

## Nebraska's 27 Supercentenarians Validated Among World's Longest-Lived

by E. A. Kral

Updated May 12, 2009

Since publication of the author's 44-page supplement "Nebraska's Centenarians Age 107 Or Above--1867 to 2001" in the April 24, 2002, *Crete News* and follow-up article on the state's supercentenarians published in the October 2, 2002, *Crete News*, more longevity claims have been validated for persons who have Nebraska connections by birth or by residence and have reached age 110 or above.

For validation of longevity claims, three records are usually needed from the first 20 years of a person's life, including such sources as birth registration, baptismal record, census data, or marriage certificate.

The author was able to validate--with assistance from Gerontology Research Group scholars and volunteers--all the individual supercentenarian reports that follow, along with a brief summary for each.

**Clara Herling Huhn** (1887-2000) Born near Clarkson, Colfax County, she died at La Mesa, California at the age of 113 years and 327 days. She lived the first 51 years of her life in Colfax County, and is the longest-lived Nebraska native. To date, she is the oldest person in Nebraska history, and as of October 15, 2006, she ranked among the top 70 oldest persons in world history, according to Gerontology Research Group based in Los Angeles.

**Helen Stetter** (1893-2007) Born at Chadron, she lived after five years of age at Valentine, Cherry County, where she died at 113 years and 195 days. The second oldest person in Nebraska history and the second longest-lived Nebraska native, she resided in Nebraska her entire life, longer than anyone else in state history. At the time of her death, Stetter was the 2nd oldest living American and the 4<sup>th</sup> oldest living person worldwide. And she ranked among the top 100 oldest persons in world history, according to Gerontology Research Group based in Los Angeles.

**Betsy Russell Baker** (1842-1955) Born at Great Brington, England, she died at Tecumseh at the age of 113 years and 65 days, after living 65 years in Johnson County. She is the longest-lived Nebraska resident, and was the second person in the world validated to reach age 113. (The first was Delina Filkins of New York, who died in 1928.) At the time of her death, Baker was the oldest living person in the world.

**Mary Cully Bittlebrun** (1864-1976) Born at Bloomington, Illinois, she died at Mena, Arkansas at the age of 112 years and 140 days. She lived in the Friend area of Saline County for 26 years, and is the second longest-lived Nebraska resident. Bittlebrun was the fourth person in the world validated to reach age 112. (Earlier validated cases of 112-year-olds were Josefa Mateo of Spain and Alice Stevenson of England, both of whom died in 1973, and Mito Umeta of Japan, who died in 1975.)

**Agnes Groves Gardner Callahan Ferron** (1893-2006) Born at Hillsdale, Miami County, Kansas, she died at Cozad, Nebraska at the age of 112 years and 66 days. She lived at Falls City, Richardson County, Nebraska from 1923 to 1946, then in Casper, Wyoming area from 1946 to 1993, and lived after 1993 at Cozad.

**Mary P. Romero Zielke Cota** (1870-1982) Born at Montecito, Santa Barbara County, California, she died at Hemet, Riverside County, California at the age of 112 years and 17 days. She lived with her husband Edward E. Zielke at Carroll, Wayne County, Nebraska from 1891 to 1903 before relocating with her children to California. Her children included daughter Rosabell Zielke Champion Fenstermaker, born at Carroll, Nebraska in 1893 and died at San Juan Capistrano, California in 2005 at the age of 111 years and 344 days. In the history of the world, Mary Romero Zielke Cota is the first woman validated at age 110 or above (supercentenarian) to give birth to a child who also reached age 110 or above. See profile in July 5, 2006 *Crete News* and July 23, 2006 *Omaha Sunday World Herald*.

**Agnes Brix Yoho Rich** (1892-2003) Born at Wisner, Cuming County, she died at Augusta, Georgia at the age of 111 years and 345 days. At the age of three, she moved to Texas, then lived in Oklahoma, California, and Georgia.

**Rosabell Zielke Champion Fenstermaker** (1893-2005) Born at Carroll, Wayne County, Nebraska, she died at San Juan Capistrano, California at the age of 111 years and 344 days. She lived at least until 1903 in Wayne County, Nebraska, then relocated to California. Her mother Mary P. Romero Zielke Cota, born at Santa Barbara, California in 1870, died at Hemet, California in 1982 at the age of 112 years and 17 days. In the history of the world, Rosabell Zielke Champion Fenstermaker is the first supercentenarian whose mother was also a supercentenarian.

**Nellie Hindman Swayne** (1883-1995) Born at Ashland, Saunders County, Nebraska, she died at Riverside, Riverside County, California at the age of 111 years and 275 days. She lived at least the first seven years of her life in Saunders County before relocating to Colorado and then later to California.

**Ella Winkelmann Schuler** (1897 - ) Born near Fontanelle, Washington County, Nebraska, she moved to Hooper, Dodge County in 1917, where she was married in 1923, then lived near Denver, Colorado and Page City, Thomas County, Kansas until 1934, when she relocated to Topeka, her current residence.

**Nina Billick Rust** (1881-1993) Born near Hainesville, Holt County, she died at Roseburg, Oregon at the age of 111 years and 202 days. She lived in Holt and Dawes Counties for at least 56 years.

**Luther L. Goding Sr.** (1884-1995) Born near Pauline, Adams County, he died at Hastings at the age of 111 years and 157 days. He lived in Adams and Douglas Counties for almost his entire life, except for at least six months spent in Arizona. He is Nebraska's longest-lived man.

**Sophia Papst DeMuth** (1866-1977) Born at St. Joseph, Missouri, she died near Ayr, Adams County, at the age of 111 years and 155 days. She lived in Adams County for 70 years. Her children included daughter Marie T. DeMuth Fulkerson, born near Juniata, Adams County, in

1900, who lived to age 108. The mother-child combination of Sophia Papst DeMuth and Marie T. DeMuth Fulkerson ranks as the second oldest in the history of Nebraska, behind the combination of Mary P. Romero Zielke Cota and Rosabell Zielke Champion Fenstermaker of Carroll, Wayne County. See article in November 21, 2007 *Hastings Tribune*.

**Mabel Bauman** (1889-2000) Born near Atkinson, Holt County, she died at Atkinson at the age of 110 years and 356 days. She lived in Nebraska most of her life, mainly in Holt, Dodge and Douglas Counties, except for several months in Seattle, Washington.

**Litta A. Walker** (1893 -2004) Born at Randolph, Fremont County, Iowa, she died at Omaha at the age of 110 years and 296 days. She lived the greater part of her life at Randolph and Cedar Rapids, but did live at Bancroft and Omaha, Nebraska for over 10 years.

**Catherine Zubrod Kral** (1891-2002) Born near Holstein, Adams County, she died at Campbell at the age of 110 years and 277 days. She lived her entire life in Nebraska, mainly in Adams, Webster, and Franklin Counties.

**Adelia M. Mead** (1885-1995) Born at Coxsackie, New York, she died at York, York County at the age of 110 years and 269 days. She lived over 90 years in Nebraska, mainly in York and Lancaster Counties.

**Mabel Stolzer Brinkworth** (1893 -2004) Born at Beatrice, Gage County, she died at Lake Wales, Polk County, Florida at the age of 110 years and 258 days. She lived in Beatrice until the mid-1920s, except for the years 1896 to 1903 in Washington, Kansas.

**Mary Fowler Norris** (1892-2002) Born near Weeping Water, Cass County, she died at Louisville at the age of 110 years and 196 days. She lived her entire life in Cass County, Nebraska.

**Julia Huigens Tharnish** (1897-2007) Born near Creighton, Knox County, she died in the town of Creighton at the age of 110 years and 191 days. She raised 14 children, more than any other Nebraskan of unusual longevity in the history of the state, and had almost 300 descendants. She lived her entire life in Nebraska, mainly in Knox and Antelope Counties.

**Josie Walker Hinds** (1873 -1984) Born near Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, she died at Cambridge, Furnas County at the age of 110 years and 176 days. She lived in Nebraska about 70 years, mainly in Gage, Pawnee, Lancaster, and Furnas Counties.

**Maryetta Cornish Metcalf** (1882-1992) Born in Lincoln, Lancaster County, she died at Newport Beach, California at the age of 110 years and 87 days. She lived in Lincoln, Nebraska about 59 years.

**Abeline Wrage Spiels** (1898 - 2008) Born near Grand Island, Hall County, she grew up on the family farm, then after her marriage in 1923 lived on her husband's farm until his death in 1939, when she moved to Grand Island. She died in Grand Island at the age of 110 years and 81 days.

**Clara Bangert Kirchner** (1884-1994) Born near Guide Rock, Webster County, she died at Blue Hill at the age of 110 years and 67 days. She lived her entire life in Webster County, Nebraska.

**Reuel S. Millar** (1897-2007) Born near North Bend, Dodge County, where he grew up, became married, and resided until the 1920s, he relocated to Denver, Colorado, in 1926 to manage a grocery store, followed by residence in Anaconda, Montana, until 1962 when he returned to live in the Denver area. He died in Lakewood, Colorado, at the age of 110 years and 45 days.

**Frances N. Cruts Heaslet Spickard** (1880-1990) Born in Driftwood Precinct, Hitchcock County, she died at Castle Rock, Colorado at the age of 110 years and 39 days. She lived for 11 years in Hitchcock County, Nebraska.

**Bertha Radil Knezacek** (1890-2000) Born near Western, Saline County, she died at Ord at the age of 110 years and 23 days. She lived all but two years in Nebraska, mainly in Saline, Howard, and Valley Counties.

Worldwide data on validated supercentenarians confirmed by Gerontology Research Group as of June 8, 2007 follow:

Age 122	1	Age 114	41
Age 120	1	Age 113	71
Age 119	1	Age 112	150
Age 117	2	Age 111	272
Age 116	5	Age 110	505
Age 115	13		

The total validated cases of supercentenarians reached 1062 at the time. It is important to note that validated cases primarily represent persons born or resided in Australia and New Zealand, Europe and Japan, and Canada and the United States. As record-keeping becomes more reliable in other nations and as more cases become known and validated, the number of supercentenarians will increase.

The website address of Gerontology Research Group is [www.grg.org](http://www.grg.org) and periodic updates are offered for validated living supercentenarians worldwide and other information about human longevity. For a listing of all validated supercentenarians in world history, consult Table B and Table BB by following this procedure: upon reaching Gerontology Research Group's home page, click on the side heading titled "Centenarians," then click on section heading titled "Official GRG Tables on Supercentenarians," and scroll through the various Tables until reaching the link for the Table you desire. Or go directly to <http://grg.org/Adams/Tables.htm>. Another option is to consult <http://recordholders.org/en/list/oldest.html> or also consult <http://w3.to/epstein>.

Anyone who knows of someone age 110 or older who is not listed on the appropriate Table on its website at [www.grg.org](http://www.grg.org) but can help validate the longevity may contact Robert Young of Atlanta, Georgia at [robertdouglasyoung@yahoo.com](mailto:robertdouglasyoung@yahoo.com) or Louis Epstein of Carmel, New York at [le@put.com](mailto:le@put.com) or [le@main.put.com](mailto:le@main.put.com). Louis Epstein's office phone is (845) 225-3234.

Journalists researching a story on people of longevity may contact one of the above investigators or Dr. L. Stephen Coles, executive director of the Los Angeles-based Gerontology Research

Group at [scoles@grg.org](mailto:scoles@grg.org) or his beeper at 800-471-5431. Leave your phone number for Coles at the numerical option.

Information about persons with Nebraska connections who have reached age 107 or above may be referred to the executive director of the Nebraska Health Care Association at 3900 Northwest 12th Street, Suite 100, Lincoln, NE 68521-3037. Phone number is (402) 435-3551.