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# Youngster Of 90 Lives Her Life To The Fullest

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

As you converse with Madge-lene Bennett you discard, one by one, any stereotypes of the "elderly." This lovely woman, 90 years of age, has the energy, erect carriage, engaging spirit and interest in others that you might expect of youth.

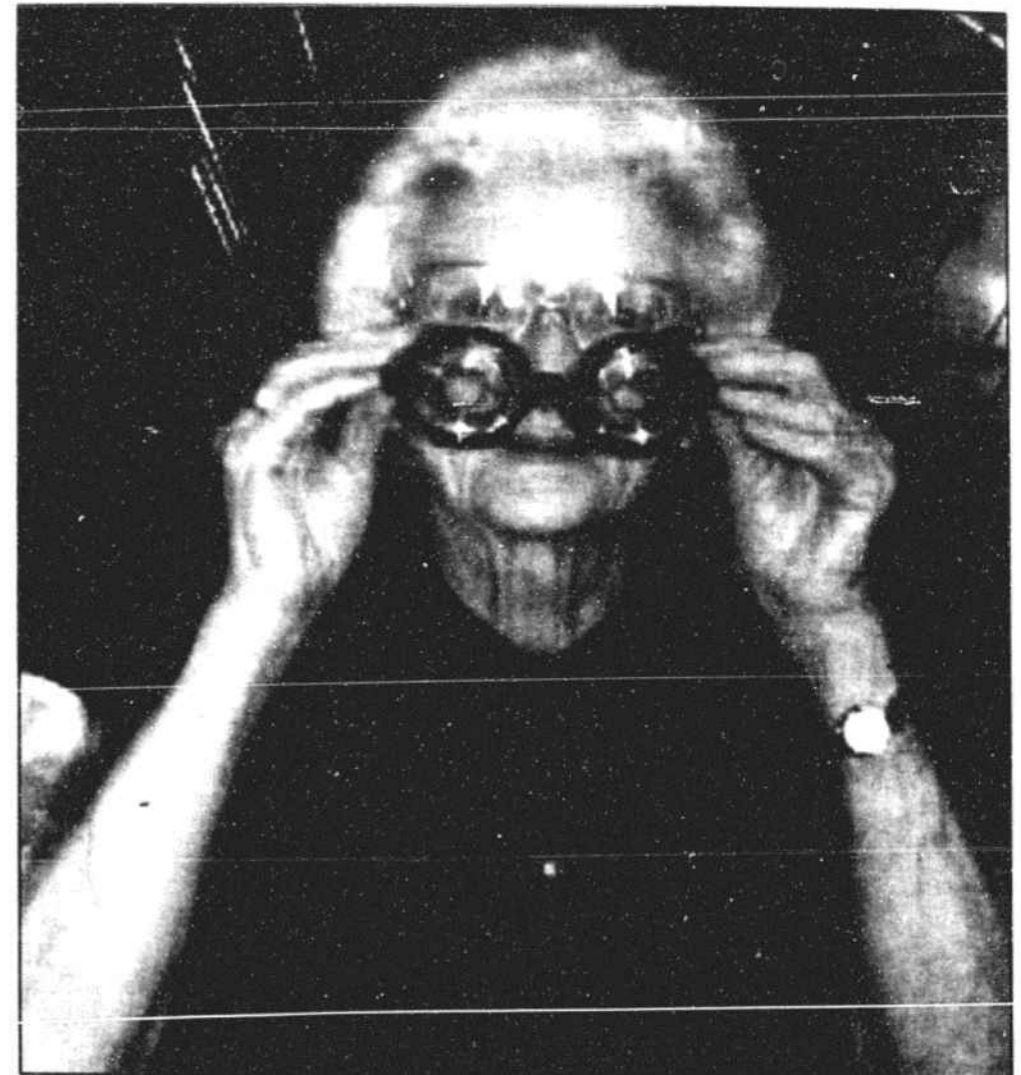
Her sense of humor is intact, tempered by sweetness and a strong sense of self. Snow-white hair may frame her face, but an active lifestyle keeps her both lively and content.

The Calabash Rescue Squad has reason to rejoice in the good health and good will of Mrs. Bennett. She has worked for more than ten years with the Calabash Thrift Shop, an enterprise that pours about \$700 a week into the squad's operating budget.

This is a volunteer work in which she takes great pleasure and pride, working a few hours every day to prepare offerings of clothing for the Saturday influx of customers who come in large numbers to find bargains.

Bennett began helping there soon after her husband's death in 1978 prompted her to move from their farm near Hickman's Crossroads to Bonaparte's Retreat II. The South Carolina native had been a full-time 12-grade teacher until her marriage in 1923, when she joined Lacy Bennett on his farm and kept busy with substitute teaching, listing taxes for the county and serving as registrar for Shingletree precinct.

When she was widowed, Mrs. Bennett's two daughters didn't want her to live alone, so she moved next-door to one of them, Bobbie White. "I told my granddaughter recently that her mother doesn't pay much attention to me," Mrs. Bennett related, "but she said, 'Oh, you just don't know! She watches and knows every thing you do!'"



Staff Photo by Marjorie Megivern  
**MADGELENE BENNET** clowns around with thick eyeglasses contributed to the Calabash Thrift Shop, as she goes through donations left at the door.

That's a tall order. Besides performing daily stints at the thrift shop, Bennett is a heavy-duty gardener who not only beautifies her home with flowers and ornamental shrubbery, but gives diligent attention to a vegetable garden on Thomasboro Road, is an active member of Beulah Baptist Church, and belongs to the Homemakers Extension Club and the Property Owners Association. Since she drives herself everywhere, even a devoted daughter would have trouble keeping up.

All these groups recently gave her special recognition on her 90th

birthday. Birthday cakes and dinners marked the occasion and filled a scrapbook with pictures, some of her in tears.

"The rescue squad really surprised me," she explained. "They got my daughter and grandchildren together and at the end of the day at the thrift shop, they took me over to the squad building where this party was."

Bennett is proud of the contribution made by the thrift shop, not only to the squad, but to those who need affordable clothing. "In addition to selling at low prices, we always give clothing to people who are burned out," she said.

Along with her life of service, Bennett's home reveals her sentimentality and love of friends and family. Hundreds of pictures adorn her living room bookshelves and mantel, pictures of the two daughters, five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Also, mementoes of the past are on the walls and in every nook. "Here's the dress I was christened in," she said, pointing to a framed white baby dress, long and lace-trimmed. Her late husband's white baby dress is framed beneath it.

"On these shelves, where there should be books, I have all the little gifts my Sunday School students and friends have given me," she pointed out. "I like to look at them and remember."

She was asked the secret of reaching a 90th birthday. "Don't drink, don't smoke and take care of yourself," was her quick response.

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