

Active 103-year-old shares her secrets to long life

By LISA BEISEL
Staff Writer

At 103, there are some things Ruth Harrison Campbell can't do.

She can't see or hear very well, and a few months ago she moved into Assisted Living Well Compassionate Care in Millersville because she can't live alone anymore.

But she does a lot at the center, including inspiring employees and other residents with her enthusiasm, especially during exercise classes.

Known to all as "Aunt Ruth," she participates in exercise a few times a week.

"I like exercise, and I know it's going to help me ...," she said. "All I know is I've been told, the more I walk, the more I exercise, the better off I'll be. Any time they say exercise, I say yes."

It's an enthusiasm that gets noticed by everyone.

"She inspires all of us out there," said employee Peggy Naumann, who

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— Ruth Campbell

led the workout on Tuesday.

Mrs. Campbell shies away from praise that she's the star of the group.

"I wouldn't know about that, but I try," she said.

She was born in Baltimore and lived there most of her life, and moved from her home only in March after she fell and broke her ankle.

Her nephew, Don Dwyer Sr., has taken care of her for years, checking on her at her house and calling frequently.

"She's a very, very independent lady," Mr. Dwyer said.

One of six children, she has six nieces and nephews and many great-nieces and -nephews.

"I was married 47 years to a real good Christian man," Mrs. Campbell said of her husband, Walter.

She got married at the age of 38, much older than was customary at the time, and was advised not to have children, as most women over 30 were told in those eays.

"Now they have them at all kinds of ages," she said.

The Baltimore area has changed a lot during her lifetime. She was born in the year of the big fire in downtown Baltimore, and her family moved away for awhile, returning when she was 14.

Then, downtown was the place to be.

"In those days, everybody went downtown to shop," she said.

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By Andy Carruthers — Maryland Gazette

At 103, Ruth Campbell is described as a role model in her exercise class at the Assisted Living Well Compassionate Care in Millersville. While seated on a sofa, she cheerfully participates in stretches and arm exercises.

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Now, with the advent of shopping centers and malls, "everything is entirely different," she said. "Everything is moving too fast for me."

She helped her husband and a few other family members build their marital home in Baltimore from 1947 to 1951. In those days, electricians weren't required to get permits, and Mrs. Campbell was in charge of installing electrical outlets. The family did all the work on the house except the plumbing, she said.

"It's a strong house," she added.

She held many different jobs and retired from her most recent one, doing payroll for Acme, in 1969.

Mrs. Campbell recalls that when she started working, a good pair of leather shoes cost \$2.95.

"If you earned \$10 or \$11 in a week, you could live on it," she said.

Her memory is still very sharp. She can tell you who gave her piano lessons when she was in her 20s, how much she paid (\$1 per lesson), and where she bought the bedroom furniture she still uses more than 60 years later.

She attributes her long life to being active. She played tennis and swam, though she didn't learned how to do the latter until she was in her 30s and was "scared to death" at the prospect.

She also liked bowling, and she and her family would bowl two or three times per week.

"I wasn't that good, but I enjoyed it," she said.

Mrs. Campbell likes fruits and vegetables and doesn't eat much meat.

"A little meat goes a long way with me," she said.

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