The Secrets of Long Life

What makes a man—or woman—live a hundred years? His heredity? The climate he lives in? The kind of food he eats? To seek an answer to this classic riddle The Post retained the Gallup Poll organization. Here are the fascinating results of their survey.

By Dr. GEORGE GALLUP
and EVAN HILL

PART ONE

There was no reason for big, bearded Francis Marion Rhetts to be poking about his livery stable in Salem, Indiana, that hot Sunday afternoon of July 19, 1863. In the first place, his dozen horses were gone, driven off ten days before by Confederate guerrillas under Brig. Gen. John Morgan.

In the second place, Frank Rhetts was expecting a fourth addition to his family. Two blocks away, in his hip-roofed house facing the New Albany and Salem railroad tracks, his wife Mary Ann had already unpinched her long brown hair, and was sitting on the edge of their straw-tick bed, counting labor pains.

It was eight-year-old Albert who ran to the stable for his father; and before five o'clock that afternoon, a puny baby boy was born into a world of civil war in the knee-high hills of Southern Indiana.

The infant, so small and fragile that he was carried about the house on a pillow, was named John Edward Rhetts. That night, tallow candles molded by Mary Ann Rhetts burned in the big kitchen, and neighbor women walked down the unlighted, unpaved village streets bringing her pots of soup and plates of corn bread. They came to help Mary Ann Rhetts, and to see John Edward.

At this time, slightly more than 100 miles away, in a destitute log hamlet in Montgomery County, Kentucky, a five-month-old infant, Edward Clay O'Rear, was squalling in his crib. Edward was fourteenth of the family's fifteen children. And in nearby

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At the age of 116, Confederate veteran Walter Williams, of Houston, Texas, is the last survivor of the Civil War. He had a grandfather who lived to be 119.

Mrs. Comfort Staten, 100, of Farmington, Missouri, was born a slave. Asked about her politics, she replied, "I'm a Republican. Heavens, yes, he [Lincoln] set us free!"

At 106, Hank Gooch (above), of Platteville, Colo., tends sheep every day on horseback. Gooch, who is an atheist, took his last drink 56 years ago. At mealtime (below) his appetite is still good.

Increases in the Average Length of Life Since Ancient Times

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Although the subjects of the Gallup report were born in the Civil War era, they have lived a quarter of a century longer than the expected life span of a child born today.
Little Johnny Rhetts had to avoid—or survive—the great killers of the mid-nineteenth century: diarrhoea, tuberculosis, pneumonia, influenza, diphtheria, typhoid, scarlet fever, smallpox. And he did get by, he and Eddie O'Rear and Alonzo Stagg and Charley the wood-tote boy. They survived infancy, despite its terrifying death rate. They survived the accident-prone years of adolescence, in a time when Joseph Lister was still preaching the antiseptic method of treating wounds. And they escaped harm in the epidemics that swept some states—diarrhoea, pneumonia, smallpox. And they did get by, they and Eddie O'Rear and Alonzo Stagg and Charley the wood-tote boy. They survived infancy, despite its terrible death rate. They survived the accident-prone years of adolescence, in a time when Joseph Lister was still preaching the antiseptic method of treating wounds. And they escaped harm in the epidemics that swept some states—diarrhoea, pneumonia, smallpox. 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In our other respects Doctor Rhett's is not typical: He is not a woman, and there are five women to every three men in this age group: and he was once a heavy smoker.

 Otherwise he is a part of the pattern. He is a gentle, kind and friendly man, alert and intelligent. He is five feet nine inches tall, two inches taller than the male median height of his group; and he weighs five pounds more than the 137-pound average for these old men. He is flat-bellied and erect. Thoroughly healthy, he has had only two medical checkups in the last fifty years, and each time the doctors "had a hard time finding anything wrong with me."

He dresses neatly and uses a cane "because it makes me look distinguished." He wears brown, horn-rimmed spectacles and is only slightly deaf. He is intensely proud of his two children and of the county where he and his parents were born.

Last April when we had lunch with Doctor Rhett's and his third wife, we walked from his comfortable brown brick house across from the First Baptist Church to the cafeteria on the sunny town square. In less than a block we were stopped four times by Doctor Rhett's friends to exchange pleasantries and Indiana witticisms. Doctor Rhett likes people and them like him, for he is a social creature with a triple-tongue baritone-horn player; he sang and acted as interlocutor in the town's minstrel shows; he has been choir director of the Methodist Church.

"I like a small town," he told us. "I wouldn't live anywhere else."

