

Ashley Brounstein's  
GER0131 Project on  
Intergenerational Storytelling

Folklore and More

Fall 2022

Ashley Brounstein  
Advisor: Linda Paumer  
Faculty: Dr. Theresa Abah

Note from Ashley Brounstein:

My name is Ashley Brounstein and I am graduating with degrees in child development and gerontology. I have always loved helping people of all ages and listening to what people have to say.

I have decided to do my project on intergenerational storytelling because I believe that it is important for older adults to be able to share their knowledge and wisdom with younger generations for years to come. With all the knowledge they have, their stories and lessons will help shape younger individuals into strong, knowledgeable adults.

All the responses to the questions in this book came from individuals from the Cardiovascular Wellness Program and they all work hard every single day to keep their bodies happy and healthy. I hope their stories, morals, and wise words impact you in the same way they impacted myself.

Thank you

Kathy Marcum

**What role do you play in your (grand)children's lives regarding teaching them morals and lessons?**

"I tell them stories from 'back in the day' and try to stay up with what is new and current."

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

"I wish I could have worried less."

**Tell a story from your life that has taught you an important life lesson that you'd like others to know.**

"I was born and raised here in Sacramento, but I got married very young, 2 days after my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. I was pregnant and, in those days, there was literally 2 choices for a teenager who was pregnant: marriage or adoption. Abortion was of course illegal and not safe. Anyways, my husband and I got our own apartment for \$60 a month. And, to answer the question, a life lesson that everyone should take away is that you should always pay your bills, especially rent, before anything else, even



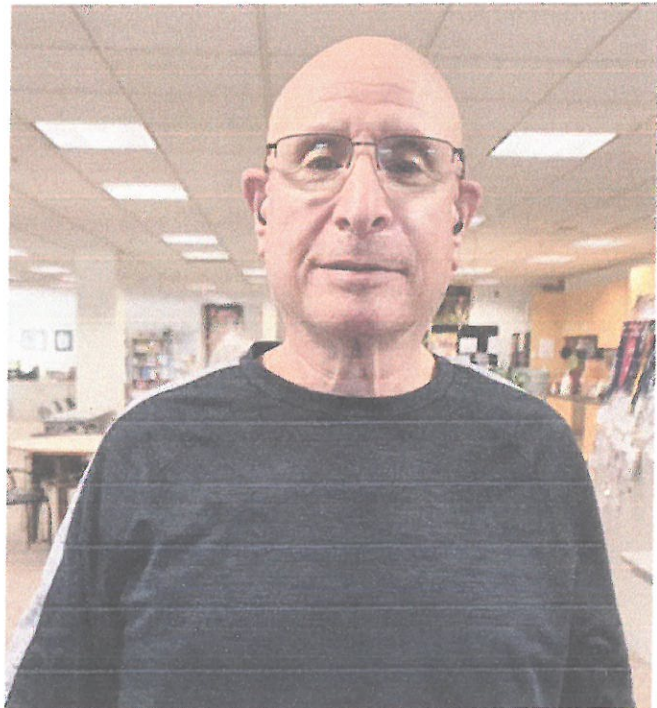
food, because without paying rent, you won't have anywhere to cook any food. Anyways, learning to pay bills and just be responsible was very much something I learned, but not through school; I had to drop out of high school which I finished later and never went to college."

"The life lesson I thought I could share is that you should never get too friendly with neighbors. When my husband and I moved into our first house I had my daughter who was 3 and my son who was 1. We got acquainted with these neighbors who lived across the street and were maybe 10 years older than us and they had teenagers of their own. We would go over to their house all the time and they would come over to ours. She would sometimes watch my kids, but I would never watch theirs because they were older, but we got friendly, and they had a lot of drama all the time that just sucked us into her world. I looked up to her because she was older than me, and then one day she came over and told me that my husband was cheating on me. She volunteered to drive me to where he was supposedly having this affair; he swore down he wasn't cheating on me and when I was 19 years old, I couldn't just go back to my dad's. I had no skills, and no job so I was in a position where I had to believe him. Many years later when our kids were grown, he told me he was cheating on me. But the moral of the story is that you can have friends, but do not let them into your house; congregate outside the patio area. If you let neighbors get too involved, there's no way to get away from them."

