

Natural Healing Express Weekly

Column Volume 87 Longevity, Part Three – Ethel Lobdell

As promised, we will finish our series on Longevity by interviewing a few shining examples of a life well lived. We hope to gain knowledge of their secrets while having a few laughs along the way. Enjoy!

Ethel Neebel Lobdell of Lena was born in January of 1919 in Pearl City. She attended a one room country school at New Dublin for grades 1-8 and then transferred to Pearl City High School for her freshman through junior years where she graduated. (At the time, it was customary to graduate junior year from smaller schools). She then came to Lena for her senior year and graduated again, thus earning two diplomas.

She met the love of her life, William Lobdell at a dance in Stockton. Ethel tells the story best. “I went to hear an orchestra in Stockton and saw Bill. We just looked at each other and the next thing you know he was coming to the house.”

Together with Bill, Ethel actively farmed until she took a job with Crum and Foster where she retired after 23 years of service. Ironically enough, she retired two weeks before the company brought in their first computers. Bill and Ethel are the proud parents of a daughter, Rita Lobdell of Lena. Ethel joined the first sorority in Lena, Beta Epsilon Phi, the year after it was founded, serving 62 years thus far.

Susan: Ethel, thank you for doing this interview, please tell me a little bit about your early life:

ETHEL: I have always liked the farm. I helped milk cows since I was very young. I had three brothers; Cloide, Allen, Elvin and a sister, Eileen. Alvin was 17 months older than me and we played pretty well together, but my sister was 14 months younger and that was not so good when the three of us played.

Susan: What about your childhood contributed to your longevity?

ETHEL: There wasn't a lot of money, but we had big gardens and did a lot of canning. Mom made the best cinnamon rolls and we had mostly all home grown food. We didn't go to town and buy everything, we grew it. There were other big families right around us and we all shared. We all played together. It was during the depression and we didn't know any different. If we had a new dress, Mom had made it.

Susan: Looking back through the eras, what do you think most affected you at the time?

ETHEL: World War II. So many people were affected by it. We had stamps for rations. They were for shoes, gas, and sugar, especially sugar. There were no cell phones back then to check on each other. My youngest brother served in the Army- he was a cook stationed in California. It was tough on all of us.

Susan: Ethel, I noticed you won a milking contest a few years back, please tell me about this.

ETHEL: I was a senior and at the Rawleigh Farm they had a contest in conjunction with the Freeport Fall Festival, October 22-27, 1934. There were so many entries they had to hold the contest over two days.

So I milked and milked getting 15 pounds which won the championship. First place was \$7.00 and I bought my first watch with the earnings. My sister Eileen won the singing contest. Not sure how much.

Susan: I know you had a very long marriage. Can you tell me a about this and what made it successful?

ETHEL: We were married in 1938. Bill died in 1995. We were married 57 years. We had lots of fun together. We went to dances at the Germania, the Mercury Ballroom and once in a while at the Flying Cloud. We listened to Big Band Music. We worked together on the farm; we were good friends and had great friends. I don't remember any big fights, but I pouted some. (Daughter Rita joins the interview)

RITA: I honestly don't remember any fighting between them. However, I can tell you, when I do something a bit out of order, I get "the LOOK". Those big ole brown eyes just give the "LOOK" and you know you better straighten up. I imagine Dad might have gotten a couple of those over the years.

ETHEL: Rita was born after we were married about 5 years. She is my biggest blessing. We had no technology then to let us know if she was a boy or a girl during the pregnancy. We went to the hospital about 2pm and Dr. Graff, who grew a lot of Gladiolas, was on his way to the Wisconsin State Fair to try to win the blue ribbon. He told me I needed to have this baby by 9pm so he could get there. Rita obliged. Rita was an easy baby, being a good sleeper and eater. She was a good kid but liked to run away a lot. One day she ran down the field to see her Dad and got sunstroke. She didn't do that again.

RITA: I have heard that Mom milked cows the morning I was born.

ETHEL: That's true. Now about those teenage years, that's where I got all my white hairs. She was a good girl and in high school, that's when the boys started to come around. But the temptations weren't there like they are today. No drugs and all the crazy stuff. Just good clean fun, but still teenagers.

Susan: What was the toughest period of your life?

ETHEL: I had shingles the year after Bill died. I lost 20 pounds and was dreadfully sick. It was awful.

Susan: What are you the most proud of?

ETHEL: (Ethel gives Rita the Nod). Rita has much more of her Dad's disposition than mine. That's the Lobdell side through and through—very fun.

Susan: Do you have anything in your life you would like to do over?

ETHEL: We don't look back. We travelled a lot together after we retired. We went on our first trip when Rita was 18, travelling to Minnesota to a lodge. Maybe I would have liked to travel more, but I feel like I am done travelling, except maybe to see Nova Scotia again. We always had an appreciation of what we had and didn't compare to our neighbors, we liked to see places and get the experience.

RITA: It was my greatest gift that through my job with the airlines, I could travel with my parents. Our first trip was to Tahiti. We loved it.

Susan: I heard you are quite the singer- Can you tell me a little bit about your interest in music?

ETHEL: I have always loved music and liked to sing.

RITA: Mom was into music from a young age. She was in the church choir, chorus in high school and sang at a piano bar on occasion. I can remember the look Dad got on his face when Mom sang. It was just pure love and adoration. Very moving.

ETHEL: Bill was raised a strict Baptist, but he overcame that when he turned Lutheran. He loved to dance and listen to music. It was a wonderful time for us. We loved music.

Susan: I know you are quite the chef, especially those peanut clusters you make for us every Christmas. What is your favorite recipe or item to cook?

ETHEL: I like desserts. I like to try new recipes. My favorite is dried apricot pie and coconut cream pie.

Susan: How do you think your cooking skills have contributed to your longevity?

ETHEL: For the most part, we have always tried to eat lots of fruit and vegetables. We didn't do fast food in our day. Maybe on a Sunday we would head into Union Dairy for ice cream. We were farmers so we ate our big meals at lunch which we called Dinner. We would have a farm breakfast and then a light supper at night(which is now called dinner). It suited us and how we worked. Our breakfast would be French toast, pancakes and coffee. And, we always had tea at night.

Susan: What is your advice for people regarding a long, healthy and happy life?

ETHEL: Just be happy at what you are doing. Feel blessed every day, that attitude helps everything. Being outside all the time really helped me. I was not a busy body with the neighbors and I like people, I can forget the bad jives when needed. We had terrific friends and shared good times. Friends make all the difference. I believe out of the 8 couples that we did things with all the time, there are only two of us girls left; my friend Flo Chapin and myself. Cherish your friends.

RITA: Mom is very humble, a lot of great qualities that I admire.

Susan: Is there anything left on your bucket list?

ETHEL: I would like to keep up my home as it is, to keep Rita around. I would like to walk around the house and drive to the library and store by myself. I can die happy.

Susan: Anything else you would like to add?

ETHEL: Look for the good. Leave behind the bitter. No one's life is as smooth as they want it to be. People have so many things now, we didn't have all those things, but we had a good life.

Susan: We should all be so lucky. Thank you and bless you Ethel.

Please share your other candidates for this series by phone or email.

Enjoy! Hope to see you soon and as always, please contact us via one of the following methods. Natural Healing Express: Phone 815 990 8732, email: skscham@aol.com 204 W Main St, Lena, IL 61048.

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