Level: B1 Intermedio

Skill: reading

A Well Lived Life

A new start after 60: I was devastated by divorce at 70. But at 102, I know the secrets of a well-lived life

"It's hard to put a size on things that happen in your life," Gladys McGarey says. At 102, it's understandable she would feel that way. Shortly before she was 70, Bill, her husband of 46 years, divorced her.

McGarey and Bill were both doctors and co founders of the American Holistic Medical Association in 1978. While married, they had shared a clinic in Phoenix, Arizona, and had brought up six children together. So, when the marriage ended – Bill had started a relationship with another colleague – McGarey lost her life partner and business.

"It blindsided me. I was broken," she says. Her daughter Helene had recently joined the practice, and mother and daughter opened a new clinic nearby Scottsdale.

The pain of the separation was extreme – "the hardest thing" McGarey has ever faced. Harder, she says, than the two periods of cancer she went through in her 30s and 90s.

"It's not a matter of getting over stuff; it's a matter of living through it," she says now. "If you can live through the issues that you have faced, they become your teachers."

But it was a slow process. "It wasn't until I was 93 that I really accepted it," she says, "You get to the stage where you can hang on."

One day, McGarey was driving back from her and Helene's clinic. She had just received an invitation to Bill's wedding. "I was so angry, I was screaming. I pulled over to the side of the road and thought to myself: 'Are you going to keep on like this?'"

McGarey is a Presbyterian; her parents were medical missionaries, and she was raised in India till she was 15. In the car, a Bible verse came to her. "This is the day that the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad in it.'"

So she bought a licence plate for her car that read "BE GLAD" to remind her that there was a lot in her marriage that she really treasured.

Looking back, McGarey can now see that her divorce was a constructive turning point: "Prior to that, I really didn't trust my own voice." Being dyslexic meant that, at school, she always felt slow. "I really didn't think I had a voice," she says, yet, "I knew I had a voice. After the divorce, it was no longer Bill and Gladys; it was Gladys McGarey, MD. I reclaimed what I had, not just as Bill's partner."

"I don't regret one minute that I spent as Bill's wife," she says. But, when he died in 2008, "My life has taken on these amazing dimensions that are completely not associated with him," she says. "What I chose is working for me."

McGarey never remarried. "People would ask if I was dating, and I would say, 'Why would I want to take care of another old man? No, thank you.'"

She retired at 86 but continues to offer telephone appointments. She no longer has a licence to work as a doctor but says: "Nobody told me I had to stop talking." At 100, she delivered a TEDx Talk – on holistic medicine and her central belief that she has "a colleague within each patient who does the healing, as I do the other part of it. This is what I know and understand in the field of medicine." She has just published a book, The Well-Lived Life: A 102-Year-Old Doctor's Six Secrets to Health And Happiness At Every Age, that offers guidance for a well-lived life.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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Decide if the sentences are TRUE or FALSE

- Gladys McGarey wanted a divorce after being married for over forty years.
- McGarey and Bill ran a medical clinic together until they divorced.
- After the divorce, their daughter Helene took over the clinic where both her parents had worked.
- McGarey's separation was almost as difficult as having cancer.
- McGarey now lives with her daughter, Helene.
- It took her more than twenty years for her to completely accept the separation.
- McGarey grew up in a religious household.
- After the divorce, she found her voice again.
- McGarey feels that she is too old to get married again.
- She believes that within each person, there is an ability to heal themselves.

Refer back to the text and find the phrasal verb that match the definitions below. Paragraph numbers are given to help you.

- .....: look after a child until he or she becomes an adult (paragraph 2)
- .....: experience something difficult or unpleasant (paragraph 4)
- .....: start to feel happy or well again after something bad has happened to you (paragraph 5)
- .....: continue doing something and achieve success even though there are difficulties (paragraph 6)
- .....: (in a car) stop by the side of the road (paragraph 7)
- .....: continue doing something (paragraph 7)
- .....: do the necessary things for someone who needs help or protection (paragraph 12)

LIVEWORKSHEETS