

Club 122 Longevity

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The woman swept through my open office door like a mild—or not so mild—hurricane.

“What’s all this business about living to be 100?” she demanded, huffily. “My mother died when she was 79; her sister at the age of 75; her brother when he was only 70. Live to be a 100? Give me a break! Maybe in some antediluvian world but not today. How can you even tell people that? Nobody lives that long now!” She plumped herself into a chair, folded her arms across her chest and glared at me.

Her name tag read ‘Jean,’ so I smiled and said, “Let me tell you about Jeanne Louise Calment.” And proceeded to do just that.

Jeanne was born fourteen years before Alexandre Gustave Eiffel built the Eiffel Tower (she remembered seeing the Eiffel Tower being built) and a year before Alexander Graham Bell patented his telephone. In 1888 when she was 13 years old, she met Vincent van Gogh when he came into her father’s fabric shop to buy some canvas. In 1896, at the age of 21, she married Fernand Nicolas Calment, her double second cousin. Unfortunately, Fernand died in 1942 at the age of 73 after eating a dessert prepared with spoiled cherries, so the story goes. Many years later when the press asked Jeanne about her long life she reportedly quipped: “I had to wait 110 years to become famous. I wanted to enjoy it as long as possible.”

When she died in 1997, Michel Vauzelle, the Mayor of Arles, said: “She was Jeanne the Arlesienne, one whose picture went around the world. But above all, she was the living memory of our city.”

“Here is a picture,” I told Jean, booting up my computer. “*Club 122 Longevity* was named in honor of Jeanne Louise Calment. Her life of 122 years, 164 days, demonstrates the old adage, *You’ll get farther if you aim higher*. Members of *Club 122 Longevity* are committed to aiming higher. Continually learning, they turn what they learn into knowledge and then daily apply that knowledge on a practical basis to create and maintain a Longevity Lifestyle.”

The woman unfolded her arms and sighed. “They were all very heavy when they died, my mother, my aunt, and my uncle. I’m heavy. I’d love to live longer than they did—hanging onto my health and my brain’s marbles—but I don’t have a clue how to do that.”

“Everything starts and ends in the brain,” I said. “All things being equal, the health and functionality of the brain impact the health and functionality of the body. Together, brain and body, impact a person’s weight. These three basic components—brain, body, and weight—collaboratively and interactively impact each other.

Metaphorically, consider traffic: vehicles create traffic, which either facilitates or impedes vehicles. In much the same way, the brain directs most of what goes on in the body. What goes on in the body can facilitate or impede the action of the brain. Your weight results from a combination of brain-body interactions. In turn, a weight that is too low (think anorexia) or a weight that is too high (think overweight and obesity) adversely impacts both brain and body. The deleterious effects of obesity on your brain can increase your risk for any number of disease processes and illnesses, including diabetes type 2 and dementia.”

“Back to Jeanne, reportedly neither athletic nor fanatical about her health, she nevertheless was active. She kept moving, pursuing hobbies such as tennis, cycling, swimming, roller skating, piano, and opera. Physical activity and brain stimulation are key to health and longevity.”

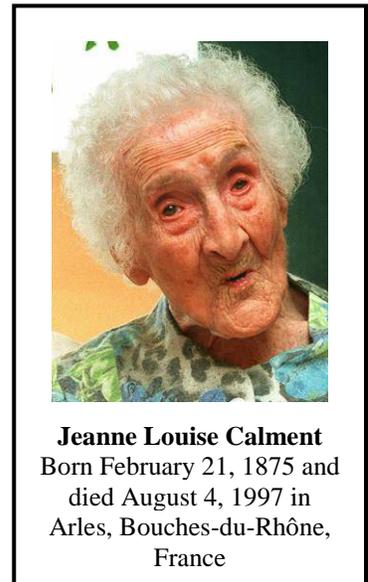
“But I don’t like to walk or swim, or play tennis,” said Jean. “And I snack all evening while I watch TV,” said Jean.

“I guess you’ll have to decide what is most important to you,” I said. “Immediate short-term rewards to feel momentarily better by taking the way of least resistance or getting in gear with a Longevity Lifestyle for a long-term reward.”

“122 years?” the woman asked. “So was she bedridden or what?”

“Not hardly,” I replied, laughing. “Here are some longevity trivia about Madame Calment:

- “In 1960 at age 85, Jeanne Louise took up fencing.
- “She continued to ride her bicycle until her 100th birthday.
- Jeanne Louise remained mentally competent until the day she died.”



“If you’ve never seen a birthday cake with 117 candles,” I said, “Take a look at this.” I scrolled down to another picture on my computer.

“Jeanne Louise Calment at her 117th birthday party.”

Jean picked up a copy of the book that was sitting on my desk and thumbed through it.

“Oh, my, goodness!” exclaimed Jean. “I’ve been aiming far too low! I’ll take one of those books, *Longevity Lifestyle Matters—Keeping Your Brain, Body, and Weight in the Game.*”

“Many people have been—aiming far too low. They also tend to miss how those three basic components—brain, body, and weight—exert a continually interactive and collaborative impact on each other.”

I told Jean about Club 122 Longevity. “Join!” I suggested. “The Longevity Lifestyle Matters website is being built. There will be a section for Club 122 Longevity. Take advantage of the additional information and resources available ongoing. Invite your family members and friends to join with you.”



www.grg.org/JCalmentGallery.htm

“I will,” Jean replied. “What should I aim for?”

“Aim for living younger for longer,” I suggested. “Personally, I’m aiming for at least 122 years, 164 days—with good mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health.”

www.LongevityLifestyleMatters.com