## Joseph Colton

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

“Exercise at least 3 hours a week. Limit the amount of saturated fat, sugar, and salt you eat. Get protein and carbohydrates from fruit and vegetables.



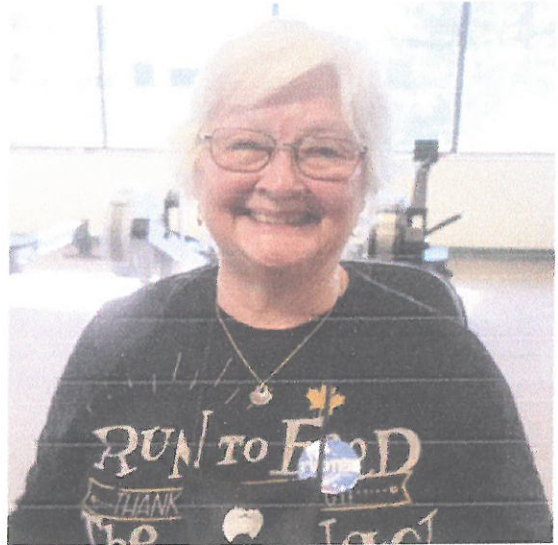
**Tell a story from your life that has taught you an important life lesson that you'd like others to know.**

“I graduated college as an economics major, I was fascinated with labor economics. The application of markets and economics to employers and workers. As the year was drawing to an end, I had to decide between two graduate programs that had offered me an apprenticeship. One was the University of Arizona which had a masters and a PHD program. The other was the University of Massachusetts which has a relatively new program on labor relations, but the course work was mostly economics. It appeared that the majority of graduates were working as economist researchers for labor organizations. At the time, I knew very little about what labor unions did on a daily basis. I decided to go to University of Massachusetts.

## Karen Dietzen

**What role do you play in your (grand)children's lives regarding teaching them morals and lessons?**

"I share information on the presence of religious education. I encourage them to treat others as they wish to be treated. There are many opportunities for discussing the real purpose of life and what is really important and how to live a good meaningful life."



**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

"It's okay to slow down and smell the roses. One's body naturally slows down as we age. You just have to accept those changes gracefully."

**Tell a story from your life that has taught you an important life lesson that you'd like others to know.**

"When I was in my mid-thirties, I was working as a nurse at a convalescent hospital and it was one of the most upscale of complex hospitals in Stockton, so there were a lot of very wealthy people that were putting in their last days there and what I noticed was many of them were very lonely and they didn't have visitors. I thought they would tell me stories about why their kids weren't coming and stuff like that and at that time I had 4 children. They were all in grade school and my days were very busy and weekends would come and the kids were all playing sports and I was like when is this ever going to end when am I ever going to have time to myself and so I think that what my take away from that experience was that it's not how much money or how much status a person can acquire in their life that's important, it's the relationships within the family that will stay with you and give you strength and enhance the quality of your life, even towards the end of your life, where your children and grandchildren that you develop these relationships with will make a priority to be there with you."

Circa 1970 public sector unions were often in the news about their strikes and the other job actions and the restrictions of public employers. Fortunately for me, there was a prior graduate from the same master's program who was now a field representative for the Massachusetts Teachers Association. The director of my graduate program contacted the MTA representative and asked him if I could shadow him at work and he agreed. So, for several weeks I went to all his work events: meetings, collective bargaining sessions, and dispute settlement proceedings. My emotional reaction was that I had found my employment goal.