Except for a few experimental forays into Minneapolis, St. Louis and New Orleans as a young man, he has stayed in Salem. And this is significant. While the great westward migrations of the nineteenth century were sweeping hundreds of thousands of Americans across the Alleghenies, through the plains and over the Rockies, most of our old people—young then—were content to stand still and watch the emigrants go by. They were not malcontents, or misfits, or insecure, and they were untouched by the excitement of adventure. They were happy where they were, happy with their jobs and neighbors, and they stayed. Many of them are still living only a few miles from where they were born. They like it there.

At lunch Doctor Rhett's ate mashed potato with baked sausage in gravy, a dish of cabbage boiled with pork fat, and corn bread. He sampled the slice of apple pie Mrs. Rhett's had bought and drank his coffee with cream and sugar. He discussed his favorite foods. "I'm not a salad eater or a fruit eater, and if it were true that an apple a day keeps the doctor away, I'd be dead long ago; I don't eat an apple a year."

The fact is that Doctor Rhett's is just not fussy. To him—and to the great majority in this study—food is not something to love, or to talk about, or to dress with condiments; it's something to eat, that's all. "I don't stick up my nose at anything," Doctor Rhett said. "If it's onions, I'll eat 'em. If it's pursnips, I'll eat 'em, and I don't give a rap about pursnips. But I've never made a slop bucket out of my stomach."

Mrs. Rhett nodded. "He's easy to cook for as long as it's plain food," she said. And "plain food" to Doctor Rhett's means boiled turnips or cabbage or carrots with a little butter and salt; never any pepper. He loves pot roast and medium stewed beef, but nothing ever fancy. Mrs. Rhett's said, "He considers mayonnaise on lettuce as fancy."

The study shows that Doctor Rhett's is not alone in his diet preferences. Almost
90 per cent of those we questioned preferred "just plain cooking" to any other kind. Although "plain cooking" in Indiana is not always identical with "plain cooking" in New England or Colorado, the ingredients are just about the same. What seems to be most important about these old folks' diet is not what they ate, but how much. Doctor Rhetts eats "only enough to keep my boiler running. I never eat so much that I feel full." And in this he is typical, for almost four out of every five of these near-centenarians say they have always been careful not to overeat.

Doctor Rhetts—as were about 75 per cent of the respondents—was extremely happy with his work, and he took pride in it. He closed his office thirteen years ago after a bout with pneumonia, but he still makes dental plates for old patients who insist. "There are some people who think there is nothing so good as a toothache, you waited until Saturday, you were coming into town any time. That day I pulled teeth all day, and I knew well there were eyes upon me all the while.

Although the pail showed less than half a peck, I thrashed my way out through that brambled screen. There's something in the spine and nape of neck that does not like the feel of sight unseen. Think there is nothing so good as a wooden-works clock," he said, "and some people feel the same way about me and my plates. They brag on me, you know, and I'm soft-hearted. Anyway, if someone brags on you, do something for them." So he makes a jaw impression in his kitchen and molds the plates in his cellar workshop.

Before his retirement at eighty-three, he worked eighty to ninety hours a week, standing at his chair from eight A.M. to five P.M.—twenty-five cents an extraction; fifty cents with anesthetic—and working late to make his plates. In his early days of practice he made many of his own dental instruments, and manufactured gold dental plates by rolling out twenty-dollar gold pieces.

During one summer Saturday in 1893 he pulled enough teeth to finance a round trip to the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago. A circus had come to Salem, drawing the farmers in huge crowds. "Saturday was always tooth-pulling day," he said. "If you had a toothache, you waited until Saturday, when you were coming into town anyway. That day I pulled teeth all day, and they were just flying, one hitting the ceiling and one hitting the floor. I was bloody up to my elbows."

In effect, Doctor Rhetts' work week was twice as long as today's forty-hour standard. He worked hard and long, and he loved it. When he retired he had been a practicing dentist for sixty-four years, almost a quarter of a century longer than a man could have expected to live when he was born. But he enjoyed more than his work. He was broad-jump champion of Washington County, sneaking an hour away from his office each summer Saturday to jump against "the country boys" for five-dollar gold pieces. And he never discussed his work at home. "I went home to enjoy my family," he said.

His is the typical pattern; but the Indiana dentist was immediate in one respect that sets him apart from 68 per cent of the other oldsters. For sixty years he smoked incessantly; if it wasn't a pipe, it was ten to fifteen cigars a day, or two packages of cigarettes. "When I was making plates," he said, "I had a cigarette in my mouth all the time."

He stopped smoking fifteen years ago, and is thus representative of the 17 per cent who once smoked and stopped. He had no difficulty breaking the habit; he simply stopped smoking, and that was that. Why did he stop? He shrugged. "It was a sort of silly habit." And here, too, he is fairly typical of those who formerly smoked. Less than a fourth thought it was harmful; others lost their taste for tobacco, or felt it was wasteful, or suspected it was irritating their throats or lungs or nerves.

