

# Virtual visit

## Local doctor does teleconference with patient

By **PHIL ATTINGER**  
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — Chester Barber, 97, has seen a lot of changes in his lifetime, including going from being a “country kid” to a DC-3 pilot in World War II.

However, he figures his recent doctor visit ranks among the top of those: A Facetime conference to protect him from having to drive up from Lake Placid, and possibly catch a virus in Sebring.

Dr. Cheri McCue, his general practitioner, asked and Barber agreed to have his regular checkup on Thursday done over the phone, via video, as a precaution against novel coronavirus.

“When you get to be this old, you have seen many, many, many changes,” Barber said. “I expect this is about as drastic a change as any in my life.”

It’s impressive, given that he had a two-year tour in Europe transporting troops from the 82nd Airborne and 102nd Airborne to such hot spots as Sicily, Normandy and the Rhine River Valley.

A lot of things have changed since then, and since his childhood, when driving seven or eight miles into town for supplies and errands was done once a week — usually on Saturday — and doctors stayed open on Saturdays for that reason.

Under the recommendations for people to isolate, practice social distancing and wash their hands frequently to prevent catching

COVID-19, weekly trips into town seem to be one practice that’s returning.

Add to that the fact that Barber and others from ages 80 to 100 often have health problems related changes in water and fat composition, and “failing parts,” McCue said, it’s a good idea to mitigate any possible problems and infection risks by having those patients call in.

Barber said he enjoys visiting the doctor, driven there by a live-in caretaker. The only real problem is getting in and out of his car, using a walker, he said. That’s what takes the time for anyone who has trouble moving about.

Did he find an online visit to be just as good as going face-to-face?

“Yes. As a matter of fact, I did,” Barber said.

How did it work for the doctor?

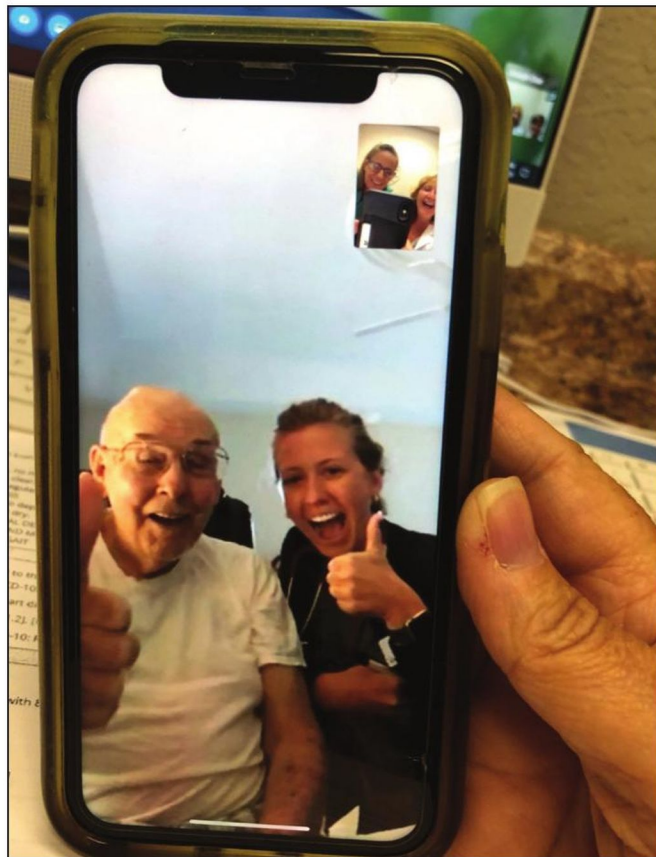
“The visit went hysterically well,” McCue said. “The hardest part was hearing.”

Barber said he had trouble hearing, too, but he added with a chuckle that he usually does have trouble with that.

McCue was impressed with how excited Barber was, and how well he took to talking via Facetime.

“I know 60-year-olds who don’t know how to use Facetime [on a phone],” McCue said.

There’s a lot of anxiety out there right now, McCue said, especially for those over age 65. Many, especially the older they get, need caregivers, because family may not live nearby.



COURTESY PHOTO/CHERI MCCUE M.D.

**Chester Barber, 97, and his nurse, Lindsey Hoffner, with Avidity Home Health, give a ‘thumbs up’ via Facetime live chat to Dr. Cheri McCue, who is holding the phone and conducting a live remote doctor’s visit with Barber. It saved him a trip from Lake Placid as well as any risk of contracting novel coronavirus while in Sebring.**

McCue said she used to make home visits for some of her elderly patients, but that meant time on the road and seeing fewer people.

With videoconferencing over a phone, she can sit at one workstation, see several patients, and make more time for each one, she said.

“We’re surprised at what some of these products can do,” McCue said. “We’re excited.”

As for Barber, he recommends doing an online video doctor’s visit, especially for anyone who had difficulty moving about.

The pandemic, he said, makes it even more compelling.



COURTESY PHOTO/CHERI MCCUE M.D.

**Dr. Cheri McCue conducts a Facetime live conference call with 97-year-old patient Chester Barber of Lake Placid, currently on her screen. The call saved them both time and trouble, and saved him the risk of contracting novel coronavirus on a trip from his home in Lake Placid to her practice in Sebring.**