



Loretta Gilkey and her daughter, Carole Lacey, embrace each new day as it comes.

Strength and longevity run in the family

Carole Lacey is still a young woman by anyone's standards but those who know her expect that she will be around for a very long time to come.

That's because, in the perpetual debate over what shapes us more - nature or nurture - Carole seems to have all angles covered.

When you consider Carole's nature, or genetics, you need look no further than her mom, Loretta Gilkey. Loretta, who was born in 1910, is an impressive 103 years old. With the exception of her fading memory and the odd nap during our interview, she doesn't show her age.

A few years back, the University of Pittsburgh planned to study Loretta and her family's remarkable genetic prowess, but they were never able to corral Loretta, her older sister Marie, and her younger siblings, Earl, Beatrice and Marian, the youngster of the bunch, who is in her 90s.

Perhaps the university should look no further than Loretta, who is quite frank about the secret to her personal fountain of youth. Her prescription

Getting to Know You

A monthly feature about the people in your
On Top of the World community

by John Koning

for longevity is a diet of hot peppers and wild mushrooms. In fact, during her Snowbird days, the date of fall migration for Loretta and her husband, Ira, was dependent upon the mushroom harvest. If friends asked when they could expect her to arrive at On Top of the World, Loretta would say, "Not until I've picked my wild mushrooms."

In the winter of 1985, two years after Carole's dad passed away, she moved her mom to On Top of the World and the pair split their time between Florida winters and Pennsylvania summers.

When Loretta came to purchase her condo on Ecuadorian Drive, she packed the cash in her purse. But first, Loretta and Carole stopped at Stude-

baker's for refreshments. During the return to OTOW to complete the purchase, Loretta realized she had left her purse behind at the restaurant. Carole made a desperate dash back to Studebaker's in hopes that her condo payment would still be there. They had 58,000 happy reasons to go back.

The Studebaker's incident wasn't the last time Carole looked after her mom's best interest, and that brings us to the other factors in Carole's life that seem to promote longevity. It reads like an advertisement for a long and healthy life:

"Stay active, care for others and laugh a lot."

Carole laughs a lot. She also golfs a lot. She plays 18 holes at least twice a week and plays poker whenever she

can get out.

Carole has three ladies who volunteer to come and care for Loretta when she goes out. Carole is determined that Loretta will stay with her as long as she is able to care for her mom.

After Carole's retirement, she moved herself and Loretta down to Clearwater permanently into a well appointed, ground floor unit near the East Activity Center. Now Loretta can get around as much as she wants and it gives Carole the opportunity to get out of the house while remaining close to her aging mom.

When I asked if Carole takes good care of her, Loretta's face lit up with pride,

"Yes, she sure does!"

That motherly compliment sums up the nurture part of Carole's longevity quotient, and it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out where she learned it.

Whatever may come, Carole and Loretta are sure to embrace it with their positive attitudes and uncompromising passion for life.