If Doctor Rhetts' life—and the lives of those in this study—were distilled to get the essence of
The value of heredity is evident when we see that 73 cent did have a parent or a sister who reached eighty and that 39 per cent had one of these relatives reach ninety or more. Doctor Rhett's grandmothers, for example, lived to eighty-three and ninety, although neither of his parents lived longer than sixty-three; his brothers died at ninety-two and ninety-six, and his sister at eighty. He had 11 uncles who lived longer than eighty-nine.

All seven of Alonzo Stagg's brothers and sisters lived more than seventy-three years, with the oldest dying at 103, and four living well into their eighties. Walter Williams of Houston, Texas, the 116-year-old last surviving Civil War veteran, had a paternal grandchild who lived to 119.

On the other hand, a ninety-nine-year-old Philadelphia woman was orphaned at three, her father dying in his twenties of tuberculosis and her mother dying soon thereafter. She has no long-lived relatives in her family. And there is John Richard- son, 100, of Easton, Pennsylvania, whose parents died in their fifties—his mother of a stroke, his father of pneumonia—and whose brothers and sisters are unschooled. There seems to be no doubt that heredity is exceedingly important in longevity, but there is no reason for the average American to despair if he has not lived as long and has short-lived ancestors. The odds are against him, but he does have a chance.

Despite smug Vermonters, who like to say they live long so they have to kill a man to stump them, the place where a man is born or where he has lived most of his life seems to have little influence on how long he will live. The Eastern, midwestern, and southern states of the nation each claim approximately one fourth of the birthplaces of the American-born respondents. Only 3 per cent were born in the West, and this is understandable in the light of the smaller population there a century ago. Most of the remain- der are natives of states except for twenty-one persons born in Canada, Mexico, what is now Israel, and Japan.

These figures, paralleling population concentrations in that the older the state, the higher the proportion of born in the warm climate of the Southern states, say, or in frigid New England or at sea level.

Longevity, the result would be a blantly sordid secret: Don't worry or be tense, don't eat too much; do be happy, do exercise, do be moderate.

But here the elixir is too much concentra- tion; it is dehydrated and has lost its value. The study indicates that food is the killer and worry the poison for a couple of parents, both belonging to long-lived families, some years before birth. Most longevity experts agree with Doctor Holmes in concluding that heredity is a critical factor in reaching a ripe old age. Our study confirms the importance of heredity, but indicates that it might be less important than we have thought. It is not a factor that we must have in order to live long, for half of our respondents had parents who lived less than eighty years, and one fourth had neither parent, or brother or sister live to eighty.

If it is possible that stormclouds can cause pregnant women to bear hare- lipped children, is it not also possible that other climatic factors can produce long-lived children? The old-age study says no. Place of birth has no effect; you can be born anywhere in the nation and have the same chance of living to be 100. This is equally true of the place where you have spent most of your life. Except for the West, the oldsters are scattered throughout the nation in about the same proportion as the rest of the population.

And this broad geographical distribution of the aged forbids any conclusions about the life-prolonging effects of climate or altitude. You can live equally long in the heat of Texas, the drizzle of western Washington, the mountains of Colorado or the tidelands of Virginia.

No state has any significant concentra- tion of the aged. After eliminating the colored races because of the questionable reliability of these statistics, the raw fig- ures of the latest United States Census show that New England and the West Central States have the highest ratio of persons ninety-five and older to the total population, and therefore it has often been assumed that these are the most healthful sections of the nation. However, it is in these two areas that population has grown the least in the last 50 years. While the nation's population doubled, New England's increased by only two thirds, and the West Central States by about 40 per cent.

Maine and Kansas now lead the nation with the highest ratio of persons older than ninety-five—twenty-five persons per 100,000—followed by Iowa, Nebraska and Rhode Island with twenty-three. But Iowa and Nebraska populations have in- creased by less than 25 per cent in the last fifty years, Maine and Kansas by less than 50 per cent. Analysis of tiny Rhode Is- land's high ratio of twenty-three persons over ninety-five per 100,000 population seems to be a barren project; why should it be a greater haven of age than its neigh- bors who squeeze it in from east and west—Massachusetts with a ratio of twenty, and Connecticut with seventeen? Vermont, the state with the graveyard trouble, joins Massachusetts and Arizona for fifth place on the state longevity scale with a ratio of twenty, but Vermont also has grown less than 25 per cent while the nation's population doubled.

Florida and California are compara- tively low on the list, with ratios of fourteen and eighteen despite the large num- bers of retired Americans settling there. But Florida and California have also at- tracted hundreds of thousands of young people, whose presence lowers the old-age ratio. The raw census figures are interest- ing, but not conclusive. They must be compared to population migration and increase, for example, exports not only milk but youth as well; its elderly citizens stay in the Green Mountains, and the ratio is thus affected.

