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Eleanor Gershien

The Power of Positive Thinking
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In 2006 at age 75, Eleanor Gershien became the oldest person to earn a degree from Maryville University. "And I'm very proud of the fact that I graduated summa cum laude, too," she interjects. "It was very important to me to get As, because when your grandkids ask, *What did you get in school?*, I had to say As, because if I said Bs or Cs, then they would have thought that's acceptable." Now at age 80, Gershien continues to sell real estate for Coldwell Banker Gundaker out of its Ladue office. Her secret? "I believe you're only as old as you think, and I have a very positive attitude."



Gershien received a Bachelor of Fine Arts, but when she first approached school administrators, she had no idea what she wanted to study. "I was asked, What do you like to do? And when I replied, Work, I was told Maryville did not have a degree in work," she says with a smile in her voice. The same turned out to be true for golf, as well. But when she mentioned that she enjoyed painting, it became clear what Gershien's major should be. "I was told the classes would include drawing, painting, sculpture and jewelry," she remembers. "It turned out to be great fun--most of the courses were like playtime."

Although Gershien pays attention to her diet, she does love her sweets, and to keep in shape, she plays in three golf leagues at Creve Coeur Country Club. "Since I was very young, dessert was always my favorite part of the meal--and we had it every night," she recalls. "I also had played golf when I was younger, before I had to work to earn a living. But when I realized I was a workaholic, in order not to work too much, I had to schedule planned activities--so I joined three golf leagues."

Except for this year due to illness, Gershien has participated every year in the Senior Olympics. "I don't remember how long I've been doing it, but I play golf and compete in the football and baseball throws and receive gold medals for all of them." Football throw? "My grandson played football in high school, so I asked him to teach me," she explains. "Although he found my throwing a football unbelievable, he showed me how, and I have won a gold medal every year since."

Gershien has one son and two daughters, along with seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. "I always was a 'great' grandmother," she laughs, "but before I was an adjective--now, I'm a noun."

A two-time cancer survivor, Gershien was once told by a Queeny Park Art Fair juror--after looking at several of her works, *You're a very happy person, aren't you?* "And I replied, *Yes, I am.*" It's evident that contentment and humor also play a role in Gershien's longevity and spirit. "Life is great, and you have to always think positive--and that's exactly the way I think." LN

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