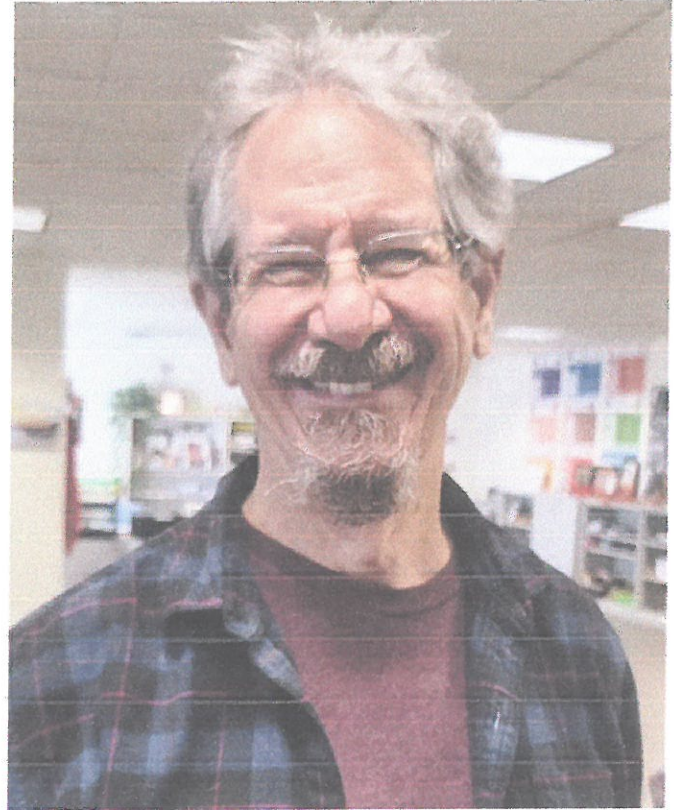
Upon receiving my master's degree, I was hired by the Michigan Education Association as a field representative. Over the next year, I was schooled in all things I was doing during my shadow at University of Massachusetts. What attracted me the most was the dispute resolution procedures which were done by lawyers in Michigan, I guess I thought what the lawyers did was fun and romantic. At the end of my first year working for MEA, I decided to apply to law school the next fall. I then moved to Washington DC.

I began my journey in 1972 and went on to become a union side labor lawyer. To make a long story short, in 2011 I retired from my last gig as a lawyer for the California Teachers Association. From three weeks of shadowing in Massachusetts in 1971 all the way until 2011, I did the same work, but as a lawyer representing teacher unions affiliated with the National Education Association. I would say those three weeks in 1971 changed my life."

## David Sady

**Tell a story from your life that has taught you an important life lesson that you'd like others to know.**

"I met a fellow I was going to Sac City College, and I met my friend David, and he was a fascinating man he was just a guy, but he seemed to have all the right answers that attracted me as far as philosophy or even religion we were both raised Christian, but we were both questioning what we were learning. And that went to a



great extent for me I was born again Christian for many years, but it wasn't satisfying because it didn't answer the questions like I was told it would. So, this took about 12 to 14 years of being around him and we looked at different things we took up meditation through a philosophy called Eureka and he met a fellow that was a professor here in the art department at Sac State and he later became the head of the art department. His name was Kurt, and he was the one that introduced us, David was taking art classes from him, and he introduced us to this Eureka form of philosophy and after the next several years he finally said "look forget Eureka, that's all about money. Buddhism is what they're teaching us under the guise of Eureka. So, Buddhism is what