The racial background of these people shows a heavy preponderance of Britons and Germans and Scandinavians. More than half had ancestors from the British Isles. About 16 per cent came from Germany, and 3 per cent from the Scandinavian countries. The evidence indicates that North European stock in the United States has a longer life expectancy than Americans of Middle and Southern Euro- pean ancestry.

And there is no evidence that the edu- cational level makes any difference. Most of the uneducated lived to be over seventy and there is no reason for the average American to despise if he does not live as long and has short-lived ancestors. The odds are against him, but he does have a chance.
The Secrets of Long Life

How much do tobacco and alcohol affect the length of your life? And food and exercise? Here are the answers as given by the oldest living Americans.

By DR. GEORGE GALLUP and Evan Hill

Part Two

Both Mrs. Lulu H. Williams of Quitman, Georgia, and Mrs. G. B. Mounger of McKinney, Texas, are 103 years old. They were born in 1856, the year the first railroad train crossed the Mississippi River.

Both lived through the Civil War as little girls, Aunt Lu Williams as a slave, and Granny Mounger as the daughter of a slaveowner. Both have outlived their contemporaries by more than half a century, subsisting for more than 100 years on a diet that would confound most dietitians and perplex medical researchers seeking the cause of heart disease.

They have lived mainly on proteins and carbohydrates—terms not in their vocabularies—feeding themselves almost exclusively on potatoes, corn bread and fried pork. They have boiled their vegetables for hours with a piece of fat pork that coated each mouthful with a thin film of animal grease.

They have never heard of cholesterol, produced by fatty diets—a probable cause of heart disease, the nation's No. 1 killer; and Gaylord Hauser is a name as strange to them as that of Sylvester Graham, an earlier food faddist who died at fifty-seven in 1851, leaving his name to the graham cracker.

Today in the rest home where she has lived for the last five years, white-haired Granny Mounger is not exactly happy with the food she is being served. "I tell you, hon," she says, her eyes twinkling and her hands smoothing the apron she always wears, "they don't put enough salt in it. And it would taste much better if they'd plop in a nice fat piece of pork." The rest-home physician, following the tenets of modern medical practice, has prescribed a light-salt, light-fat diet for her, but 103-year-old Granny is not much impressed.

Aunt Lu Williams lives with her daughter in a scrubbed yellow house on a dirt street shaded by oaks with straggly branches of Spanish moss. Quitman is a small Georgia town tied strongly to its products. At the death of her farmer-preacher husband, "Parson T," she took his name to granite gravestones.

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Today in the girl's room where she was born in 1853, leaving his name to granite gravestones. "I don't want to dig my grave with my teeth," says Henrietta Dall, 96-year-old Atlanta author of Southern Cooking. Like many of those surveyed, she eats lightly.

She still eats her collard or turnip greens boiled with a piece of side meat. She loves corn bread and corn dodgers, sometimes dipped into the pot liquor of the boiled greens, and she eats fried pork when she can afford it. She drinks two or three glasses of buttermilk a day, as she has done much of her life, and she has been drinking coffee since she was old enough to hold a cup. She is not fond of sweet foods, but for eighty-five years has taken an occasional glass of "sweetening water"—cane syrup and water—as an energizing pickup when she is "too tired to eat."

Aunt Lu and Granny Mounger are fairly typical of the 402 persons ninety-five years old or older who have been interviewed for this report on longevity. The work, massive in scope, was commissioned by the editors of The Saturday Evening Post. Its object: to discover the secrets of long life—if such secrets exist—using scientific sampling methods and the field organization of the Gallup Poll.

One of our first discoveries was that 50 per cent of our oldest have eaten fried food regularly all their lives. But there are exceptions. Ninety-five-year-old Walter J. Penn of Chula Vista, California, calls the frying pan "a devilish instrument" and prefers his food boiled, "not greasy with fats or butter." A lifelong bachelor, he has always done his own cooking, deliberately avoiding greasy foods.

On the other hand, Redwing Beck, a fiery ninety-five-year-old in Bonne Terre, Missouri, says, "Fat meat and corn bread and beans is what I've lived on. The fatter the meat, the better I like it. When it runs down my chin, that's the way it should be." And Uncle Charley Washington, living happily in Cincinnati at 115, was raised on "corn bread, fat meat and milk." He says, "Fat meat is the best part of the hog. I sop up the fat with my corn bread." He still follows the daily diet he started more than a century ago: boiled fat meat and corn bread for breakfast, cabbage and beans for lunch, fried fat meat and corn bread for supper.

There is a large and convincing body of medical evidence indicating that a diet heavy with animal fats causes fatty deposits, such as cholesterol, in the arterial walls. The result is hardening of the arteries and increased danger of heart attack.

