

# Unstoppable Independence: Seniors Who Choose to Live on Their Own Terms

How seniors are redefining aging with autonomy, purpose, and resilience while aging in place.

By Lyra Brown

It's one of those inevitable questions few people want to deal with. Where do we go when we get old? A seniors' home is an option for many, or long-term care, if necessary. Still, more individuals are choosing to age in place, preserving their independence and living on their own terms. Research shows that nearly 90% of adults aged 65 and older want to remain in their own homes, valuing autonomy and self-sufficiency. Ross Brown, 94, is embracing this shift, "I'm not ready for a senior care facility," he says, proving that aging doesn't mean losing control. Ross lives independently in his Edmonton home, which reflects a larger movement of seniors finding purpose and autonomy in their later years. Studies, including one from *The Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, confirm that independent living is linked to higher life satisfaction and better health.

## A Life Built on Autonomy

Ross's commitment to independence began when he moved to Edmonton in 1970 from Brantford, Ontario, to work with Metropolitan Life. After decades in the insurance industry, including five years in Japan, Ross retired but never gave up his desire to live on his own terms. When he bought his home in 1970, it wasn't just a house—it was a place to nurture his autonomy.

His home, filled with mementos from his career and travels, symbolizes his independent life. While he hires help for tasks like cleaning and snow removal, Ross remains the sole decision-maker in his life.

"I want to do what I want, when I want, and how I want. It's all about independence."

Although his physical activity has slowed with age, Ross stays mentally engaged. "What's on the agenda today? What am I going to do tomorrow?" he often asks himself. His focus on the present helps him maintain a sense of purpose.



## Connection and Community

An essential aspect of Ross's independence is his connection to the community. Living across from Grandview School, he's a familiar face to local children, who often wave hello as they pass by. "The kids come by, wave, and say 'Hi Mr. Brown!'" he says with a smile. These interactions reinforce that independence doesn't mean isolation.

Ross's freedom is also reflected in his ability to drive. "It's not about how often I drive. It's about knowing that I can," he explains. The freedom to move through the world on his own terms is vital to his happiness and sense of control.

## Embracing Mortality with Grace

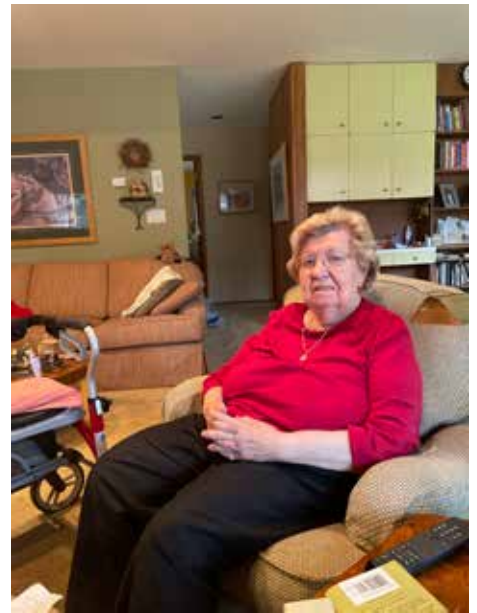
Ross has faced significant loss—outliving his wife, Gerry, whom he was married to for 67 years, and his daughter Wendy. Despite these hardships, Ross maintains a positive outlook on life. "I try to focus on the wonderful things, not the negatives," he says. Instead of dwelling on the past or fearing the future, Ross embraces the present and values each day.

"I don't know how long I have," he reflects. "So, why be afraid of it? Just keep moving forward." His ability to accept the inevitability of aging without fear or bitterness is key to his resilience. By focusing on the good memories he holds dear, Ross moves forward with peace and purpose.

## Elizabeth's Perspective on Independence

Ross's approach to aging is not unique. Elizabeth, 88, a retired architect, shares a similar commitment to independence. When she built her home in Belgravia, she designed it with aging in mind, ensuring it was accessible and barrier-free, with no stairs. "I built this house with the future in mind," she explains. "I wanted to make sure it was designed to support me as I age."

Like Ross, Elizabeth embraces help from a small team of caregivers for tasks like cleaning and personal care. "It takes a village," she says, smiling. "It's important to keep doing what you can, for as long as you can," Elizabeth adds, echoing Ross's sentiments.



## A Life Well-Lived

Ross's life is a reminder that independence is key to aging well. At 94, he lives with purpose, engaging with the world around him while maintaining his autonomy. "You can't stop time," he says, "but you can keep making the most of it."

For Ross, independence isn't just about living alone—it's about making choices, staying active, and enjoying the freedom to shape each day. As he puts it, "It's all about independence—having control over your choices, your life." This mindset, along with his positive attitude, reflects the spirit of the song playing on his radio, *Turn! Turn! Turn!* by The Byrds: "To everything, there is a season." In every phase of life, Ross embraces purpose, resilience, and freedom, showing that each season can be lived meaningfully.