we're going to look at here" and so for the next several years we started doing Buddhist meditations in meditations and learning about Buddhism and it answered all my questions for me and to this day I practice Buddhism rather than Christianity. Eureka that just went by the wayside, but it was a steppingstone to get into Buddhism. It came to me indirectly from Kurt to my friend David to me and ultimately Kurt became one of my mentors, but so is my friend David; both were mentors to me when it came down to me trying to find a philosophy or a religion that I could live by that would and it changed my life. It took me from wanting to be a tough guy asshole into recognizing that wisdom and compassion is why we're here on Earth; that being alive is pain and suffering and we're all trying to find ways to avoid pain and to avoid suffering; it's why we get professions, it's why we raise families, it's why we do everything. My job on this planet is something I learned from my friend David, indirectly, was to try to be compassionate, and to be wise about it, and to not give idiot sympathy to people that just need somebody to tell them that everything's okay while they're crying, but to actually boot him in the butt and say "hey, get on the path, you know, you have to do something about this. Nobody can do it for you. So, that was part of the compassion side of my exposure to Buddhism."

**Kristen Boelter**

**What role do you play in your (grand)children's lives regarding teaching them morals and lessons?**

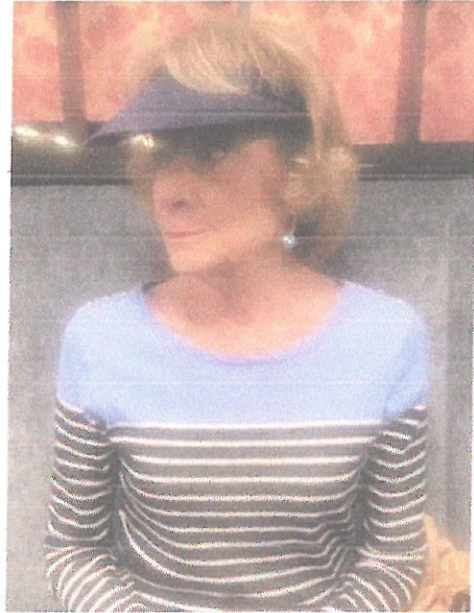
"I try to be a good example when I visit."

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

"So many things in life seem important when you are becoming an adult. As you age, you get a clearer picture of what is important and worth your time and energy."

**Tell a story from your life that has taught you an important life lesson that you'd like others to know.**

"I lived in California until I was 28 years old. I haven't lived anywhere else and then my husband accepted a job in Philadelphia as a professor and I moved back there with him and then we ended up moving to Odessa, Texas and back to Stockton then to Sacramento. What that life lesson taught me is that twenty-eight 8 years I spent in Southern California everyone



doesn't feel the way I feel about things whether social issues or politics or whatever and so in my mind I thought it's very important for me to teach my children to try and live somewhere else than where they're from, for at least a certain period of time and to not always stay around the home base because you learn so much more about people and you learn so much more about the country. I'll give 2 specific examples: in Southern California where I grew up, many people had a swimming pool and we all learned to swim by age 6. I went back and worked at Temple University, in Philadelphia, and I'm talking about swimming and several of the people my age doesn't know how to swim. Now that's a funny little thing, but they didn't have the number of pools we had; it was just a given. And even though they have the ocean, they didn't know how to swim."

"When I worked in Odesa, Texas, For Planned Parenthood, I believe that people were generally pro-choice because that's a background I came from but when I worked in The Bible Belt, working with Planned Parenthood, I found that that's not true and that people who are not pro-choice, I call them anti-choice, were just as passionate as I was about the issue and they had their reasons, so it taught me a lot to try and understand the reasons of different people behind what they believe because they probably are as passionate as I am about the issue as I am."