According to Dr. John W. Gofman, professor of medical physics at the University of California at Berkeley, carbohydrates—contained in sugar, potatoes, bread, corn and beans—also increase the possibility of arterial hardening.

But the centenarians in this study seem unaffected by cholesterol and carbohydrates. Only 13.5 per cent have ever had any heart trouble, and of this small percentage the vast majority had no attacks until after they were eighty. Yet 45 per cent of them name pork, ham and bacon as their favorite meats—40 per cent preferred beef. Almost 60 per cent admit they have a sweet tooth, and a typical favorite meal would include pork or beef, potatoes, cab-bage and beans or peas and a dessert, most likely apple pie. Of course, a favorite meal is not necessarily a typical meal, but answers to other questions in the survey confirm the almost daily consumption of foods heavy in carbohydrates and fatty proteins.

Sixty-five per cent of these people have normal blood pressure. Of the rest, those reporting a tendency toward high blood pressure, or low pressure, are about equally divided. How can we explain the low incidence of heart trouble and the comparatively normal blood pressure, in view of their diet? We cannot; the study gives us no indication.

They are meat-and-potato people, plain-food eaters who would blot the soul of a Parisian chef; and they are indifferent to the rules of dietitians. At his 100th birthday dinner two years ago the Rev. Dr. Arthur Judson Brown of New York City said, "I have always liked New England boiled dinners. Dietitians told me such heavy meals were not wise. But I am here, and the dietitians are dead."

Food faddists are about as useful to this group as a Christmas tree on New Year's Eve. They have never

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At 106, William Perry (above) of San Francisco still has a huge appetite. Here he breakfasts on ham and eggs, beans, fried fish and coffee. He says he’s never had indigestion.

"I drank whisky," says ex-lumberjack Thomas Murphy, 106, of Spokane, Wash.

Lula Williams, 103, of Quitman, Ga., thrives on fried pork and boiled greens.

Redwing Beck of Bonne Terre, Mo., is part Cherokee, loves to argue and has lived 95 years on a high-fat diet. "The fatter the meat," he says, "the better I like it."

Granny Mounger, a 103-year-old, dips snuff on the porch of a nursing home in McKinney, Texas. She started using snuff at the age of six and still takes it after every meal.
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heard of Gayelord Hauser's promotion of yogurt, whey, and skimmed milk as health preservers and restorers. Hauser calls overcooking "murder in the kitchen," and dietitians agree that it destroys vitamins; but these people have been boiling their vegetables for more than a century, and have been introduced to cooking only late in their lives. Forty-five per cent have never taken vitamins at all. Of those who have, more than half have been taking them after they were eighty, sometimes with little reason. Alfred Clumper of Spokane, Washington, a 97-year-old, says "I'm sure I can't get along without them--they treat milk with the same indifference as they do the rest of their foods; and they are not waterits."

They prefer coffee to tea, and they drink it hot with cream and sugar, as does most of the adult population of the nation. They drink an average of two cups a day, and have been doing so for at least seventy-five years. The tea drinkers--two-thirds occasionally drink a cup of tea with some drinking it in addition to coffee--consume about a cup a day.

Three out of four drink milk, consuming about two glasses a day; two-thirds say they drink a lot of milk when they were youngsters, and most of them say they have drunk milk regularly since they have been grown up. Almost all drink about two glasses of water a day, but there is no significant pattern in when they have them after they were eighty, sometimes with little reason. Alfred Clumper of Spokane, Washington, a 97-year-old, says "I'm sure I can't get along without them--they treat milk with the same indifference as they do the rest of their foods; and they are not waterits."

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not know, and the study does not show, although the secrets may be hidden somewhere in their sleep habits, their exercise, or their heredity.

However, they had it. Granny Mounger speaks of "the time I had dancin'. My leg was broken and the doc told me I couldn't walk thirty miles to get him. He'd jump up on the mare with his fiddle, and I'd jump up behind him and we'd go." Of course, the dancing stopped when the children came—nine of them.

When he was ninety, Redwing Beck hitched up a mule and drew 160 logs out of the woods. Uncle Charley Washington says the happiest day of his life was "to the end of the plow and go right up the row," and Aunt Lu Williams spent her childhood "tending to white folks' coop" with hog killings, picking cotton, chopping cotton and breaking corn. Then for almost half a century she plowed the family farm, clearing land and rooting out stumps. And she reared five children.

They were a highly energized group, men and women who would jump out of bed in the morning feeling not only that the world was their apple but also that they could pare and core it.

