

## Getting your driver license renewed at 98 — Listen to the expert

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George, is my hero. George was born the year the brassiere was invented. As a Second Lieutenant, he was introduced to his wife by a First Lieutenant, named Westmoreland (as in General William Westmoreland). At age 98, George still lives independently in his own home. His mind is still impressively sharp, and his body has not failed him. Young people love to be with George, and he loves to be with them. George still safely drives himself where he wants to go, and his current goal is to become West Point's oldest living grad.

Another of my heroes is Dick. I first got to know Dick some years ago while doing an annual 12-mile military road march, as part of welcoming the incoming class of cadets into the Long Gray Line at the completion of their West Point basic training.

Dick is a little older than I am. More precisely, Dick graduated from West Point the year I was born! This past August, Dick completed his 9th road march at age 88. And yet, even though these marches involve some pretty tough terrain in the middle of the night, Dick never stops to rest. While the cadets are sitting down to take scheduled breaks, Dick is standing, walking around, visiting with everyone, and otherwise "holding court." We "Old Grads" always look to be sure Dick will be doing the next road march with us. He truly is an inspiration.

One of George's and Dick's secrets to such long, healthy, and happy lives is simple. These two men embraced the lessons of their cadet years early and have never forgotten them: Always be mentally sharp. Always believe in "can do", and always be physically fit.

So how do my heroes apply to you? Ask yourself this: "How old would you be if you didn't know how old you are?" Aging is as much a mental and an emotional process as it is a physical one. It is a reflection on how you embrace life.

The importance of having a positive attitude and a determined will cannot be over emphasized. It will get you through many of life's difficulties. When negativity starts to creep into your thinking, shake it off with a positive resolve of "I can do this," and then start to work on the problem.

Look for friends and associates who are happy and who enjoy what they are doing. They will inspire you and, in turn, you can inspire them.

Keep challenging your brain. Is there something you always wished you knew how to do? Know how to do simple home repairs? Play the piano? What's keeping you from starting to learn those things now?

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In this changing world, it is important to be able to use today's electronics. Don't be afraid of computers. George works on his computer every day. Don't understand a smart phone? Make your next cell phone be a smart phone and find some young person to teach you how to use it.

Because regular exercise increases blood flow throughout the body, including the brain, exercise is an important aspect of maintaining your mental acuity. One of the easiest fitness habits you can have is a 30-minute walk every day -- doesn't have to be anything more than walking on a treadmill while watching a tv show or walking 15 minutes away from the house and then walking back home.

In addition to your legs and your cardiovascular system, walking actually strengthens your back muscles. Keeping your back muscles in good shape will help protect your nerves as they come out of your spine, which is critical to maintaining a good, happy life.

You don't have to be a body builder, but you do need to keep your muscles in good tone. George has a personal trainer. He explained, "She makes me use muscles I long ago forgot I had, but it helps. I feel better now than I did at 96."

Don't skimp on sleep. Your body needs sleep time to heal and to prepare itself for the next day. According to the National Sleep Foundation, there is no "magic number" of hours each person needs to spend sleeping each day. What is important is to listen to your body and to be sure you are getting the amount of sleep your body says it needs.

So, how does a man 98-years-old continue to get a driver's license renewed every two years? George explained, "Leave the cane in the car. Before walking through the door of the DMV, stand up straight and tall with shoulders back, just like you were taught as a Plebe (West Point freshman). Walk up to the counter with a smile on your face. Look the lady on the other side of that counter in the eye, and start flirting with her."

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