Bob Diercks

**What role do you play in your (grand)children's lives regarding teaching them morals and lessons?**

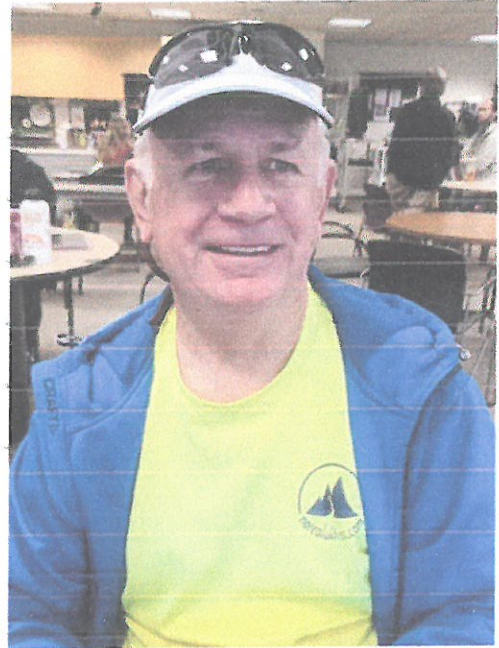
"Since the reaching days are over for my son; the most I offer now is 'days of reflection.'"

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

"Look forward to your senior days by taking chances in your youth. It's hard to reflect these days on 'what I should have done in my youth,' but I wish I had taken a year off before college and grabbed a backpack and visited somewhere I had never been."

**Tell a story from your life that has taught you an important life lesson that you'd like others to know.**

"It was taught to me by my mom and applied to me and then it applied to my son and the moral of it is the kick at the end is 'Always pay everybody something.' And that can be a money, that can be in emotions, that can be anything. but this is a story when I was about to 42. I was going through a divorce. Anyway, all of the bills were on me: mortgage, credit card. And they were just maxed out. It was a not a very productive time in my life. Anyway, I call my mom because she just always has been influential, I ask her if I should just declare bankruptcy. If I just go through the devotions and she said no, let me tell you a story and what it was when we were little kids my father

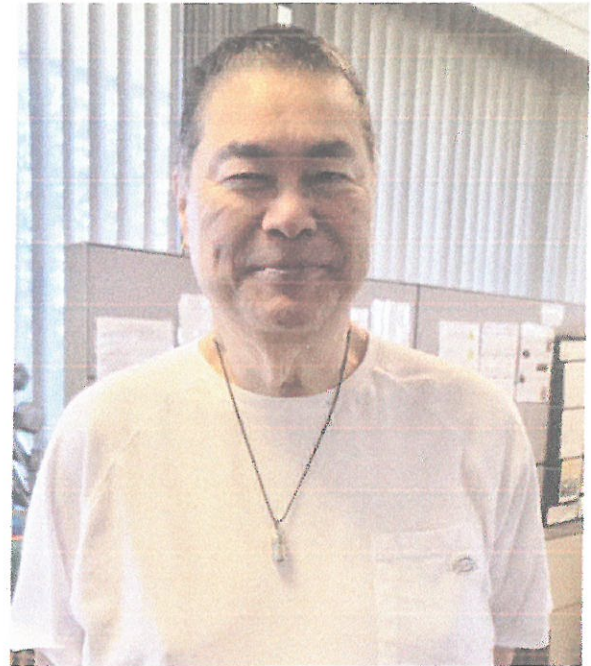


struggled through life with a lot of issues. Anyway, mom had to get our car repaired so she took it in those days to a local guy to have it repaired and whatever the bill was that time you pay in cash or pay it off whatever. Anyway, so she said 'I can't pay for all here' but you have 5 kids you had to have a car so she said 'I can pay you \$5 a month until paid off' and this guy said 'I've had people tell me this before. It's just know you're never going to pay' and so my mom paid this guy \$5 a month for almost 2 years and he said 'I can't believe it, I've never had anybody pay me off like that' you know I usually run out on the bill and he told her then it was funny he said 'if you ever take your car anyway else, I won't have you have to bring your car to me to be repaired when anything.' It was just the idea, she paid what she could as long as she could. I mean, I had a house mortgage, I had credit cards, I had car payments, and the house payment was about \$900 a month, which was at times a lot. So, I send everybody \$10 each month and each bill I would get back the 'you're past due' statement. Every month I'd get the notice and so then when things were finalized and our house was sold, I paid everything off. I was able to do that and then I went to buy a house for my son and I to live in, a condominium, I told the woman I said, 'you know, I had this period of time where I couldn't pay everything and I just paid what I could, but it's going to be on your record.' The Loan officer just says, 'I want you to just write a letter to me exactly what happened' and I was approved, and she said you have to understand you are slow-pay you are not a non-pay and I was approved for the credit card. Just don't be a non-pay; just pay everybody something. And so, my son ran into this when he was leaving his apartment that he kind of trashed. He did always just pay something and it's just something passed on, so it still works because he was a young adult and this was only like 20 years ago for him, so I mean it still applies to everyone. It's making a huge difference this world. It shows that you're making the effort."

