, World War II and the profound grief known only to the nation's Gold Star families after his older brother, Ben, a bombardier, was killed in the war. McCartney himself was drafted in advance of the war and was granted a deferment to pursue his law degree at Harvard University. That changed on Dec. 7, 1941 – the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor – after which all deferments were called off.

"Even if they hadn't been called off, I would have called mine off," McCartney said with still-fiery determination displayed by men of his generation who were morally outraged by the unprovoked attack and felt compelled to defend the country. As a U.S. Navy Landing Craft Infantry officer, he escorted dozens of ships with tanks and troops to North Africa, Sicily and Italy.

After the war, McCartney earned his law degree and worked for firms in Washington D.C. He outlived his first two wives and found a third soul mate in a longtime friend whom he married five years ago, when he was 95 and his wife, Anne, was 80. "We've known each other for more than 30 years," Anne said.

It was also about the time he gave up playing golf. He wanted to stay fit, so with Anne's encouragement, he started training with her certified personal trainer, Kristen Pierce, at Spring Hill RECenter. When McCartney trains with Kristen, they focus on strength training, balance and stretching.

"The training has definitely improved his circulation and flexibility," Pierce said. "He always moves better afterwards, and I think he has surprised himself doing things with me in session that he never thought he could ever do. Those moments increase his self-confidence and overall quality of life." While Anne trains with Kristen, McCartney walks a mile around the RECenter's indoor track.

McCartney also keeps his mind in shape by reading newspapers and magazines and socializing with other people. His advice to others who wish to make it to triple digits: "Keep your legs in good shape, read a lot, walk and travel," he said. "The benefit of visiting new places and meeting new people is the connections that you make."

McCartney is living proof that exercising both body and mind helps assure independent living and a high quality of life for at least 100 birthdays. Now he's aiming for 101.

Personal training is offered at all Park Authority RECenters.
To learn more, contact the fitness director at your nearest RECenter.

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