If exercise or physical activity causes this zest, then the secret is out, for, in the words of William Perry, they've been "as busy as a one-eyed cat watching two rats holes" most of their lives. The riddle is, which came first, the zest or the exercise? But 47 per cent of the mothers in this study have been "homemakers" commanding a platoon of children after thirty-five; 8 per cent gave birth after forty-five, and 2 per cent after fifty. The zest or the exercise? Their illnesses occurred most frequently after they were eighty, but surgical operations followed this pattern only with the men. The women (31 per cent) remained healthier, scattered their lives through their pregnancies, while the men (41 per cent), distressed mostly with prostate trouble and hernias, were operated on more frequently after eighty. Hysterectomies accounted for ten operations on the women, removal of cataracts or appendectomies for nine each. Rheumatism or arthritis, disorders common in old age, afflicted 31 per cent of the respondents today.

Although very few of the women—eighteen out of 250—ever have smoked, 71 per cent of the men have smoked for half a century or longer. But only 15 per cent have ever been cigarette smokers, and two thirds of these have given them up. Only three of the 108 male smokers have been chain cigarette smokers. These people are, and have been, devoted to cigars and pipes, and they do not inhale the smoke.

Judge O'Rear has been puffing a pipe for seventy-five years. When he was on the bench he chewed tobacco. He says, "A pipe keeps my hands busy. It's a peaceful occupation, smoking. I never knew a man to whip his wife while he had a pipe in his mouth."

Half of the men who smoked are still at it, and many of them have been smoking for as long as eighty years. Eugene M. Gillette, now 102, of Wenatchee, Washington, smoked three or four cigars a day for fifty-nine years, then decided to quit. "I enjoyed smoking," he says. "But I just came to the conclusion it wasn't doing me any good." He had no trouble giving up since he had cut his联系's tobacco habits.

Granny Mounger is a real tobacco addict, although she does not smoke. She's been using snuff for almost a century, starting when she was six by dipping into her mother's bottle. When she was sharply reprimanded, she made her own pouding dried tobacco leaves into powder. But her homemade brand wasn't good enough; she's been buying the factory brand ever since, using it after every meal. "Hon," she says, "I done made the snuff makers rich."

Perhaps the general avoidance of cigarette smoking is one explanation for the normal blood pressure registered by the majority of these oldsters and the low incidence of heart attacks. In 1954 the American Cancer Society published the results of a 200,000-person survey which showed that regular cigarette smokers had from one and a half to two times as many heart attacks as noncigarette smokers. Recently Doctor Gofman, the University of California researcher, reported that "cigarette smoking is associated with elevation of certain of the blood lipids, increased blood flow velocity, increased coronary arterial hardening and hence to heart attack risk."

Doctor Gofman also points out that a cigarette smoker raises his blood pressure by about 20 per cent while smoking two cigarettes consecutively, and that a two-pack-a-day smoker will raise his average blood pressure by about 6 per cent above that of a nonsmoker. These oldsters do not know this; they simply do not smoke cigarettes; they stick to pipes or cigars or they do not smoke at all, and they live to be 100.

If there ever was any truth to the old story about keeping whiskey in the house "for medicinal purposes only," it must be credited to these old people, for they use alcohol—moderately—and they really do think of it as medicine or tonic. But they do not regard alcohol as necessary for longevity. About 60 per cent of the women and a fourth of the men have never had a drink in their lives.

Very few consider drinking an evil. For the most part the teetotalers don't drink simply because they don't like the taste, or because their parents never drank, but because they tried it and became dismazy, very few abstain for moral reasons, although Aunt Lu Williams has never seen a man drink who is fond of liquor live his days out. Aunt Lu can say this because she has not taken one drink in 65 years.

Alonzo Stagg is less positive about the dangers of drink; he merely says that Christians and cocktails should not mix, but he does not regard drinking as evil. In Christian Science he was sixteen. "As a boy I played around the saloons and watched the fights. They were just like the movies are to boys today. I didn't want to emulate those men." And he hasn't.

The reason that Hank Gooch hasn't had a drink for fifty-six years is that he drank too much one night when he was fifty and became ill. He hasn't touched a drop since. "No sense in swallowing stuff that makes you sick," he says.

Judge O'Rear is probably typical of the oldsters when it comes to drinking patterns. He says it was thirty before he tasted alcohol. "I wasn't a teetotaler," he says. "I just didn't drink."

During his long and active practice in the courtroom and on the bench, the judge would sip an after-hours glass of wine. Octogenarians say: but his offspring, not for pleasure, it was to keep his drinking friends from being put out of countenance. He does drink now, a nightly toddy, and has done so since he reached eighty-six, ten years ago; but this practice is truly medicinal.

If there are the most popular drinks for those who have used alcohol during their lives. In Spokane, Washington, the locally famous says, "I never drank, or because they tried it and didn't like it for fifty years. The 61 per cent of the men we interviewed and 80 per cent of the women, he drinks nothing now.

There are exceptions, of course. Uncle Charley Washington, for example, has been drinking "all the corn juice I can get hold of" for 30 years. The 115-year-old former slave was introduced to tobacco as a boy when "the old master traveled very much. And he hasn't.

"Pioneering the thirty-hour week, Hutchins?"

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST
The Secrets of Long Life

How do your religious beliefs, marital happiness and occupation influence your chances of living to be a hundred? What about your money worries and sleep habits?

By Dr. GEORGE W. GALLUP and EVAN HILL

Last summer, wearing his usual loose, bib overalls and knee-length rubber boots, Hank Gooch rode his mare along a stretch of barbed-wire fence in the grazing lands of Northern Colorado. He was doing what he has done for sixty years—tending sheep. He guided the young mare too close to the fence, and she caught a stirrup on a post.

“She jerked loose,” Hank says, “and threw me. The doctor said I was O.K., but I was a little lame for a while.” That was only a few months before Hank had his 106th birthday.

Easygoing, gentle Hank Gooch lives in Platteville, Colorado, thirty-seven miles north of Denver. He has a full head of iron-gray hair, his hearing is excellent, and his blue eyes are better than those of many an American college student, although they are beginning to water. He is five feet five inches tall, and he weighs 130 pounds. In winter he wears a closely trimmed white beard—“It keeps me warm when I’m working out”—but in summer he is close-shaven.

For the first fifty years of his life he farmed in Republic County, Kansas, and as a boy he stood alongside the Mormon Trail, watching the Latter-day Saints migrating westward to Salt Lake City. “There were miles of them,” he says. “Wagon trains with kids and sheep and cattle.” But he felt no urge to go west himself; he had chores to do. He remembers the huge buffalo herds on the prairie, but he didn’t shoot any. “No need to,” he says.

For longer than most Americans have been alive, Hank has led a lonely life in the sheep camps. He’s more careful now since the mare threw him, but he’s still on the job, although he admits that “it’s getting pretty hard for me to get on that horse unless I can find a piece of high ground.”

He is a placid, comfortable old man who would like to own his own sheep instead of herding them for someone else. Still, his economic status does not disturb him; he’s happy in his old age. He likes companionship, but his occupation has kept it from him. “When I’m out there I miss people,” he says, “but I don’t let it bother me.”

In fact, there is very little that bothers Hank Gooch. In this respect he is like the majority of the 402 persons ninety-five years old or older whom we have interviewed. This painstaking study of the aged was aimed at discovering the secrets of longevity. Commissioned by the editors of The Saturday Evening Post and using the field staff of the Gallup Poll, the survey led us to many oldsters like Hank Gooch. For Hank—in his personality, his happiness, his ambitions and his worries—is typical of his age group.

(Continued on Page 63)
The Secrets of Long Life
(Continued from Page 30)

But there is one point on which he diverges sharply from this group of aged Americans: His is a clear-cut profession of atheism. "I don't make sense," he told us. "I just don't believe in religion." He is calm about his lack of belief. "What if there is a God? What if there is a God? You're one hundred six years old." His hair is combed, and his blue eyes twinkle. "Well, if I'm wrong about religion, and there is a God, then I guess I'll have to go down to the bad place. And that is a significant remark. Although his disbelief clashes with the religious convictions of the majority of these old people, his general attitude is the same with theirs. He is unworried and serene. He is not a crusader, and neither are his strongly religious contemporaries; they are not inclined to seek overemotional release.

Perhaps one of the most sincerely devout persons in this study is 109-year-old James Henry Gooch, of Houston, Texas. He is a moderate man of modern height and weight and is almost completely deaf. Until he was eighty years old, completely bald; today his head is covered with baby-soft white hair. "This is my second suit of hair," his daughter says. Yet James Gooch, with his strong faith, and Hank Gooch, with his lack of it, would find no cause to quarrel on the basis of religion. Both men have a complete faith in God, saying his time for dying "is not to be denied; it's left to the Old Master," and "He points to the sky.

James Brett has been a Baptist for seventy years; he has been a bed-time pray- er all his life, and he has never eaten— even snickers—without first saying grace. For years he and his wife read the Bible each night before bed. A typical gentleman in God, saying his time for dying "is not to be denied; it's left to the Old Master," and "He points to the sky.

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is one of the secrets of their longevity. Little wonder that Ponce de Leon never found the Fountain of Youth; he could not find it because he was seeking it. And of what value is this discovery that long life depends in some degree on serenity? Can a perfectionist change his personality, replacing his ambitious drive with a disinterested? Can he be indifferent about another man's religion, or his politics, when he knows in his heart that he is right and the other man is wrong? Probably not; personality may be modified, but not radically changed. If you are aggressive, and somewhat critical, and more quick-tempered than you'd wish, the door to longevity might seem closed to you. But not completely; there are exceptions.