## Kevin Down

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

“I have learned through cardio rehab how important flexibility is to seniors. It helps with daily tasks and reduces an injury should a person fall.”



**Tell a story from your life that has taught you an important life lesson that you'd like others to know.**

“So, my mother’s family came from Japan, and they were farmers and my mom, when I was growing up had a vegetable garden, a big one, and so we ate pretty well, almost like what I should be eating now. After I left home, I got away from that healthy lifestyle and developed all these bad habits like fast food and when I came back to the healthier lifestyle when I turned 60, I really went back to what she had been doing when we were growing up. I felt blessed that I had a good start for the first 18 years of my life and have the knowledge she taught us. Now my daughter and I kind of replicate what my mom was doing on a smaller scale.”

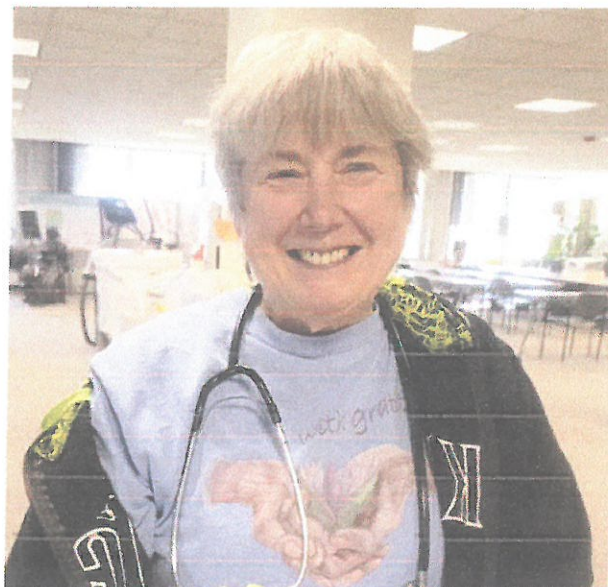
## Mary Sheikh

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

"I take it all in and process it each step of my life. Always look at every path."

**Tell a story from your life that has taught you an important life lesson that you'd like others to know.**

"I am the youngest of six children by 10 minutes. The reason I mention by 10 minutes is I have a twin brother who was born first. We grew up in the countryside with farms, coal mines, oil wells, and lots of acres to run around on in Southern Pennsylvania. It was beautiful. All my siblings went to college, but I only attended 2 years to become a legal aid but soon found out that it was not the field for me so after 1 year I quit. One day, my sister took me to work with her at the local hospital, which was a turning point for me. I soon found a job as a ward clerk and later in my life stayed in the medical field and performed electrocardiograms on house patients and became the first pacemaker tech at UCD Medical Center. I feel I grew up along with the cardiology field. It started as a baby field that expanded over the last 50 years to what it is today; so did I. I love to learn and continue doing so through the Cardiovascular Wellness Program here at Sac State. As they say, "you're never too old to keep your brain active."



Toni Simi

**What role do you play in your (grand)children's lives regarding teaching them morals and lessons?**

"I taught religion and brought my children up to believe in God."

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

"Don't make haste decisions and care for your body for future years of the aging process."

**Tell a story from your life that has taught you an important life lesson that you'd like others to know.**

"I am a very strong independent person. I am not sure if it's because I am the 3rd oldest of 13 children. I learned early in life to follow through with whatever occupation I pursued. I acquired a good work ethic from my parents. There were many times I struggled but I always did the best that I could. I gave 110%. It didn't matter if it was volunteering or paid employment. If I put my mind to it I accomplished it. I became one of the 1st women in nontraditional trades in Northern California. I became a painter which required several nights of schooling per week to work toward my journey level status. I succeeded. I was met with a lot of opposition especially from my father. He always would say "why don't you get an office job and don't do a man's job." Times were different in the 80's. I needed a good job with a good wage to raise my family as a single parent. I decided I then wanted to take Medical Transcription I earned my certificate. Again, many nights of school. I decided I did not want to pursue that career. I then moved on to the State of California started as a Painter then moved into an analyst position. I believe in hard work and achieving my goals. I have worn many hats, but all have brought me life experiences. The takeaway would be that you can achieve anything if you set your mind out to do it and give it 110%."



Karen Lowrey

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

“Make the most of every day; life goes by so quickly.”

**Tell a story from your life that has taught you an important life lesson that you'd like others to know.**

“In general, one of the things that I've seen to carry forward is that experiences that may seem negative, painful, sad, depressing, and discouraging have that component but there's usually something you can learn from them. There's usually the other side of the coin and if you learned to look for that instead of just focusing on how horrible and awful this is, it helps you to deal with it and makes sure that you don't miss the learning part of it. I cannot pinpoint just one instance, but in general, I have a couple of medical issues that I've had since birth; heart murmur and eventually there was a valve that had to be replaced so when I 65, about 10 years ago, I had the valve replaced and that's open-heart surgery. I still have a-fib, but it's kind of been a thing that has restricted me as a child because they didn't know how bad it was. And the other disability involves mobility and coordination and it's kind of similar to MS or cerebral palsy. In fact, it was relatively mild, or was relatively mild until lately, but throughout my life they assumed it was very mild cerebral palsy. I jogged, I backpacked I did different things and then when I was 55 all of a sudden I was losing my balance and it was a lot worse and it took a year to get this sorted out and I finally get to a neurologist and it



turned out I had a tumor that I was at the base of my brain and it was pushing against the spinal cord so it was very dangerous at that point. I had that removed and that took me out of the danger zone. Those 2 things were lifelong, so I was used to making accommodations or not being able to do absolutely everything. I wouldn't attempt downhill skiing, but cross-country skiing was fine. There are things that I just knew that would be an accident waiting to happen. So, I didn't go around celebrating the fact that I had those disabilities or restrictions, but I didn't feel victimized either. I didn't feel like 'poor me.' I think it's not because I worked hard at that or I read a lot about how to be positive or anything, it's just that it was part of what was normal for me and I didn't have to get used to anything, but I learned how to be positive through those experiences and I'm a lot stronger in a lot of ways compared to other people. I am probably emotionally stronger and mental health wise may be stronger in terms of handling the normal losses that you go through as you age. There are fewer things that you can do to some extent and other setbacks in life because it helped me to learn that you know maybe this will lead you to other experiences. You may end up meeting people that you may not have met otherwise through a negative experience and on the surface, it appears negative, but it puts you in places and in situations that you wouldn't have had. I knew someone once who had a terrible brain atrophy thing and she said that "gift sometimes come in very ugly wrapping" and she didn't go round excited that she had this progressive condition, but she did say the same thing. She had experiences and met people and learned how to be in the moment. While I would not recommend going around being artificially positive, because you need to express your depression and your sadness and your anger but then be alert to what you might be able to learn from it too. So, that would be one thing that my life has taught me

**Theodora Hill**

**What role do you play in your (grand)children's lives regarding teaching them morals and lessons?**

"To be kind and respectful to others."

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

"Keeping yourself active also exercising and eating right."

