

# PRIME VIEW

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## Senior keeps his home with help from New Hope Hospice and Visiting Angels

By Jan Hogan

Everett Garn spent much of his life looking out for others. He enlisted in the Coast Guard as a teenager and served aboard a Navy transport ship, the USS William Black. He made 12 trips across the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans, evading German submarines, a constant threat. Sometimes his ship transported prisoners.

As a ship's cook first class, he said, "I was the first cook they'd had in a long time, so I was pretty popular."

He came to Las Vegas and went right to work as a mechanic for Caterpillar, then moved to the automotive dealership as a GMC parts man, used car mechanic, general manager of parts and service department and later became the top salesman for the Cadillac dealership.

He knew many hotel executives by first name. Garn not only looked out for their needs in a vehicle but also for the dealership's, so much so that he once refused a young man's check for the full amount of a new Eldorado.

"I didn't know who he was," he said. "I didn't think his check was any good."

The young man was Elvis Presley.

When a patron couldn't get his new car to start, Garn went to the man's house, rolled it out of the carport -- which he found to be an odd request -- and started it right up. He started it over and over again as the man watched from his doorstep. The man insisted that Garn drive it around the block.

"I couldn't find anything wrong with it," Garn said.

Only afterward did the patron admit the reason for his call: He was worried that a husband of his multiple mistresses might have rigged it to explode.

Garn took care of his own family, as well -- wife Jeanne and daughter Sue. They often went to Lake Mead to water ski and enjoy all the lake had to offer. He supported Sue Garn's art activities at the then-new Western High School, 4601 W. Bonanza Road.

Now 91, Everett Garn needs a little help from others. He has had two strokes and ongoing heart problems that required a five-bypass surgery.

"I didn't think he would survive the '90s, he had so many heart problems," Sue Garn said.

He also developed essential tremors, which presents similar to Parkinson's disease. It causes him to shudder and his limbs to move uncontrollably. Garn had two deep stimulators implanted in his brain that now control those tremors so they're less frequent and the episodes less extreme, which Sue Garn described as "tsunami tremors" before the surgery.

He lives in the house that he and his wife bought in 1964 near Valley View Boulevard and Sahara Avenue, at the very end of town in those days. Jeanne Garn died 10 years ago.

"I miss the freedom I used to have to go and do what I like," he said.

His daughter lives across the street. A retired art teacher, she is able to see him every day and takes him where he needs and wants to go. Everett Garn's health is such that he doesn't need to be in an assisted living facility, but he does, by his own admission, need a little help. He gets that help from New Hope Hospice, 8 Sunset Way, Suite 101, in Henderson, which sends someone out twice a week and as needed for medical care, and Visiting Angels, 800 N. Rainbow Blvd., which comes three times a week. The caregivers stay about two hours and help him with shaving, dressing and minimal housekeeping. He said it was hard to admit that he needed outside help.

"I didn't want to give up my home and the stuff I'd worked for all my life ... having people in my home, it was a tough decision," he said.

Now, said his daughter, he has adjusted and knows it means he can keep his house.

Before New Hope Hospice and Visiting Angels, Veterans Affairs provided excellent in-home care, he said, which he lost when he signed up with hospice with no duplication of services. Visiting Angels has picked up where the VA left off. The family said all the caregivers have been "professional and wonderful individuals."

Michael DiAsio, president of Visiting Angels, said it takes a special person to be a caregiver for seniors.



Photos by Jan hogan/VIEW

The wall in Everett Garn's home is filled with awards. Above, Garn, 91, shows off his military memorabilia. Garn is able to stay in his home thanks to help from New Hope Hospice and Visiting Angels.

Staying in one's home "is their biggest concern," he said. "It's a comfortable environment, and they're surrounded by their things ... we supply that little bit of help when they need it."

For the anniversary of 9/11 this year, Everett Garn was flown to Washington, D.C., by Honor Flight Network, a group that pays tribute to the remaining World War II veterans, estimated to now be about 12,000 people. He and other veterans visited the World War II Memorial in the nation's capital.