AGING AMERICA

Are We Ready for the Centenarian Boom?

Agnes lived to be 101. She was my grandmother—a petite, Scotch-Irish formidable force of properness who visited the White House often while Ilo, her close cousin and wife of Henry Wallace, was second lady in the early 1940s.

Thirty years ago it was so unusual to reach 100 that our family celebrated Agnes’ 99th grandly. But reaching 100 is not so unusual anymore. Our cover story, “Living to 100,” tells us that by 2060 our country will be home to half a million centenarians.

Most of us have friends or relatives living longer than they ever imagined they would, some in good shape, others not. With fewer choices in the 1980s, Agnes spent her last years in a tiny room in a nursing home. Writer Suzanne Weiss asks: Is life really too short, as we like to say? It depends, of course, on one’s health, finances, family support and how much one has prepared for the “golden years.” Turn to page 14 to learn how some states are preparing for an onslaught of centenarians, from easing the burden on family caregivers to promoting long-term care insurance.

Elsewhere inside, you can discover why some preschoolers are being expelled at high rates, read a debate on the Electoral College and get primed for redistricting.

—Julie Lays