**John Skarstad**

**What role do you play in your (grand)children's lives regarding teaching them morals and lessons?**

"Although religious training was outside of my direct knowledge, I supported it. Teaching important life lessons and morals was combined with parental effort. Just trying to stay connected and have conversations grow more involved."

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

"Genetics are a time bomb. Learn about the health of your grandparents. Regarding life in general, pay attention to your moment in time."

Velma Parker

**What role do you play in your (grand)children's lives regarding teaching them morals and lessons?**

"I teach more through my own behaviors than verbally."

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

"Diet is important and can dramatically impact your health."

Tom Griffith

**What role do you play in your (grand)children's lives regarding teaching them morals and lessons?**

"We try to model and encourage consideration and care for others and improving yourself in whatever ways possible."

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

"Social lives require a lot of initiative because when aging, there is a loss of daily proximity to friends and colleagues."

**Mary Ann Robinson**

**What role do you play in their lives regarding teaching them morals and lessons?**

“I encourage one to have conversations about anything you hear, see or experience.”

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

“I wish I had understood that the older people in my life had much more value to me and to our community than I gave them credit for.”

**Wayne Martinson**

**What role do you play in your (grand)children’s lives regarding teaching them morals and lessons?**

I taught my children to “make use of your youthful energy.”

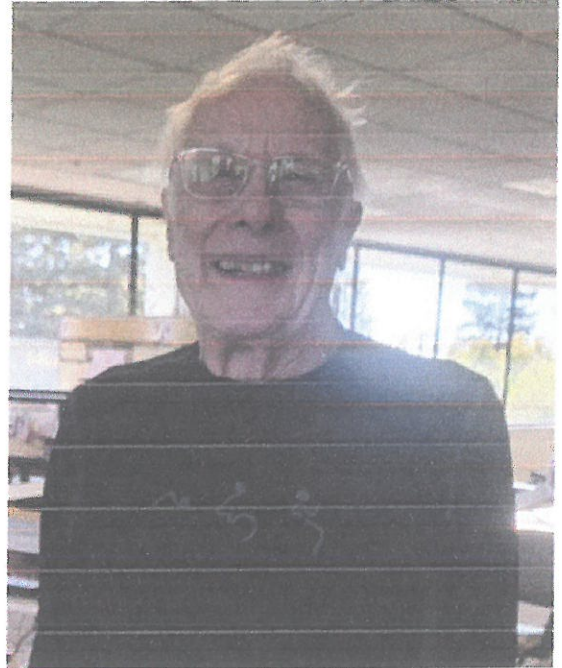
**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

“Take advantages of opportunities.”

**Cary Osfeld**

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

“I wish I knew how politics work, how the system works, all of that. When I was younger, I thought I knew it all, and now I realize that I didn’t, so I wish I had the knowledge that I’ve gained over several years at that time.”



**Susan Titus**

**What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?**

“The importance of regular exercise and of spending time in nature.”

Wes France

What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?

“Live below your means; invest in yourself.”

Michael Kessler

What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?

“I wish that I knew how certain choices both work and personally really effected my circumstances today and into the future.”

Beverly Knox

What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?

“Exercise and eat right to have a better quality of life.”

Michael Mullen

What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?  
“Make friends you can speak honestly with.”

Elizabeth Mathew

What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?  
“Even though you see the aging process through your parents and grandparents, I was momentarily surprised when I started experiencing those changes.”

Arthur Baird

What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?  
“There’s great importance in spending time with people important to you.”  
“Opportunities disappear fast.”

Joyce Poirot

What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?  
“Knowledge and experience are important to aging.”



Joe McCormick

What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?

“Life and energy are fleeing... Invincibility is a feeling for the young, when our bodies are strong.”

Ron Mackintosh

What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?

“To appreciate every day.”

Diane McGuire

What is something you know today, regarding the aging process or life in general, that you wish you knew as a younger version of yourself?

“To age well, one needs to work hard at it. Staying active is a requirement.”