

WBTV Weekend Weather

FRI	SAT	SUN
Warm & windy High 83 Low 61	Partly sunny High 80 Low 55	Scattered storms High 78 Low 60

Charlotte WEEKLY

'Speed Racer' revs into theaters and IMAX. Should you go, go, go?



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Zone A

Aging loved ones have Home Instead

Charlotte couple turns to family business for help

by Lynn Grayson
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Like the rambunctious boy at the center of Robert Munsch's children's book, "Love You Forever," Les Farnum grew up with the love and affection of a doting mother.

But just like in the book, life has come full circle. The roles have been reversed, and Farnum is now caring for his mother, former actress Eleanor Farnum Cook, who celebrates her 90th birthday this year.

Farnum Cook is fortunate to have an experienced caregiver: Her son and his wife, Roberta, own Home Instead Senior Care of Mecklenburg County, which offers nonmedical assistance and companionship to families who need help caring for aging loved ones.

Every day is Mother's Day

The Farnums sold their dream home in south Charlotte's Carson's Pond subdivision and renovated a house in Dilworth to accommodate his mother, who moved here from California last March.

Farnum said his mother helped pay for renovations and contributes to the household's monthly expenses. The couple live upstairs, sharing three bedrooms and an office, and Farnum Cook has a master suite and private living area on the main floor. They share the kitchen.

"This was a life-changing decision," he said. "My mother had lived in California nearly all of her life. She took care of her own mother until she died at age 100. She had friends there, memories and a lifetime of belongings."

But over the last five years, it became clear to Farnum that he needed to make other arrangements. Once very independent and self-sufficient,



Former actress Eleanor Farnum Cook will celebrate her 90th birthday this year. A glamorous young woman who studied with the likes of Lucille Ball, Farnum Cook and her family have had to reverse roles. Farnum Cook moved to Charlotte from California last year to live with her son and daughter-in-law, who operate Home Instead Senior Care of Mecklenburg County with locations in Charlotte and Huntersville. *Photo courtesy of Les Farnum*

Farnum Cook could no longer manage daily tasks.

This Mother's Day, millions of Americans are facing the same situation.

Millions care for parents

According to the 2003 National Alliance for Caregiving/AARP National Caregiver Survey, at least 44.4 million adults provide critical care to friends and loved ones in home and community settings. It is estimated that 80 percent of all care received by elderly Americans is provided by family members. And due to medical advances, seniors are living longer. The

2000 Census reported 35 million Americans age 65 or older. By 2040, the population of adults over the age of 65 in the United States is expected to exceed 70 million.

The act of caregiving isn't without emotional or financial strain, either. According to a 2007 survey by the National Alliance for Caregiving and the MetLife Foundation, workers who care for elderly relatives cost U.S. businesses about \$34 billion annually in absenteeism, replacement costs and lost productivity. According to the North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services, while more men are assuming caregiving responsibilities, three-quarters of family caregivers are women, most often the daughter of the person for whom

she cares. It is estimated that 31 percent of women over 18 will care for both children and parents over their lifetime.

The Farnums opened Home Instead Senior Care to help these people. "Roberta and I decided to begin this company after our own experience as long-distance caregivers," he explained.

"In 1996, my mother was caring for my 100-year-old grandmother 3,000 miles away in California. We began a desperate search for respite care for my mom and came up short, feeling helpless and resource-limited."

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With some coaxing, his grandmother moved in with her son in northern California. But within 60 days, she landed in a skilled-nursing facility and died shortly thereafter.

Following his grandmother's death, Farnum and his wife learned about Home Instead Senior Care, a network of locally owned franchises, and realized they could help caregivers and elderly people who want to stay in their homes.

"Roberta and I believe that our elderly deserve not only respect, but time to share their wisdom and experiences," he said. "We believe that all of life is experienced through relationships. It is through each other that we learn about ourselves. It's this philosophy that we teach our staff. We send them out into the homes of our clients knowing the client will be loved."

Easing the transition

The Farnums consider themselves fortunate to have additional help. A caregiver from Home Instead visits two to three times a week to prepare meals, run errands or just play Scrabble.

"The socialization of having one of our caregivers come in for a few hours a day is really good for her and for us," Farnum said.

But some aren't so lucky when it comes to arranging care for Mom or Dad.

"You have two kinds of parents: realists, who know that things are changing and are open to listening to your suggestions, and resisters, who are so independent that they are never going to allow any help," Farnum said. "If a parent can let go of the parental role, they are more likely to have an easier time adjusting to these changes."

To make the transition as smooth as possible, Farnum said it's important to start the dialogue early, discussing tough issues, including driving, money and advanced directives, such as living wills. Adult children should initiate a series of conversations with their loved one and a family physician. Don't wait for a crisis, because the family may be forced into choosing options that aren't best for anyone, Farnum said.

And no matter where a senior lives – in his or her home, an assisted-living facility or even a nursing home, companies like Home Instead Senior Care can help. The professional staff helps with everything from opening the mail and folding laundry to reading a book aloud or scrapbooking family memories. Services also may include driving to doctor appointments, medica-



Photos courtesy of Les Farnum

Left: Les Farnum, center, celebrates his bar mitzvah with his grandmother, left, and mother, right. Right: Today Les and his wife share their Dilworth home with his mother, center, who will turn 90 this year.

tion reminders and housekeeping, and respite for caregivers of those with dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The result is companionship that allows seniors to feel safe and independent, Farnum said.

Adjusting to a new life

Following her cross-country move, Farnum Cook has adjusted well to her new surroundings.

A former Las Vegas showgirl and Hollywood actress – she studied with Lucille Ball – she enjoys watching and critiquing movies with her son and daughter-in-law, as well as reading and discussing theater. She enjoyed long friendships with Hollywood legends like Ray Milland, Nick Adams (famous

for his role as "The Rebel") and actress Jane Wyman, once married to then-actor Ronald Reagan.

And while her son is still her pride and joy, it's his turn to nurture and protect her.

"This has to be a conscious decision between both parties," Farnum said. "Family and friends all sacrificed to have Mom move in with us, but we felt like it was the best thing for her and it would allow her the most comfortable and safe environment we could provide." □

Home Instead Senior Care's rates vary depending on type of service and number of hours requested. For more information, visit www.homeinsteadcharlotte.com.

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