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Precious memories



CHIP ELLIS | Gazette

Residents at the Marmet Center nursing home are having their memories recorded as part of a StoryCorps program that tapes the stories for the national Memory Loss Initiative. Samantha Carney (front left) interviews her grandmother-in-law, Patty Carney (right), while StoryCorps worker Carolina Correa records the session.

Group records county seniors' life stories

By Davin White
Staff writer

Patricia Carney remembers the day she met her future husband at the old Middleburg Auditorium's roller skating rink on Lee Street.

At the time, she didn't skate. It wasn't until years later that her two sons showed her how. She just went to the Charles-

ton rink to socialize.

On Wednesday, the 75-year-old Carney also remembered that her great-grandmother had the prettiest red hair, and she'd braid it with a fine-tooth comb.

Near her death, the woman's colorful locks turned white almost overnight, "and that stuck with me," she said.

As a young girl, Patty Car-

ney grew up on a 44-acre farm just a few miles outside Point Pleasant. Her family's seven-room, wooden farmhouse had a sandstone foundation, which started to erode and the family had to build it back up.

Carney, a resident of Marmet Center nursing home, shared these and other memories Wednesday during an in-

terview with her granddaughter-in-law, Samantha Carney.

Workers with StoryCorps, a national nonprofit group that records, preserves and shares stories of Americans, recorded Carney's interview and gave the family a CD copy of the 40-minute recording session.

A second copy will be

SEE SENIORS, 9A

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FROM PAGE 1A

archived at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. Segments of select interviews also air nationally on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."

This week, StoryCorps expects to visit with 12 elderly residents at Marmet Center and at Regency Place in Scott Depot, facilities operated by Genesis HealthCare.

The interviews are a part of StoryCorps' Memory Loss Initiative, which encourages people with various forms of memory loss to share their stories with loved ones and future generations. Genesis invited the 12 residents who are experiencing early-stage dementia or Alzheimer's disease and their

families to participate in the interviews.

Matt Herman, who works as a facilitator for StoryCorps, said the group also recorded interviews Tuesday at Heartland of Charleston.

Part of Herman's job is to make the participants, who are usually close family or friends, comfortable with the interview process "cause this is a new experience for most of them," he said.

Herman has been with StoryCorps for three years, and has been directly involved with recordings for about half that time.

"More often than not I'm surprised by the story I hear," he said.

Samantha Carney believes that the recording will allow her children to hear their great-grandmother's stories in her own words.

"Instead of me telling it, it's actually her voice," she said. "It's basically kind of like an overview of her life as she remembers it."

Debbie Jones, the dementia program director at Marmet Center, said it's an impressive legacy to leave behind.

"For the family, I think that's pretty awesome," she said.

In Jones' office Wednesday morning, Patty Carney also talked about the big garden her family grew while she was a child in Mason County. She didn't like to work in the garden.

"I sure didn't," she said.

Then Jones asked Carney: But still, you had to take time tending the garden?

"I sure did," she said.

In a one-room Mason County schoolhouse, Carney's mother taught her from first grade through fourth grade.

"I went to school to her four

years and got four whippings," Carney said.

She briefly attended Morris Harvey College, found out it wasn't for her, and moved on to the old Charleston School of Commerce.

At about this time she met her husband, and later worked for about five years at the former United Fuel Gas Company until she found out she was pregnant.

She and her husband had two sons, William, who lives in Point Pleasant and Robert, who lives in Cincinnati. An infant daughter died in childbirth. She now has six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Ever since she received it as a gift from Samantha, Patty has worn a silver necklace with each great-grandchild's birthstone on it. She doesn't take it off.

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