Helen Watson of Bay Hill serves as dean of women at Rollins College in Winter Park.

D ec. 11, 2011, will mark an important milestone for longtim

At more than 70,000, the U.S. currently has the largest number of centenarians in the world. Japan is ranked No. 2, with m

Though born in Indiana, Helen considers herself a true Floridian, as she and her family weathered the diff Great Depression, she and her brother, Wayne, were

Conveniences many people take for granted today were luxuries when Helen was a child.

“We didn’t have a telephone in the house for a long time,” Helen said. “When we did, it was a party line,

Ford Motor Co.’s Model T, generally considered to be the first affordable automobile, had just made its c

“I remember that my father had a [automobile] , and we had to crank it to get it started,” she said.

In the early 20th century, women were not expected to attend college, which has become a Florida S

Bay Hill resident Helen Watson annually sends a Christmas card to her former students, often with a hu

After receiving a bachelor’s degree, she earned a master’s in psychology from Simmons College in Bost

It was while she was in Philadelphia that Helen met her husband, Jack Watson. They married in 1937 ar

After losing his job because of the economy, Jack and Helen moved to Gainesville, where they lived whi

The Watsons later moved to Jacksonville, where he continued his architectural career, and Helen

became the personnel director at a local department store. It was around this time that Jack enlisted in t

Roger Babson, one of the few businessmen to survive the Great Depression with his fortune intact, foun

Under pressure from clients who only had daughters, Babson later co-founded Webber College, now kn

Helen Watson, a longtime resident of Bay Hill, celebrates her 90th birthday.

Initially, her job was to purchase books, hire teachers, interview students and run the retail department.

Once the war ended, Helen and Jack lived together in Winter Park, and Helen commuted more than 60

More Southwest's Centenarian