

Jamestown resident Field marks 100th birthday today



RICHARD SAYER/Meadville Tribune

Elisha (Lash) Field turns 100 today. He celebrated his birthday Friday at the Lakeland Valley Regional Senior Community Center in Linesville.

Mr. Century

By Mary Spicer
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LINESVILLE — Anyone planning to make it past the century mark should make a point of paying a visit to Lakeland Valley Regional Senior Community Center in the heart of downtown Linesville. The ultimate role model lunches there pretty much on a daily basis.

Today is officially the day Jamestown resident Elisha Joseph Field — known far and wide as Lash — will celebrate his 100th birthday.

“Laugh and the world laughs with you — cry and you cry alone.”

ELISHA JOSEPH FIELD

Friday morning, however, more than 100 celebrants filled the center almost to capacity for a 100th birthday party destined to live on in regional folklore.

This is a birthday boy extraordinaire.

“Lash, you are the poster child of active aging,” said Donna Stimpson. As execu-

tive director of Active Aging Inc., she’s definitely in a position to know.

“Nattily attired” hardly begins to describe the honoree, resplendent in top hat, black tie and — you guessed it — tails. Very nice tails, as a matter of fact. According to his

Did You Know?

100 years ago there were ...

■ 144 miles of paved highway in the U.S.

■ 50 people living in Las Vegas, Nev.

■ 46 stars on the American flag

■ 8,000 cars in the U.S.

■ An average wage of 22 cents per hour

— Birthday party emcee Bill Armstrong

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daughter Minnie — formally known as Mary Ann Stuyvesant from Akron, Ohio — his years of involvement as a Free and Accepted Mason left him with an impressive collection of formal wear.

Master of ceremonies Bill Armstrong gave the celebrants a bit of a history lesson, noting that much has changed since Field's birth on Feb. 13, 1910, in Mount Vision, a community in central New York State's Otsego County.

"One hundred years ago, there was 144 miles of paved highway in the United States," Armstrong explained, rapidly warming to the subject. Fifty people lived in Las Vegas, Nev., the American flag had 46 stars, there were 8,000 cars in the United States and the average wage was 22 cents per hour, he continued. "That's how Lash got

rich," he quipped as the room exploded with laughter.

"He loves coming here — and we love having him come here," said Armstrong, who describes himself as an active volunteer with the center.

"Flash Lash" first arrived in Linesville in 1941. While he only lived in Linesville itself for four years before relocating to Westford in nearby South Shenango Township to take over the local mill, "I've lived in 10 or 12 places over the years — and Linesville is the friendliest town I ever lived in," he recalled. "I've always had a warm feeling for Linesville — and when I started coming to the center, I found out it was still a friendly town."

The celebrant's sight and hearing may not be quite what they once were, but nothing's slowing this one-man dynamo down.

Both he and his wife, Frances, played an active role in their community, Minnie told the group. "We thought his whole life was his work," she

said. "We thought, 'When he retires, what are we going to do with him?'" As it worked out, they didn't have to worry. He quickly took up carpentry — and golf. In fact, the summer of 2009 — his 99th year — was the first summer since he was in his mid-70s that he didn't make it onto the links.

Even though he was the only member of his high school graduating class to attend their 80th class reunion, Lash was still the star of the show, Minnie recalled with a chuckle. "The children of people he went to school with were all asking him about their parents."

As for the secret of his long and still very active life, "I enjoy every minute of it," he said. "My mother used to say, 'Laugh and the world laughs with you — cry and you cry alone.'"

The decision to keep laughing was a very conscious one, according to Minnie. When her mother died about four years ago,

her father — a widower after 71 years of marriage — moped around for several months, she recalled. "He realized he was either going to sit around and die — or get out and live," she said. Opting to live, he started spending time at the center.

From the home in the Jamestown-Espyville area he shares with his daughter Doris Livingston, Lash hops on the bus to Linesville on a daily basis. According to testimony from his fellow bus riders — all women, by the way — he's definitely the life of the party. In fact, on the bus he's known as Big Guy or Bad Boy. "There's nothing quiet or shy about him," revealed one fellow passenger.

Everyone's always laughing when the bus arrives at the center, but they have one very firm rule: What happens on the bus — stays on the bus.

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