PARIS. Dec. 28 (AP) – André-François Raffray thought he had a great deal 30 years ago: He would pay a 90-year-old woman 2,500 francs (about $500) a month until she died, then move into her grand apartment in a town Vincent van Gogh once roamed.

But this Christmas, Mr. Raffray died at age 77, having laid out the equivalent of more than $184,000 for an apartment he never got to live in.

On the same day, Jeanne Calment, now listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the world’s oldest person at 120, dined on foie gras, duck thighs, cheese and chocolate cake at her nursing home near the sought-after apartment in Arles, northwest of Marseilles in the south of France.

She need not worry about losing income. Although the amount Mr. Raffray already paid is more than twice the apartments current market value, his widow is obligated to keep sending the monthly check. If Mrs. Calment outlives her, too, then the Raffray children and grandchildren will have to pay.

“In life, one sometimes makes bad deals”, Mrs. Calment said on her birthday last Feb. 21.

The apartment is currently unoccupied, according to local media.

Buying apartments “en viager” or “for life” is common in France. The elderly owner gets to enjoy a monthly income from the buyer, who gambles on getting a real estate bargain – provided the owner dies in due time.

Upon the owner’s death, the buyer inherits the apartment, regardless of how much was paid.

Mrs. Calment, who has lived through the administrations of 17 French presidents, has proven the nightmare of all those who buy real estate “en viager”.

Mrs. Calment physically active all her life, rode a bicycle until she was 100, and until 1985 occupied the several large rooms of her apartment on the second floor of a classic old Provençal building in the center of Arles, where Mr. Raffray was her notary public. She moved that year into a nursing home, which is now named after her.

She has outlived her husband, her daughter and her grandson, who died in a car crash, and has no direct descendants.

Mrs. Calment seemed to offer some consolation to the Raffrays when asked on her last birthday for her vision of the future, she replied: “Very brief”.

Born in Arles 1875, Mrs. Calment recalls working in her father’s shop at age 14 and selling colored pencils and canvases to Van Gogh, the Dutch impressionist who depicted Arles in several of his vibrant paintings.

On Oct. 18, the Guinness Book of Record listed her as the world’s oldest person able to authenticate her age with official records, mostly civil and religious documents.