



The Gift of Long Life

Describing 105 year old George Fugate, a Kentucky newspaper headline read, “He didn’t have a regular doctor until he was 100. A checkup showed he was in fine health, just getting old.” Mr. Fugate has a lot of company. In America and across the globe, we are living longer, healthier lives. You, your family and your world will be affected in many ways by this rapid growth in older persons.

In this century, factors such as lower birth rates, improved nutrition, and better sanitation and disease control have brought about a vast increase in both the number and percentage of older people in many countries across our world.

According to UN estimates, in 1950 there were 200 million people worldwide over the age of 60. By the year 2000, that number will have risen to 590 million and, in 2025, to 1.1 billion—a projected increase of 500 percent since 1950.

Other important global trends include more elderly individuals living in urban areas and a continuation of far more older women than men.

While some people have always lived to an advanced age, until recently their numbers were small.

In the United States, growth of the older population slowed somewhat during the 1990’s because of the smaller number of babies born during the Great Depression of the 1930’s. But our older population will mushroom between the years 2010 and 2030 as baby boomers turn 65. By 2030, about 70 million Americans will be over 65, more than



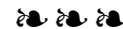
**INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
♦ OLDER PERSONS ♦**

twice as many as in 1997. In the year 2000, 13 percent of our population will be 65 or older. By 2030, we anticipate their numbers will rise to 20 percent of the American population.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, one of every nine baby boomers will live to be at least 90 years old. Today, centenarians are the fastest growing segment of the American population. Four-generation families will soon be the norm. Older Americans are also becoming increasingly

diverse both racially and ethnically.

With the gift of long life coming to so many, what changes do you see taking place? How can we best prepare? Name some blessings—for both individuals and society—that come from living to a “ripe old age.”



Reference: Administration on Aging Web Page.

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