Redwing Beck of Bonne Terre, Missouri, is far from serene. He is part Cherokee and was reared by an Indian woman until he was seven. He attended school for only three months. He was wounded at San Juan Hill with Teddy Roosevelt. Now, strong and vigorous at ninety-five, resembling a Frank Lloyd Wright in bib overalls, he lives with his second wife in a two-handled, unpainted, rented house. He is an unswerving Republican in Democratic territory, and he loves to argue. Often at the neighborhood grocery store he'll provoke an argument with another Republican by pretending he's a Democrat.

Redwing and his wife moved to Bonne Terre a few months ago, he demanded, "Are you religious?" and left the room without waiting for a reply. He returned with three heavy, well-thumbed Bibles and tossed them into our laps. "I can tell you ain't religious," he accused.

"How can you tell?"

"Hah! How can a hog tell when it's eatin' corn? Listen. I got religion when I was twenty-two. Before that I was the wild man from Borneo. Didn't have no sense when I got mad and still don't. Why I'd cut your heart out just to look——"

We said a demonstration was not necessary, thank you; but we would like to see if his temper ever got him into fights.

"Of course it did," he said. "I got into lots of fights. I killed a man once. It was in Protection, Kansas, in the summer of 1906. This fellow he come at me when I was delivering mail with a team and a spring wagon. Says he was delivering the mail from me, and I said he wasn't. He seemed right mean, so I just reached down and got that revolver and shot him right square in the head."

It is unlikely that Red Beck's cabbage-eating ability or the accuracy of his memory has been tested for some decades now, but he is hardly the unruffled, serene oldster typical of this survey.

The same is true of William Perry of San Francisco. Although he is 106 and somewhat slowed down by an artificial leg, he still takes periodic gambling trips to Reno. His absence disturbs his stepdaughter. "I worry when he's away," she says. "I'm afraid something might happen to him—you know, with his leg and all."

"The old fool," Bill Perry snorts. "What can happen to me? I was taking care of myself for twenty years before she was in diapers. Same thing they said when they took off this leg. I was a hundred and two then, and those doctors said I was too old to use a wooden leg. They told me to get a wheelchair, and I told them to go to hell. I learned to walk the day after my operation—"

He got his artificial leg after badgering the prosthesis suppliers who refused to fit him because they "said I'd be wasting my money." He learned to walk rapidly; in his haste he fell and broke his nose. "I learned to walk the day after my operation—"

But neither Perry nor Beck has ever let his irascibility interfere with his sleep. Like Alonzo Stagg, they never took their travel or ambition are unlikely to add a single year to the life of a complacent personality. In the study of 402 aged Americans—this study rarely thought about how long they were going to live. In a way, their long lives just happened to them. Only per cent of them ever expected to live this long; only 2 per cent ever hoped to reach 100; and more than three fourths of them didn't think about it.

We know that education or wealth or the advantages of sleeping on hard mattresses or in cool rooms or without pillows, the survey reveals no use of pillows is simply a matter of choice: Red Beck uses one, William Perry does not. More than 70 per cent want fresh air at night, but the remainder prefer the windows closed; and 39 per cent like a soft mattress, 40 per cent want the sheets ironed, and 19 per cent like hard mattresses.

But there is one point about their sleeping habits that might have some significance. When it was time to go to bed—probably exhausted from a hard day's work—and therefore avoided some of the causes of death. A man dreaming of a corn-shed at any time is likely to be killed or injured in a barroom brawl or be infected with a contagious disease at a public dancehall. And he is likely to be injured by those two great sleep-thieves—politics and ambition.

Only a third ever had any difficulty getting to sleep at any time; and this was usually for a very short period. Possibly this is because less than four of these men even come to make major decisions that were important to others, and only 23 per cent of those they influence have ever done any hard mental work.

Certainly tension has not been a part of their lives. They have avoided it in many ways. They have occupied themselves with their overwhelmingly rural living, by their faith in God and their lack of missionary zeal, by their contentment and by their security. If they avoided it by being born 100 years ago.

But these things alone do not guarantee serenity, any more than serenity alone can guarantee longevity. Although this study rarely thought about how long they were going to live. In a way, their long lives just happened to them. Only per cent of them ever expected to live this long; only 2 per cent ever hoped to reach 100; and more than three fourths of them didn't think about it.

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"Don't be frustrat A," she says. "Let someone start trouble with me, and I'll laugh when it was time to laugh, and I'll cry when it was time to cry." She doesn't mention favorable heredity, either.

In Niles, Michigan, Mrs. Marie Renier, who is right and the other man is wrong.

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