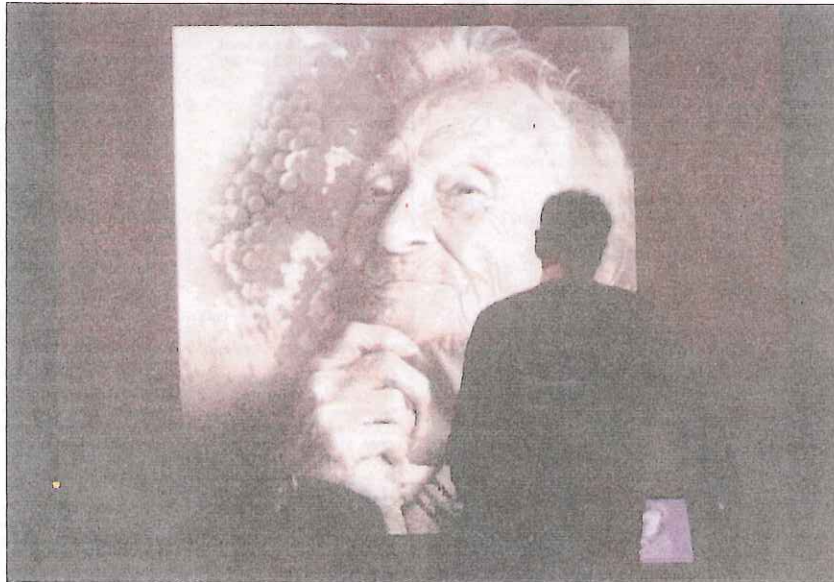


CHESTERTON/VALPARAISO

Post-Tribune

1

Thursday, May 21, 2009



PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE DOWELL/POST-TRIBUNE

Photographer Jerry Friedman (in silhouette) recently presented his images of supercentenarians, including this French woman born in 1891, during a breakfast appearance at Strongbow Inn in Valparaiso. He defines supercentenarians as people 110 years and older. Friedman was invited by Pines Village Retirement Communities in honor of National Older Americans Month.

'Supercentenarians'

Book honors people 110 years and older

By AMY LAVALLEY
Post-Tribune correspondent

VALPARAISO — Jerry Friedman's trip from New York City to see his mother at a care center in the Boston area started a much longer journey than he ever imagined.

Friedman, an advertising photographer at the time, "embedded" himself at her facility for four days, getting to know the people and their stories.

At a glance

■ For more information about Pines Village Retirement Communities, call 465-1591 or visit the Web site www.pinesvillage.org.

■ For more information about Jerry Friedman and his book, "Earth's Elders: The Wisdom of the World's Oldest People," visit the Web site www.earthselthers.org.

The result was a book, "Earth's Elders: The Wisdom of the World's Oldest People," and an offshoot educational program that is available for free on Friedman's Web site. It helps children find and connect with the oldest people living in their communities.

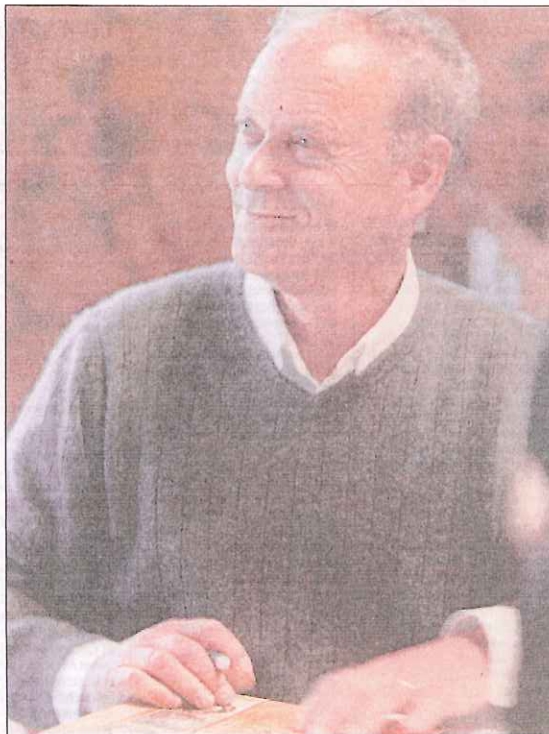
Friedman presented his work during a recent breakfast at Strongbow Inn sponsored by Pines Village Retirement Communities in honor of National Older Americans Month.

Of the 6.5 billion people in the world, 350 to 450 are verifiable supercentenarians. Increasing life spans are creating a "tsunami" of aging people "who are not going to be well taken care of," Friedman said.

Friedman said the supercentenarians

"What I saw was both good and bad," he said, adding he saw how residents perked up when their grandchildren came for a visit, but realized how isolated they really were.

That trip sparked a worldwide odyssey of interviewing and photographing supercentenarians, those who were 110 or older. Friedman recorded the stories of 62 people.



Jerry Friedman autographs copies of his book, "Earth's Elders: The Wisdom of the World's Oldest People," at Strongbow Inn.

he interviewed shared several common traits. They were born in the late 1880s in rural environments and chose to stay there. They had a sense of humor and engaged in hard work.

They ate mostly organic, vegetarian diets. Faith played a large role in all of their lives; they were able to cope with

and adapt to the difficulties in their lives, and valued the family structure in their lives, which often included friends and neighbors.

"I hope all of you are now encouraged to reach out to your elders in the community," said Laurie Mullet, chief executive officer of Pines Village.