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Contemporary Health

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 I interviewed my wonderful grandmother for this project. Her name is Elizabeth Ewers and is a 76 year old women. She had many jobs throughout her life, but was most recently worked in a doctor’s office. She is now retired. She explained how her early life was a very busy time. She was one of nine children in a two family house, which often included their grandparents. They lived in the country and their house was the family business, so their lives revolved around the business. She told me about how she had many pets, as well as chicken. She joked about how the chicken where for food, not pets, explaining how plucking their feathers was the worst job she ever had. She went on to explain how with a family consisting of so many people, there was always a birthday or special occasion. This kept her life exciting. They went to Catholic school 20 miles away, so they would all pile into the big family station wagon. They all played instruments, and she told me that one of her fondest childhood memories was marching in the New York Saint Patrick’s Day Parade with her cousins. She went on to tell me how her mornings consisted of their aunt making breakfast for everyone while her mother prepared lunch for everyone. As her father cleaned up the bar/ restaurant for the new day, their uncle would drive all the kids to school. She talked about how she enjoyed her school years, and how the early 50’s where a great time to be a teen.

 When I asked my grandmother if she considered herself old, she jokingly said no, not until she looked in the mirror. She said her health dictates how old she feels, not her mentality. She has never stopped and thought, wow I am old, she said it is more of a thing other people bring up. The most significant historical events she has lived through are The Korean and Vietnam Wars. Her husband, my grandfather, and her cousins where in these wars. The biggest change she has seen in how people conduct themselves is the amount of fear people have today. She talked about how people do not have the freedom they used to have. She gave the example of how kids can’t play and enjoy their neighborhood like she did. People have to lock doors, worry about things like terrorism, identity theft, etc. The best years of my grandmothers life where getting married and raising her children from the 50s to the 70s. Her plans for the future are to enjoy her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

 The biggest difference my grandmother explained about young people today as opposed to in her day is the social interactions. She would be very social by going to dances, parties and school functions. All these in person interactions are now replaced with social media communication. The advice she would give to young people in order to help prepare them for their old age is to take care of your personal relationships and health. She said all of the money in the world cannot mend a broken heart of buy your health back. This is what makes her such a great grandmother, she knows what is important. When I asked if she had ever experienced negative attitudes toward her as a result of her age, she told me she had never been discriminated against. She did say that people are can dismissive or impatient with her though, especially if you don’t get what they were saying as soon as they say it. Something she wishes she knew that she knows now is not to worry about the small thing in life. The thing my grandmother fears most about growing older is being dependent on someone else.

 Every time I talk to my grandmother I learn something new. She is such a great person and am proud to be a member of her family. Hearing about how she grew up a house with so many people makes her even more impressive to me. Something I did not know was that she marched in the Saint Patrick’s Day parade as a kid. This is a great experience and I could tell how much she enjoyed the memory as she shared it with me. I learned how I should enjoy all of the opportunities I can now so I can look back the same amount of happiness she did. Something that surprised in the interview was her view on being elderly. She does not think of herself as an old person. That is not to say she does not know she is not the same as she used to be physically, but she views herself as mentally the same as she has always been. This is such a great way to look at life and I hope I can have the same way of thinking when I grow old. She does not think about how she is getting older, she thinks about how lucky she is to be with her family.

 I was surprised on how I felt during the interview. Initially, I was a little nervous to ask my grandmother these questions because I thought they were rude and would offend her. However, I realized quickly how open she was about talking about herself to me and relaxed. She is very content with who she is and where she is in life, and this was made clear throughout the conversation. It felt more like a conversation than an interview, which was a great experience. I do not have the opportunity to talk to her as much as I would like to, so it was nice to listen to all of her stories and everything she had to say. I felt happy listening to her talk about her fondest childhood memories.

 Not much about the interview with my grandmother changed my perception of the elderly. I always thought they were filled with stories of their youth that they were willing to share with their loved ones. I always look up to my elderly family members and go to them for wisdom in life. They grew up in very different times than I am, so they have different perspectives on many different subjects. One thing the interview did change is how I think about the interactions people have today. They did not even have the internet when they grew up, so they were much more social in person than people today. Now people stare at phones in order to avoid interaction. If I was from their generation, I would be frustrated with how little people interact in person. This makes me want to make more of an effort to have more interaction in person as opposed to over the internet.