

Super Centenarians

In ancient civilization, both biblical and other historical records, such as the *Sumerian Kings List*, report lifespans in the hundreds of years. It is a well-known biblical fact that the oldest man to ever live was Methuselah, who lived to be 969 years old.

But what about the life span of humans in the modern era? Contemporary scholars have devised specific methods of verifying the ages of modern supercentenarians. Claims of great age are validated by international longevity research institutes such as the Gerontology Research Group and Guinness World Records.

A Life Care resident – Nyleptha Roberts of Sparta, Tennessee – lived to be 112. At that time, she was the oldest living person in Tennessee.

The oldest living person in the modern era was Jeanne Calment, a French supercentenarian who has the longest confirmed lifespan in modern history – age 122 years, 164 days – and is the only confirmed person to have lived beyond 120 years.

She enjoyed a life of wealth and privilege, having grown up the daughter of a shipbuilder. She married her wealthy shop-owner second cousin (with the same last name). Calment outlived her only child, raised her grandson and enjoyed leisurely hobbies like tennis, piano and swimming.

During her later years, Calment also enjoyed fame as the oldest living person, appearing in a documentary film about her life and playing herself in a 1990 film, which made her the oldest living person to appear in a motion picture.



She attributed her longevity to consuming olive oil, port wine and dark chocolate. She died of natural causes on Aug. 4, 1997.

Calment's most famous quote? "I've never had but one wrinkle, and I'm sitting on it."

Okay, maybe we just discovered the real reason for her longevity – her sense of humor!

Calment lived the last 12 years of her life in a nursing home, which is a reminder to us of the important mission to which we are called. We are serving people – famous or not – who have contributed significantly to the betterment of their communities and countries through lives of significance by raising families and sharing their talents.

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And those who seem the happiest are those who demonstrate the joy of living.

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones (Proverbs 17:22 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter