

The Magazine

# AARP



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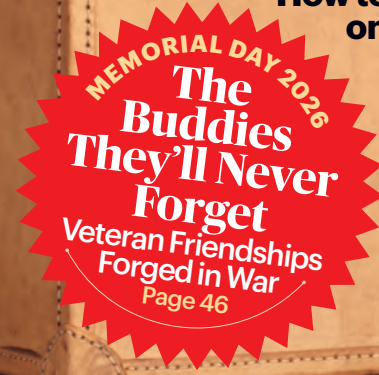
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## *Seven* CRUISE MYTHS, *One* LUXURIOUS REALITY

For many travelers, the word “cruise” still comes with baggage. Images of crowded mega ships come to mind, as does awkward shared tables and a final bill full of surprises. But that is far from the ultra-luxury experience aboard Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

Read on to learn the realities of cruising in all-inclusive comfort aboard the all-suite ships of The World’s Most Luxurious Fleet®.



*Myth*

1

*There'll be crowds and lines for dining or activities*

Not here. Regent designs its ships with space in mind. Fewer guests, generous public areas and a thoughtful balance of venues mean there's no need to queue for dinner or arrive early to claim a seat. Whether it's a show, a lecture or a quiet corner on deck, everything feels unhurried.



*Myth*

2

*I'll be bored*

The bigger challenge is deciding what *not* to do. Days can begin with sunrise yoga overlooking the sea or a slow breakfast on your private balcony. Later, you might join a hands-on cooking class, test your knowledge at trivia or listen to an expert guest speaker. Prefer to do nothing at all? That's just as encouraged. Regent's approach is simple: choice without pressure.



Myth  
3

*I'll have dinner with people I don't know*



Only if you want to. Dining is entirely on your terms. Solo tables, intimate two-tops, group settings, or in-suite dining are all available and included. There are no assigned seating times and no mandatory social rituals. Eat early, eat late, dress up a little or keep it relaxed. It's your vacation, not a seating chart.

Myth  
4

*There will be constant surcharges*



This is where Regent truly redefines the experience. Shore excursions, specialty dining, fine wines and cocktails, gratuities, Wifi, fitness classes, and even access to the spa are included in your voyage fare. That transparency creates a noticeable shift on board.

Myth  
5

*It's all formal dress and a stuffy ambiance*



Regent's dress code is best described as elegant casual. Think skirts, slacks, polished denim, and comfortable sophistication. You won't find tuxedo requirements or enforced formality. The atmosphere is refined but warm, social without being showy.

Myth  
6

*I won't visit adventurous destinations*



In reality, Regent sails to all seven continents. From the icy stillness of Antarctica to Alaska's rugged coastline and the remote Arctic, these are journeys designed for travelers who want to see the world without sacrificing comfort. Expedition-style destinations are paired with spacious suites, attentive service and thoughtful enrichment that deepens the experience.

Myth  
7

*I have to be a certain age*



While many guests are seasoned travelers, the onboard community is more diverse than stereotypes suggest. Younger couples, solo professionals and culturally curious travelers are increasingly drawn to Regent for its value, depth and lack of pretense. The common thread isn't age. It's a preference for quality over flash and substance over spectacle.

*With Regent Seven Seas Cruises you will discover a holistic travel experience that is elegant, effortless and without compromise. With all-suite accommodations, gourmet dining experiences and an impeccable crew-to-guest ratio, enjoy cruising the way it was meant to be with **EVERY DETAIL INCLUDED and EVERY EXPERIENCE UNRIVALED.***

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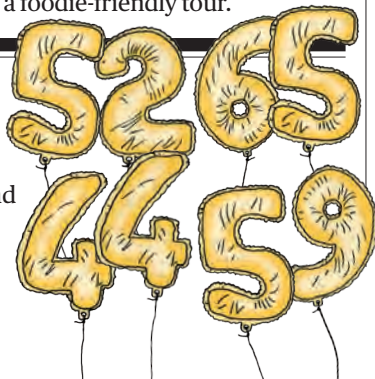
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**ON THE COVER:** Eva Longoria photographed by Brian Bowen Smith in Los Angeles on January 19. Producer: Kathy Nenneker; wardrobe stylist: Maeve Reilly for the Only Agency; prop stylist: Rachel Rockstroh for Wanted PD; hairstylist: Ken Paves for Rouge Artists; makeup artist: Eian Bongiorno for Rouge Artists. Inset: Courtesy Red Rooster

Clockwise from top: PhotoFest; Arturo Olmos; Sean McCall; Peter Attler; Kathleen Fu; Victor Prosser; Jeff Lipsky; Center: Courtesy; Vernice Armour



# Did You Know?

Anyone can learn something new—and earn rewards—just for participating with AARP. Everyday activities on [aarp.org](http://aarp.org) and in the AARP Now app earn **AARP Rewards** points anyone can redeem for gift cards, local deals and great prizes. It's an easy way to turn learning into real savings.

## EARN POINTS WHEN YOU:

- ▶ Learn about health, money and fraud protection
- ▶ Join AARP or renew your membership
- ▶ Stay active and fit
- ▶ Play brain-boosting games

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# These are some of the reasons why your AARP membership is so valuable.



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# Night of a Thousand Stars

*This year's Movies for Grownups Awards event shined a light on art—and wisdom*

**I** WAS PRESENT AT the creation of AARP's Movies for Grownups Awards more than 20 years ago, but this was the first year I attended the awards ceremony, and I wasn't quite prepared for the intensity of the star power. They may be just like us, but when you get a bunch of celebrities together in a Beverly Hills hotel ballroom, that's a head-spinning amount of charisma—especially once George Clooney shows up.

But these awards aren't really about star power. They were created to challenge film industry ageism by honoring the contributions of people over 50, both in front of and behind the camera; to help our members find films that appeal to a mature audience; and to encourage Hollywood to produce more work for this important demographic. As Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan, CEO of AARP, said of the awards, "Powerful storytelling has no age limit.... These honorees are challenging the narrative around aging in Hollywood, pushing back against ageism and setting a new standard for what storytelling can, and should, look like."

I was honored to share a table with the venerable Edward James Olmos, 79, who welcomed a steady stream of younger

stars paying their respects. Olmos wasn't up for an award this year, but he still got a shout-out from the stage during Noah Wyle's acceptance speech for best actor in a TV series for *The Pitt*. "Edward James Olmos, I've never even met you," Wyle, 54, began, "yet you once told an actor that, before Michelangelo began a work of art, he would look to the heavens and say, 'Lord, rid me of myself so that I may please Thee.'" That actor told Wyle about Michelangelo's prayer, and Wyle says it before every take he does. Wyle has also shared the prayer with "a million other people," he told Olmos from the stage. "So thank you for passing that forward." It was touching testimony to the ripple effects of an elder's shared wisdom.

If you'd like to watch the two-hour ceremony, you can stream it for free through April 30 at [aarp.org/MFGAwards](http://aarp.org/MFGAwards) and on [pbs.org/moviesforgrownups](http://pbs.org/moviesforgrownups) and the PBS app. (The show will be available to PBS subscribers on the network's platforms through the end of the year.)

## AARP VS. AGEISM

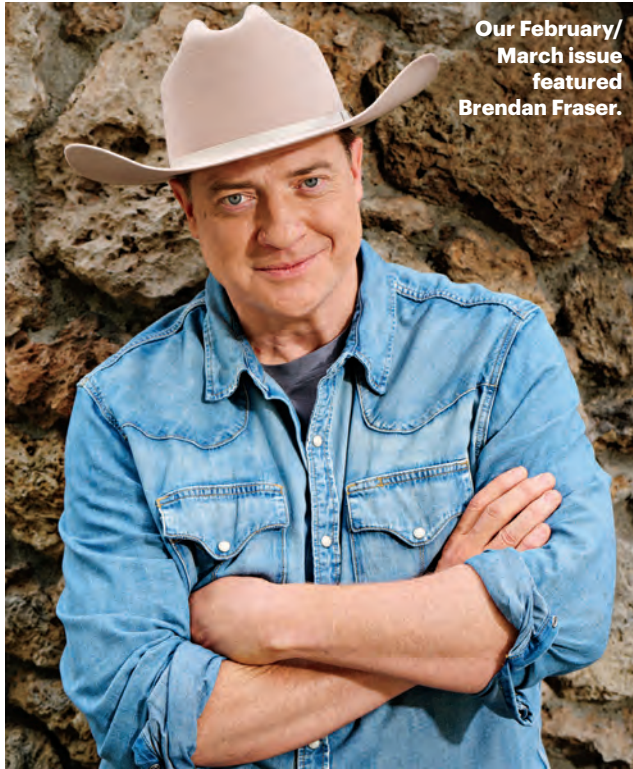
AARP Foundation attorneys fight against workplace age discrimination across the nation.

In Washington, D.C., AARP's Legal Counsel for the Elderly takes on local cases. Go to [aarp.org/agediscrimination](http://aarp.org/agediscrimination) to learn more.

*Meg*

Photo credits on page 79





Our February/  
March issue  
featured  
Brendan Fraser.



I'm not wearing my glasses, so I'm assuming this is *Tiger Beat*.  
@yupjusta  
randomranger  
Reddit

Cool beans. Didn't even realize I had a *Teen Beat*-size hole in my heart.  
@Efficient  
Career-829  
Reddit

He could do commercials for the used-car lot up the road, and I would support it.  
@glennwards  
Instagram



## FLOWER POWER

Please include Essex County's Branch Brook Park in your

list of cherry tree collections ["The Cherry Blossoms Are Out!"]. This jewel of a city park in Newark, New Jersey, has the largest and most varied collection of Japanese flowering cherry blossom trees in the United States: 5,300 trees in 18 varieties.

MELISSA ROGERS, *Westfield, New Jersey*

## NOT TYING THE KNOT

"I Love You—Let's Not Get Married" does not, fortunately, apply to me—I've been married 42 years. But there is a real downside of non-marriage for one important group of older folks: military retirees. If you're not married to your partner, they will not qualify as a "military dependent," and therefore cannot qualify for Tricare, a military health care program, or free prescription drugs. And they also can't shop at the discount supermarkets, known as commissaries, or easily visit a military facility.

COL. JAMES T. CURRIE, U.S. ARMY (RETIRED)  
*Alexandria, Virginia*

## FRASER REFRESHED

I enjoyed "The Return of Brendan Fraser" and was glad it mentioned his solid performance in *Crash*, a movie I think is even more relevant today than it was when it premiered. It is filled with complicated characters—including a police officer (Matt Dillon) and a politician's wife (Sandra Bullock). The movie is brilliant, sad and uplifting (just like real life). *Crash* should be required viewing for all our leaders, especially considering our current climate.

G.H. ALLEN, *Gilroy, California*

With age comes wisdom. We learn to stop being so hard on ourselves, to give ourselves grace and room to breathe. We learn to forgive ourselves for not being perfect and for making mistakes. There is something very vulnerable and endearing about Brendan Fraser. I'm so glad he's finding his happy place now.

PEGGY HAYES, *Facebook*

It's nice to know we always have the chance to start again no matter the age.

MEGAN ELLEN AJMAL, *Facebook*

I absolutely love this man. He has so much more to accomplish, and now he has everything it takes to get there. Go Brendan!

CHRISTINE EVANS, *Facebook*



## FREEZE 'N' SQUEEZE

In "Heart-Healthy Food Swaps," the pro tip for making "nice cream" using bananas is to remove the banana peels before freezing. Actually, I find freezing the bananas in the peels preserves them even better and, when I'm ready to use them, I just pop them into the microwave for 30 seconds on each side and squeeze the banana out like toothpaste out of a tube!

JIM GRANTHAM, *Gainesville, Florida*

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# Warm Greek Salad with Turkey Meatballs

## INGREDIENTS:

### MEATBALLS

- 2 lb. ground turkey
- 3 Tbsp. DASH™ Original Seasoning
- ¼ C. minced yellow onion
- ¼ C. plain nonfat Greek yogurt
- 1 large egg
- ½ C. plain panko breadcrumbs
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil

### GREEK SALAD

- 3 C. cooked brown rice or quinoa
- 2 C. diced cucumber
- 1 C. baby tomatoes, halved
- ½ C. thinly sliced red onion
- ¼ C. crumbled feta cheese
- ¼ C. sliced Kalamata olives, rinsed and patted dry

### LEMON DILL DRESSING

- 4 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp. fresh dill, finely chopped
- 1 tsp. DASH™ Original Seasoning

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. In a large bowl, gently mix all meatball ingredients until just combined.
3. Portion into 16 equal 2-oz meatballs.
4. Bake meatballs for 16–18 minutes until internal temperature reaches 165°F, or pan-sear until cooked through.
5. While meatballs cook, whisk all the dressing ingredients together until well combined. Let stand 5 minutes before using.
6. Serve in a bowl with 4 meatballs, brown rice or quinoa, and top with cucumbers, red onion, cherry tomatoes, kalamata olives and crumbled feta cheese. Drizzle with lemon dill dressing.

Visit [mrsdash.com](http://mrsdash.com) for more recipes

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# Upfront The **A**List

## 7 Surprising Things About Arsenio Hall

### 1 His family moved all over Cleveland

The upside is I became a real social animal, learning to make friends. The downside is I don't have a lot of friends from childhood because we always moved away from them. Sometimes I wish I knew where Vivica, my first girlfriend, was. Or Marcy Smith, who used to braid my hair while we watched *Good Times*.

### 2 Carson was his idol

I'd love to say I vibed with the wonderful writing of *The Tonight Show* or his interviewing skills, but I think the thing that resonated most about Johnny was how he looked. He was so sharp.

### 3 He worked as a child magician

I watched my dad, a preacher, move people with his voice, so I knew I had that quality. And when I went to conventions as

a magician, I got comments from adults—"You're funny, kid." I didn't realize it, but it was all coming together.

### 4 Hollywood was hand-to-mouth, at first

I remember going to a Ralphs supermarket and you could sample a piece of sausage. I became a pro at eating sausage samples and getting full.

### 5 *Coming to America* led to his talk show

It was an idea of Eddie Murphy's. One day he said, "You know, I think it would be cool if I could meet girls and them not know who I am, because you never know who you can trust." That was the idea behind *Coming to America*. We took it to Paramount, and Paramount said, "How about if a lot of people that you meet are played by you?" We took that idea to the moon. As soon as that was finished, Paramount said, "Come back and do a talk show."

### 6 Being the first Black late-night host was a real balancing act

I exposed America to Black culture, but I knew I had to balance Q-Tip with Dolly Parton to make sure I got a large enough share of the viewing pie to stay on the air. There were days when I felt like I was doing it for myself and my mom, because no one else was happy with it. But I kept fighting, and I got six good years in.

### 7 He and Jay Leno have long been close friends

We're on the road now doing a show called *Kings of Late Night*. We still argue constantly about a joke and how to do it, whether it works. But he's like a big brother to me to this day.

—As told to Lisa Rosen

Comedian Arsenio Hall, 70, hosted the groundbreaking syndicated late-night program *The Arsenio Hall Show* from 1989 to 1994, starred opposite Eddie Murphy in the hit film *Coming to America* and appeared in the cult favorite *Harlem Nights*. His memoir, *Arsenio*, written with Alan Eisenstock, will be published March 31.



or scan this code to watch our exclusive video interview.

**"It's never too late to dream. Tell your kid to keep dreaming—and you keep dreaming yourself."**

—Arsenio Hall, 70

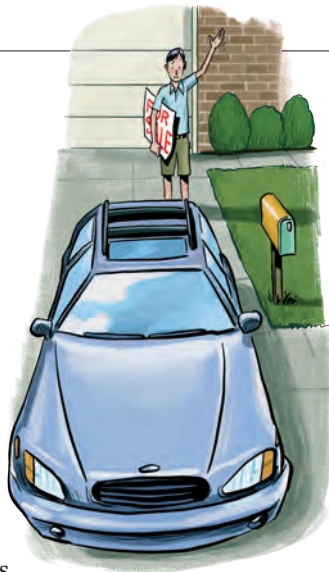
# Selling a Car Could Cost You

*In some cases, your insurance bill increases*

**W**HEN you're looking to trim expenses, selling a spare car might make sense. But you also might get an unwanted surprise: Your auto insurance bill could go up.

The dynamic at work here is statistical probability. The car you sell is likely of lower value than the one you keep. So to the insurance company, a higher-value vehicle is being driven more and has a greater chance of getting into an accident, says Kaz Weida, who writes about insurance for NerdWallet. Some savings tips:

- > **Call before selling.** Rather than simply expecting rate relief, contact your insurer and do the math.
- > **Shop around.** More than 60 percent of customers who switched carriers last year were able to cut their annual bill by at least \$100, a LendingTree survey found.
- > **Get discounts.** Many insurers offer multipolicy discounts for home and auto coverage. You may also be eligible for a senior discount, or you could get a rate cut for taking a defensive driving class, such as the AARP Smart Driver course ([aarpdriversafety.org](http://aarpdriversafety.org)).
- > **Boost your deductible.** Increasing your comprehensive deductible from \$100 to \$500 could lower your annual premium by an average of nearly \$500, per a Bankrate analysis.
- > **Consider keeping the car.** If you own it outright and carry liability-only insurance on it, it could make sense not to sell. Run the numbers. —Beth Braverman



## 100 Years of Route 66

Hit these six stops for an epic road trip

America's original highway to the West celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. Some notable sites:



### CHICAGO

Begin your adventure at the new

starting point for Route 66: Chicago's Navy Pier.

### SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

In 1926, state highway officials met here and proposed the name "U.S. Route 66." Stroll historic Commercial Street for boutique shopping.



### OKLAHOMA CITY

This stop is in the middle section of the route. Walk the Myriad Botanical Gardens, with 15 acres of grounds and the stunning Crystal Bridge

### ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

This city boasts the longest urban stretch of the original Route 66 still in existence: 18 miles of glowing neon signs, vintage artifacts, retro motels and honky-tonk dives.



### FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA

Known as the Gateway City for road-trippers heading west, this town is 7,000 feet above sea level. Explore Arizona's majestic canyons and pristine pine forests.

### SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA

Visit the Santa Monica Pier and take a selfie by the historic End of the Trail sign. —Deborah Gaines

A version of this story originally appeared in The Girlfriend From AARP, a newsletter and website for Gen X women. Visit [thegirlfriend.com](http://thegirlfriend.com) to learn more.



## TAKE ME OUT TO THE MUSEUM

*As a new baseball season gets underway, celebrate the diamond by visiting one of these gems*



### National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum

(Cooperstown, New York) See a selection of the museum's more than 40,000 historic items. [baseballhall.org](http://baseballhall.org)



### Negro Leagues Baseball Museum

(Kansas City, Missouri) Interactive exhibits, videos and artifacts show the 40-year Negro Leagues history. [nlbm.com](http://nlbm.com)



### Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory

(Louisville, Kentucky) Tour the factory, where 1.8 million bats are made every year. [sluggermuseum.com](http://sluggermuseum.com)



### Babe Ruth Birthplace and Museum

(Baltimore) A former red-brick row house is now a museum that traces Ruth's story. [baberruthmuseum.org](http://baberruthmuseum.org)



### National Ballpark Museum

(Denver) Fans come here to see relics such as seats from historic stadiums. [ballparkmuseum.com](http://ballparkmuseum.com) —Gina DeCaprio Vercesi

Illustration by Zahar Lazar; Route 66, from top; Alamy; Getty Images; Shutterstock; Collage: AARP; Getty Images; 2; Alamy; 3; Shutterstock; 2) Museums: From left: Getty Images; Houston Astrodome; Getty Images; Aaron M. Sprecher/Getty Images; Thomas Kelley/Getty Images; 3) Young Chang/Getty Images; The Denver Post via Getty Images

# Here Comes the Bill

Your kid's wedding is expensive. Experts share what you can do to keep costs under control



**T**HE AVERAGE cost of a wedding and reception today rivals that of a new car, at a record-high \$36,000, according to Zola, a wedding planning platform.

And much of the price tag is being driven by social media imagery of happy couples showing off their dream nuptials. It's "the rise of inspiration," says Sammi Kobrin, director of brand at Zola.

If you have a recently engaged child, here are some ways to manage the money.

- **Need to have or nice to have?** Make time for an early and frank conversation with the soon-to-be-weds over what they can live without, says Esther Lee, editorial director for the Knot, an online wedding marketplace. Have them choose priorities. Book the core vendors first: venue, catering, entertainment and photographer. Then add in extras if the budget allows.

- **Consult a professional.** "A wedding planner definitely can save you money," says Melisa Imberman of the Event of a Lifetime, an event planning company in the New York City area. The average fee is around \$3,600, says the Knot—but a planner can secure vendor discounts.
- **Turn up the music.** Instead of a band for the reception, hire a DJ. It's only one person to pay. But you can still offer guests a live music experience with a solo pianist or guitarist at the ceremony or cocktail hour.
- **E-invite.** Digital invitations, RSVP cards and thank-you notes are getting more popular. Search for online providers that will let you share details faster—and cheaper!
- **Timing is everything.** Weddings in November to April can cost less, as demand is lower. If you're stuck on in-season, look to save by booking on off-days and times, such as Sunday afternoon. —*Claire Leibowitz*



## Is Your Shower Bad for Your Skin?

You might need to get a water filter

**MARTINA STIEFEL**, 65, has dry-skin conditions that are made worse by her shower. The culprit: the chlorine in her Indiana tap water. So Stiefel attached a water filter to her showerhead. "I've noticed a huge change in my skin," she says, "and my hair is coming in thicker."

This type of filter, often used to condition hard water, typically costs under \$100 and fits behind or replaces the showerhead. Experts say it can be especially beneficial to older people. "As we age, our

skin naturally produces less oil and becomes thinner and more prone to dryness," says Dr. Geeta Yadav, founder of Facet Dermatology in Toronto.

When shopping for a shower filter, look for one that uses activated carbon. Kathy Park of Weddell Water, a shower filter manufacturer, says activated carbon can pull out many kinds of contaminants from water, including chlorine and PFAS (human-made substances commonly referred to as "forever chemicals"). —*Michelle Mastro*



## Dog Food for Thought

Should you feed your pooch kibble, fresh meals or something else entirely?



### Dry/Kibble

This is typically the least costly, with a long shelf life. But it may be slightly less digestible, says Joseph Wakshlag, a professor at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.



### Wet/Canned

It's a bit more expensive than kibble and has a long shelf life. But canned food may cause more plaque buildup than dry food, which can lead to dental problems.



### Fresh

Michael Q. Bailey, president of the American Veterinary Medical Association, says this is similar to human food. But it's more expensive than even high-end kibble.



### Freeze-dried

This growing category comes in gently cooked or raw varieties. Vets say the cooked kind will ensure elimination of harmful bacteria and organisms.



### Raw

This food is palatable and digestible. But it's often expensive, and vets typically don't recommend it because of risk of disease. —*Julie Halpert*

Clockwise from top left: Illustration by Patrick Leger; Getty Images; Illustrations by Lucy Engelman (5); Getty Images

# Easy Peas-y

*Chef and cookbook author Jessica Formicola shares elegant dishes perfect for entertaining and every day*

By LESLIE QUANDER WOOLDRIDGE

## ↓ Lemon Pea Mash Crostini

"Served cold, it is the perfect appetizer. Lemon zest and spicy crushed chile flakes accent the fresh, vibrant green."

## ↑ Multicooker Chicken Sausage Paella

"This creates an authentic flavor without the time and energy of a traditional paella. Instead of making the sofrito from scratch, salsa re-creates that texture and flavor."

## ➤ Oyster Chowder

"This chowder is rich and silky: tender oysters in a creamy broth with Yukon Gold potatoes, sweet corn and a whisper of sherry. Using jarred oysters, it comes together fast for an elegant week-night bowl or holiday starter."

## ➤ Smoked Salmon Pasta

"Pea sweetness really emphasizes the salmon's smokiness and texture. Rigatoni pasta, mushrooms, cheese and garlic round out this amazingly easy pasta recipe."

## ↓ Seasoned Peas and Onions

"Peas and onions can be paired with nearly any dish. What really makes this great is the ease of preparation."



**MEMBERS ONLY**  
For full recipes go to [aarp.org/peas](http://aarp.org/peas) or scan this code.

## Great New Fries to Try

Nothing's better than a tater—until you've tasted yuca or carrot fries!



**SURE, WE LOVE** potatoes, but other vegetables make great fries too. Two essential tips to ensure crispiness: Opt for sturdy, firm produce, and thoroughly dry it after cutting and before cooking to remove excess moisture, advises José Luis Chávez, chef at Mission Ceviche in New York City. Each recipe yields six servings.

### CARROTS

**Prep:** Cut 2 lbs. (12 large carrots) into thin, 3½-inch strips or sticks

**Season:** Toss with olive oil and balsamic vinegar

**Cook:** Roast at 400°F for 20 to 25 minutes

**Serve:** With honey mustard dipping sauce and turkey burgers



### PARSNIPS

**Prep:** Cut 2 lbs. (10 to 12 medium parsnips) into thin strips or wedges, soak in cold water for 30 minutes and dry

**Season:** Toss with olive oil, chili powder and cayenne

**Cook:** Roast at 425°F for 25 to 30 minutes

**Serve:** With garlic aioli

### ZUCCHINI

**Prep:** Cut 2 lbs. (6 medium zucchini) into thin, 3½-inch strips or sticks

**Season:** Toss with corn oil and coat lightly with flour or cornstarch

**Cook:** Pan-fry over medium-high heat for 2 to 3 minutes per side

**Serve:** As a side with Philly cheesesteaks

### BUTTERNUT SQUASH

**Prep:** Peel 3 lbs. (1 medium squash) and cut into thin, 3½-inch strips or cubes

**Season:** With maple syrup, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt

**Cook:** Bake at 375°F for 30 to 35 minutes

**Serve:** As a side with roast chicken

### YUCA (cassava)

**Prep:** Peel 2 lbs. (8 to 10 yuca roots) and cut into thick fries

**Season:** With olive oil, fresh minced garlic and rosemary

**Cook:** Boil in salted water for 10 to 15 minutes, then dry and bake at 450°F for 15 to 20 minutes, flipping halfway through

**Serve:** With chipotle mayo  
—Kelsey Ogletree



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# Music Formats Over Time

How we listen just keeps changing



**R**ECENTLY, A NEW kind of vinyl record was introduced. Tiny Vinyls are 4-inch records that hold one song, up to four minutes long, per side. They play at 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  rpm on most standard record players.



For older Americans, yet another music format probably doesn't hold much appeal—we've invested in so many others already. Let's take a walk down memory lane.

## VINYL RECORDS

Records—at 78 rpm, then later at 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  and 45 rpm—have been popular since the early 20th century. **CURRENT STATE:** Still popular. The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) calculated that 44 million vinyl albums were sold in 2024.



## REEL-TO-REEL TAPES

Developed in the 1940s, this delicate format—played on bulky machines—later became available for home use. (Columbia House subscribers may recall that only select releases were on reel-to-reel.) **CURRENT STATE:** The format was thought extinct but reemerged last fall with rereleased classic titles by Yes and T. Rex.



## EIGHT-TRACKS

In the mid-'60s, these tapes brought album listening to cars. (There were home players as well.) But there was a big *ka-chunk* sound when the player needed to switch channels—sometimes even mid-song! **CURRENT STATE:** This is the stuff of hobbyists today.



## CASSETTES

Introduced in 1963, these were mini reel-to-reel tapes in a handy format. They were wildly adaptable—you could listen at home, in cars or on the go through boomboxes and portable players like the Sony Walkman. **CURRENT STATE:** Many artists still release albums on cassette as a low-cost way for fans to own a physical product.



## COMPACT DISCS

Introduced by Philips and Sony in 1982, CDs exploded in popularity in the late '80s and early '90s, as many music fans dumped their vinyl and cassette collections and repurchased albums on this modern format that utilized lasers. **CURRENT STATE:** CDs are not as popular as they once were, but they remain a mainstay format. The RIAA says 33 million units were sold in 2024.



## MP3s

The digital download format began to gain favor in the late '90s. Apple's iPod, introduced in 2001, became a ubiquitous piece of hardware, promising the ability to carry your music collection in your pocket, and a short time later, the iTunes download store allowed fans to purchase individual tracks off albums. **CURRENT STATE:** Digital download services remain, but dedicated MP3 players have been mostly replaced by smartphones.



## STREAMING

By the 2010s, streaming services, led by Spotify, offered users the ability to play music on devices without needing to download tracks. This gave fans instant access to millions of songs for a subscription fee (or for free with ads). **CURRENT STATE:** By 2015, streaming became the top source of revenue for the U.S. music industry. It continues as the leading format, according to Luminate, which tracks music consumption. —Craig Rosen



## Cher-ing the Love

Happy 80th birthday to the iconic artist

**CHER TURNS 80** on May 20. But really, Cher is ageless. She's a singer with hit songs across decades, an Oscar-winning actor and a fashion trailblazer who has adapted to the times.

We asked for insights from someone who has worked to understand Cher from the inside out. Chicago-based vocalist Lisa McClowry, 57,

tours the country portraying the singer in *The Beat Goes On—A Cher Theatrical Concert Experience*. Her take:

"Cher has never stayed in one lane: She's gone from folk to pop to rock to disco to ballads. She delivers lyrics in a way that feels conversational, almost confessional. She doesn't soften her edges to be palatable, and that authenticity creates trust. I believe her, whether she's singing about heartbreak or resilience or joy." —Sean Piccoli



Illustration by Zohar Lazer; photo credits on page 79



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### Non-Smoker Current Monthly Rates

Issue Age	\$10,000		\$50,000		\$150,000	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
45–49	\$9	\$12	\$21	\$32	\$45	\$72
50–54	11	13	27	40	62	93
55–59	12	17	35	61	85	145
60–64	16	23	54	89	135	219
65–69	21	30	77	124	201	310
70–74	33	41	137	179	361	455

**Cigarette smokers within the last 12 months will pay a higher rate.** Premiums above are the rates New York Life currently charges. Your initial premium is based on your age at issue; premiums increase as you enter each new five-year age band and will be based on the current rates at that time. Age bands begin at ages 45–49 and end at ages 75–79. Coverage ends at age 80. Premiums are not guaranteed; however, your rates may change only if they are changed for all others in the same class of insureds. If relevant statements of age or facts are not accurate, New York Life will make a fair adjustment of premiums and/or insurance. Residents of FL: D. N. Ogle is a licensed Florida agent for service to Florida residents. Residents of MT & NY have rates different from those shown. Coverage amounts, rates, and rate classes may vary by state or by product. Please call New York Life for details and higher coverage options.

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\*\* Ratings as of 9/30/25. A.M. Best (A++) Highest Rating, Fitch (AAA) Highest Rating, Standard & Poor's (AA+) Second-Highest Rating, Moody's Investors Service (Aa1, Second-Highest Rating).

† Apply online not available in all states.

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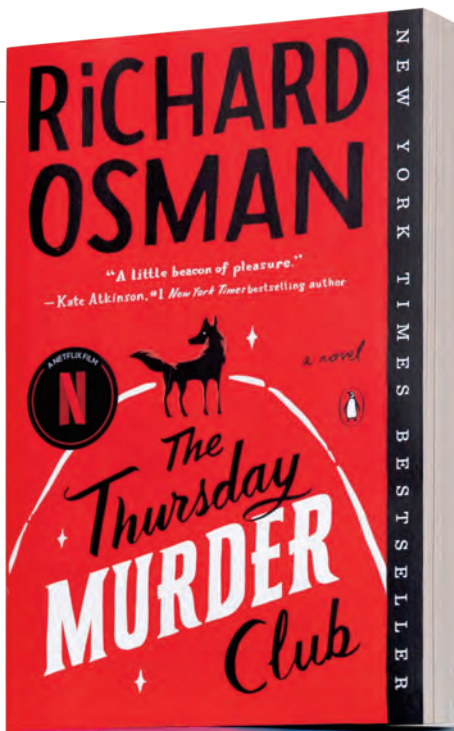
# Older and Bolder

When seasoned characters take center stage

## The Tiny Slice

“After a certain age, you can pretty much do whatever takes your fancy. No one tells you off, except for your doctors and your children.”

—Joyce Meadowcroft, from **The Thursday Murder Club** by Richard Osman



## Book Club Faves

We asked booksellers and other bibliophiles, including members of AARP’s The Girlfriend Book Club (thegirlfriend.com/book-club), for their favorite novels with older characters, from 2000 onward. Among the titles that popped up repeatedly:

**Remarkably Bright Creatures** by Shelby Van Pelt (2022), **A Man Called Ove** by Fredrik Backman (2014), **The Story of Arthur Truluv** by Elizabeth Berg (2017) and the beloved recent bestseller **Theo of Golden** by Allen Levi (2025).

Go to [aarp.org/oldercharacters](http://aarp.org/oldercharacters) to check out our full list of 50 picks.

## Reviews

### The Things We Never Say by Elizabeth Strout

The *Olive Kitteridge* author introduces Artie Dam, a longtime high school teacher who’s unaccountably lonely. That feeling is exacerbated when a secret about his family comes to light. “Mostly we travel through life unsighted,” he notes in this beautiful tale. (May 5)

### The Midnight Train by Matt Haig

In this memorable, moving novel by the mega-best-selling author of *The Midnight Library*, Wilbur, 81, at the moment of his death, is given a chance to revisit and reassess his life by way of a ghostly train that transports him through the highs and lows in his past. (May 26)

### Take Me with You by Steven Rowley

College professor Jesse reckons with sudden solitude after Norman, his partner for 30 years, mysteriously vanishes. Jesse is forced to consider the man he wants to be without Norman at his life’s center. It’s witty and poignant, by the author of *The Guncle*. (May 19)

### Mad Mabel by Sally Hepworth

Nobody on her quiet street knows that cranky Elsie Mabel Fitzpatrick, 81, was once known as Mad Mabel, said to be cursed and a murderer. Then a little girl moves in nearby and wants to know everything about Elsie, and her walls start to crumble. (April 21) —Christina Ianzito



## NONFICTION OF NOTE



**CRIME**  
**London Falling: A Mysterious Death in a Gilded City and a Family’s Search for Truth** by Patrick Radden Keefe (April 7)



**ESSAYS**  
**The Land and Its People** by David Sedaris (May 26)



**MEMOIR**  
**Give Them Their Flowers: Reflections on Women, Film, and Friendship** by Octavia Spencer (May 26)



**MEMOIR**  
**Keeper of My Kin: Memoir of an Immigrant Daughter** by Ada Ferrer (May 19)

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## Now Playing

Film critic Chris Nashawaty recommends the top movies and TV shows for grownups this spring



### MICHAEL

🎬 *In theaters April 24* • This sweeping biopic traces Michael Jackson's complicated life, from growing up under the same roof as an emotionally distant and physically abusive

father (played by two-time Oscar nominee Colman Domingo, 56) to finding fame as the pint-size front man of the Jackson 5 to becoming the biggest star on the planet with the 1982 megahit *Thriller* and beyond.



### MARGO'S GOT MONEY TROUBLES

📺 *On Apple TV April 15* • This series tells the story of a cash-strapped single mom (A Complete Unknown's Elle Fanning). Created by David E. Kelley (*Boston Legal*, *Big Little Lies*), it also features Nicole Kidman, 58, Nick Offerman, 55, and Michelle Pfeiffer, 67, as Margo's ex-Hooters-waitress mom.

### THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA 2

🎬 *In theaters May 1* • Meryl Streep, 76, Anne Hathaway and Emily Blunt return for this fashion-forward sequel to the deliciously witty 2006 smash. This time, Streep's haughty magazine editor in chief faces the decline of print journalism.



### MALCOLM IN THE MIDDLE: LIFE'S STILL UNFAIR

📺 *On Hulu April 10* • In this four-episode revival of the beloved dysfunctional-family sitcom that ran on Fox from 2000 to 2006, star Frankie Muniz (still boyish at 40) is back. So are his on-screen mom and dad, Jane Kaczmarek, 70, and Bryan Cranston, 70. The new story revolves around Muniz's Malcolm returning home (with his daughter!). High jinks must ensue.



### WIDOW'S BAY

📺 *On Apple TV April 29* • Fans of *The Americans* should find plenty to satisfy their Matthew Rhys sweet tooth in this new 10-episode series about a mayor trying to breathe the new life into his sleepy New England island community by turning it into a tourist destination. Problem is, the superstitious locals are convinced the place is cursed. All of this spells trouble as those hoped-for vacationers start pouring in. *Widow's Bay* looks promising, especially since Emmy winner Rhys, 51, is an ace at balancing horror and comedy.



### THE TESTAMENTS

📺 *On Hulu April 8* • Less than a year after *The Handmaid's Tale* finale, this spin-off series brings viewers back to Gilead. Set 15 years later, it focuses on a new generation of repressed women, one of whom is played by Chase Infiniti (*One Battle After Another*). But *Handmaid's* scene-stealing Aunt Lydia (Ann Dowd, 70) returns.

Clockwise from top left: Glen Wilson/Longgate; Robert Clark; Disney; Marcell Polley/20th Century Studios; David Dukachi/Disney; Carl Hesse

# Patricia Cornwell

The crime novelist, 69, lifts the lid on her spooky origins, a teen eating disorder and, at last, Scarpetta

## A natural storyteller

I love spooky things. My fourth-grade teacher put a big red circle on one of my papers and said, "You use the phrase 'all of a sudden' too often." I would tell stories all day long, especially to the little kids I babysat. If I wanted to make them sit back down with their Hawaiian Punch, all I had to say was, "He walked under the streetlight, and all of a sudden...."

## Writing from pain

When I was 19, I had a terrible eating disorder [anorexia nervosa] and was hospitalized. I felt like the biggest failure on the planet. I dropped out of college. But Billy Graham's wife, Ruth [who had looked out for Cornwell and her siblings after their mother was hospitalized with depression when the future author was 9], said, "I want you to tell your story." She gave me a journal that I still have. And so, at age 19, I started writing my autobiography.

## Not into the genre

I read Nancy Drew as a little kid, but I didn't read a murder mystery until I decided to write them. I bought three second-hand paperbacks—P.D. James, Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers—to try to learn what people did.

## Spare her the gore

I'm actually very squeamish. I've spent days on end in morgues because it's the only way to tell my stories, the only way to know what I'm talking about, but it has never been easy.

## When she knew she'd made it

I remember landing my helicopter at a book signing years ago in a shopping mall parking



lot. [She is a licensed helicopter pilot.] The line was around the entire mall. People had been waiting since 8 a.m. I almost burst into tears.

## Hurry up and wait

It has taken 37 years for *Scarpetta* to make it to the screen. It has been optioned since 1989 and went through one studio after another and always fell apart at some stage. But I'd become friends with Jamie Lee Curtis, and she helped make it happen with Prime Video. Then Nicole Kidman agreed to take the lead role as the medical examiner Kay Scarpetta. The synergy, it sparked.

## Finishing her memoir

I pulled it out of a box, having not seen it in 50 years. I always said I wouldn't actually publish it. But there was talk recently of doing a TV show about my life, so I decided to write a treatment. And once I started, I couldn't stop.

## Regrets, she has a few

If I knew when I was younger what I know now, I wouldn't do a lot of the stupid things I've done, like buy all those Ferraris. Going from having no money to making millions of dollars was incomprehensible to me, so I had a lot of fun. I felt like I had to prove I was worthy of being rich and famous. I don't have anything to prove anymore.

—As told to Shelley Emling, editor of AARP's *The Girlfriend Book Club*. Go to [thegirlfriend.com](http://thegirlfriend.com) for more great interviews and books content.

Patricia Cornwell's memoir, *True Crime*, will be out in May. The series *Scarpetta* is now on Prime Video.



For an exclusive video of Cornwell, visit [aarp.org/cornwell](http://aarp.org/cornwell) or scan this code with your phone.



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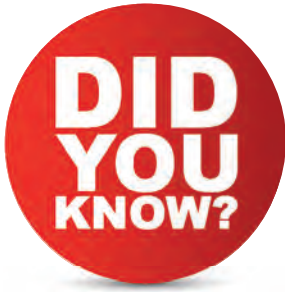
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\*Average annual savings are derived from 6-month policy terms and based on information reported by customers who switched to The Hartford's newest rate plan between 9/1/24 and 8/31/25. Your savings may vary. Rate differences for AARP members and non-members vary by state and AARP membership tenure.

† Terms and conditions apply. **Accident Forgiveness and Disappearing Deductible are not available to CA policyholders.**

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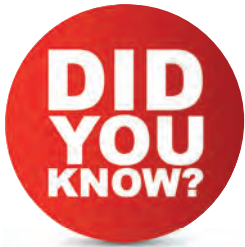
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<sup>1</sup>In Texas, the Auto program is underwritten by Redpoint County Mutual Insurance Company through Hartford of the Southeast General Agency, Inc. Hartford Fire Insurance Company and its affiliates are not financially responsible for insurance products underwritten and issued by Redpoint County Mutual Insurance Company.

<sup>2</sup>Average annual savings are derived from 6-month policy terms and based on information reported by customers who switched to The Hartford's newest rate plan between 9/1/24 and 8/31/25. Your savings may vary. <sup>3</sup>Terms and conditions apply. **Accident Forgiveness is not available to CA policyholders.** <sup>4</sup>Gift is a limited time offer and not available in all states. Email address required in most states. Allow 4-7 weeks for delivery. Bag style and color may vary from image. Bottle not included.



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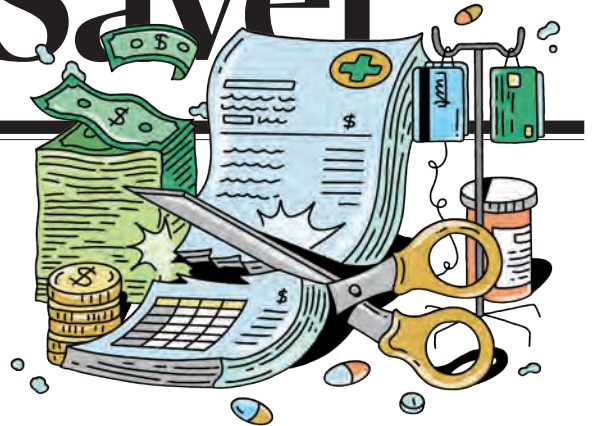
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# Money Saver

## 5 Ways to Slash Your Medical Bills

Keep more money in your pocket without sacrificing the quality of your health care BY DAVID HOCHMAN



### ASK FOR THE CASH PRICE

If you have a high-deductible health insurance plan and don't typically reach your annual out-of-pocket maximum, think about paying for appointments and treatments with cash instead of going through insurance. A 2023 study found that hospitals' cash price was lower than the median insurance price nearly half the time, thanks to steep discounts for paying up front. The advice of Johns Hopkins University professor Ge Bai, the study's senior author: Ask, "What's the price if I pay in full today versus the insurance price?" (Note: In most cases, such a cash payment won't count toward your deductible.)

### LOOK FOR DEALS ON DRUGS

"Check all the coupon sites," says journalist Dan Weissmann, creator of the health care podcast *An Arm and a Leg*. Companies including GoodRx, ScriptSave WellRx and Optum Rx (supplier of the AARP Prescription Discounts Provided by Optum Rx program) offer steep discounts off retail prices for select drugs at participating pharmacies. Warehouse clubs Costco and Sam's Club discount heavily too. Sam's Club Plus members can receive certain generic medications for 30 days at no cost and more than 600 generics for \$10 or less. Savings at Costco can be up to 80 percent.



### BE CURIOUS ABOUT TREATMENT

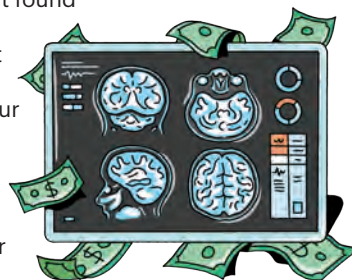
Up to 30 percent of prescribed medical services provide little or no value, according to a study published by the American Board of Internal Medicine's ABIM Foundation. Here are some useful questions you might ask a provider before you take a medication or opt for a test, surgery or other procedure:

- ▶ "Why do I need this?"
- ▶ "What happens if I don't do it?"
- ▶ "Are there side effects?"
- ▶ "Are there lower-cost options?"



### AVOID HOSPITALS FOR ROUTINE SCANS

A 2020 UnitedHealth Group report found that hospital outpatient imaging costs an eye-popping 165 percent more, on average, than the same scan at a stand-alone center. If your doctor orders a routine MRI scan, CT scan or echocardiogram, consider getting it done at an independent imaging clinic. Just make sure that the imaging center is covered by your insurance.



### GET FREE HELP WITH BILLS AND DENIALS

If you're battling a serious medical condition, the nonprofit Patient Advocate Foundation may be able to provide a case manager to help you fight billing errors, appeal insurance denials, negotiate payment options and qualify for financial support. The group says that in 2024 it provided assistance to more than 193,000 patients and distributed over \$335 million in financial support. You can visit [PatientAdvocate.org](http://PatientAdvocate.org) or call 800-532-5274 to connect with a case manager and learn whether you meet eligibility requirements.

Visit [aarp.org/medicalbills](http://aarp.org/medicalbills) to learn 19 more ways to lower your health care costs.

# Complain Like a Pro

Get the good customer service you deserve when things go wrong

By LAURA T. COFFEY

**U**NEXPECTED fees. Faulty merchandise. Promises of service that fall short.

These things happen. And so does subpar service when you try to get matters fixed. Companies' growing use of automation to handle customer support makes it especially challenging and confusing for consumers who need to reach actual human beings to get legitimate complaints resolved.

But do not fret! If you have a complaint about a cellphone provider, auto dealership, airline or other merchant, you can use this handy guide to get refunds and other forms of satisfaction.

## START WITH THESE GUIDELINES for dealing with any merchant that has let you down:

→ **Be AI-savvy.** Increasingly, companies are ceding their customer service operations to AI-driven chatbots, both online and over the phone. If you're getting no help from robotic replies in a call or online chat, using these phrases may help you reach a real person: "representative," "customer service," "speak to human," "talk to professional," "live support," "supervisor," "complaint," "account issue" or "escalate."

→ **Be polite.** If you reach a human being, that person usually isn't the one who caused your problem. "For the benefit of your own soul, remind yourself that there's another human being at the other end of the phone line," says consumer affairs journalist Bob Sullivan, who hosts AARP's *The Perfect Scam*

podcast. "This is a person who might have a choice to either benefit you or not benefit you."

→ **Be clear.** Be upfront about what you expect to get. "Don't just be mad," Sullivan advises. "Have a resolution in mind. Say things like 'You charged me this fee. I don't deserve to pay it. I should be refunded this amount.'"

→ **Use your time wisely.** Make sure the end goal is worth it before you begin—for example, that you're willing to spend three hours to claw back a \$10 overcharge. And early on, ask representatives you're speaking to whether they have the authority to give you what you want. If not, say you want to talk to the person who does, Sullivan says: "This way, you're not wasting your time."

→ **Document, document, document.** Keep a record of all interactions (and attempts to interact) with the merchant. That might include notes

of phone conversations, such as the date, time, person spoken to and promises made; screenshots of online chats; and copies of emails sent and received. Should your problem escalate, having all this material on hand can help support your case with company higher-ups, regulators and other government officials.

→ **Be quick.** Whenever possible, speak up about your concerns in person. By addressing the issue in real time while you're still on vacation or on the car lot, you give the business more options for fixing it. If your complaint involves calling or emailing a company after you've noticed a problem, give the other party no more than a week to 10 days to resolve it before escalating the issue, advises Teresa Murray, Consumer Watchdog director for the Public Interest Research Group. "As time drags on, you lose some of your rights," she says. "Do it while the details are fresh."





→ **Climb the company ladder.** Christopher Elliott, a journalist and consumer advocate, maintains a list (at [elliott.org/company-contacts](http://elliott.org/company-contacts)) of customer service emails and phone numbers for scores of national companies. If those don't get you satisfaction, he also has contact info for key executives at many of those companies. Keep emails brief, polite and factual, he advises.

### NEXT, USE THESE SPECIFIC TIPS for navigating complaints with different types of merchants:

→ **"I just bought a new cellphone, and now I'm being charged for insurance I didn't ask for."**

If you're finding unexpected or confusing charges on your bill, start by reviewing your cellphone contract to check whether introductory offers have expired, Murray suggests. If you feel you have a valid complaint, contact the cellphone provider directly to

ask for relief. If that doesn't work, visit [consumercomplaints.fcc.gov](http://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov), where you can file a report with the Federal Communications Commission.

→ **"My plane has an engine problem, and I'm stranded at the airport."**

You're entitled to a cash refund on domestic flights if, for any reason, your flight is canceled or delayed for more than three hours for your departure or arrival. If the problem is your carrier's fault—say, its computer went down—you could be due a free meal for the delay. If you have to fly out the next day, you should get a free hotel stay. (If the delay is weather-related or otherwise outside the airline's control, you'll probably have to foot your own food and lodging.)

Visit [www.transportation.gov/airconsumer](http://www.transportation.gov/airconsumer) and click on Flight Delays and Cancellations to find different airlines' customer service commitments. With that information, approach your airline's counter at the airport and politely ask about meal vouchers, hotel accommodations and ground transportation, as appropriate.

→ **"We prepaid for a luxury suite, but the smell was unbearable."**

As soon as you spot a problem, reach out to someone at the hotel's front desk or contact a vacation property's host, calmly describing the problem and your hoped-for resolution. If that doesn't work and there's no higher-up to appeal to, start working from the bottom up the next day: the local hotel management, then the chain's corporate headquarters—or, if it's a vacation rental, the vacation rental platform's help center. You'll typically need to complain about a vacation rental within 72 hours of discovering a problem, and you'll be expected to document the problem as well.

In especially egregious cases, you can use what Elliott describes as the "nuclear option": filing a dispute with your credit card company to get the charge for your stay reversed.

→ **"A contractor upgraded my bathroom, but now the plumbing leaks."**

Complaints about contractors are so common that it's always wise to hire contractors who are licensed, bonded and insured, Murray says. If speaking with the contractor doesn't yield results, you can file a complaint with the city where you've (ideally) gotten a permit and, if your contractor has a state license, with your state.

Many states have funds with names like Homeowners' Construction Recovery Fund or Residential Recovery Fund from which you might get financial relief, says Erin Witte, senior counsel on consumer protection for the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General. "That's a situation where you should definitely file a complaint and have your documents in order," she says.

→ **"My new car keeps breaking down, and the dealer isn't fixing it."**

Familiarize yourself with your state's lemon law, covering problematic cars, advises Ronald Montoya, manager of consumer advice for the automotive site Edmunds.com. "As a general rule, the car needs to go into the shop for the same issue three times or it must be out of service more than 30 days to be considered a lemon," he says. For persistent car problems, ask the following people for help in this order: the service adviser in the dealership's service department, the service manager, the general manager of the dealership and—in extreme cases—the car brand's corporate office.

You might also consult another dealer within the same brand to get a fresh set of eyes on the problem, Montoya says. If all this doesn't help, you can file complaints with the state attorney general's office; a city or county consumer affairs department; and a Motor Vehicle Dealer Board, an Auto Dealers Association or organization with a similar name that oversees dealerships in your state. ■

*Laura T. Coffey wrote the long-running column 10 Tips for Keeping Your Money in Your Wallet for the Tampa Bay Times and NBC News.*



**Jean Chatzky**  
TO THE RESCUE

## Confused by an Annuity

*She was sold an investment she never quite understood. What should she do now?*



### THE PROBLEM

Before retiring in 2014, registered nurse Ellen Donahue put \$180,000 of her IRA into an annuity in order to have guaranteed income later on. Now 75, she and her husband, Joe, 73, don't need the income; they live comfortably on Social Security, Joe's military pension and required minimum distributions (RMDs) from various retirement accounts. She came to me with two concerns: First, the annuity account's value was dropping steadily. Second, she didn't know how to get her money out. "I don't know how we let someone talk us into these products when we didn't really understand them," Ellen said.



Joe and Ellen Donahue crunch the numbers.



### THE ADVICE

Annuities come in many shapes and sizes; Ellen's was a fixed index annuity (FIA) with a guaranteed income rider. The money in the annuity grew based on a formula where she earned a percentage of gains in the S&P 500 but wasn't subject to any losses. The rider, a separate purchase, guaranteed a certain amount of annual income no matter how the FIA investments performed. It carried an annual fee, most recently around \$4,000.

Ellen had three options for getting her money out. She could turn on the income rider, which would produce a flat amount of income that would last the rest of her life (or her life and Joe's combined). She could withdraw varying

amounts based on her income needs or wants. Or she could pull her money out of the annuity and reinvest the money within her IRA. Since turning 70½, she has withdrawn money from the FIA to fulfill her RMDs. Those RMDs, plus fees that outstripped earnings, were eating away at the FIA account's value.

I consulted Scott Witt, a fee-only insurance adviser in Milwaukee who, among other things, helps clients decide what to do with their preexisting policies and annuities.

Witt started by comparing the annuity's account value to the benefit base of the annual-income rider. The account (or cash) value of an annuity is the money you could walk away with—its investment performance minus surren-

der charges, rider fees and other costs. The benefit base is a bookkeeping entry the insurer uses to calculate the rider's guaranteed income. Ellen's cash value was \$141,000, while her benefit base was \$300,000. A benefit base significantly higher than an account value indicates that the income rider is the best option, Witt said.

Witt also noted that, based on Ellen's age and her FIA's income base, triggering the rider would give her a \$19,500 annual income for life. But if she cashed out the account and used her \$141,000 to buy an annuity in the current market, she'd receive only around \$13,000 annually, he said. That, too, pointed to triggering the rider.

Then Witt estimated the investment returns Ellen would need on the \$141,000 to match that annual guaranteed income. If she lived to 95—and he cites data that show 35 percent of healthy 75-year-old women do—she'd need whopping (and unrealistic) annualized returns of nearly 15 percent.

Turn on the income, Witt concluded. "It's a no-brainer."

That said, Witt also noted that if Ellen were in poor health, he might have advised differently. In addition, if a benefit base hasn't outpaced its value, simply taking all the cash out of the account can be more attractive.



### THE OUTCOME

Ellen hadn't expected to, but she decided to turn on the income rider. "I assumed it would be better to let it sit there," she says. If historical patterns continue, the cash value of the annuity will shrink a bit each year. If Ellen dies before the money runs out, the remainder will go to her heirs. But even if the cash value goes to zero, she'll receive income until she dies. As for her plans for the money, "We'll most likely just invest it," she said. "Maybe we'll help our kids a bit or go visit them a little more often." ■

**Want Jean Chatzky to write about helping you sort out your financial problem? Email [rescue@aarp.org](mailto:rescue@aarp.org).**



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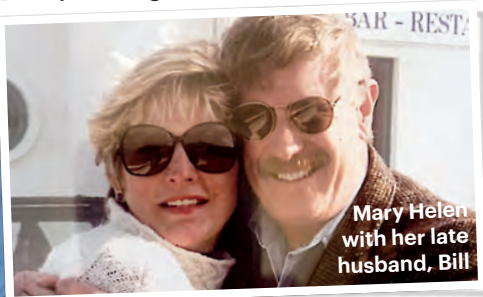
## JACK McBRAYER'S CAREGIVING 'SUPERPOWER'

When Jack McBrayer's 79-year-old aunt, Mary Helen, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, the actor and his extended family sprang into action to support her. "My superpower is that I love a spreadsheet," says the performer known for playing lovable page Kenneth Parcell on *30 Rock* and current host of *Zillow Gone Wild*, on HGTV.

McBrayer, 52, spent three days at his aunt's Atlanta home creating a list of current doctors and medications, key documents and financial accounts. He even digitized her living trust. McBrayer has created his own "tomorrow" list of important documents for the future. "It's better than a memoir," he jokes. —Nancy Kerr



Visit [aarp.org/jackmcbraayer](https://aarp.org/jackmcbraayer) to hear more from actor Jack McBrayer about how his family members use their unique strengths to care for their aunt.



Mary Helen with her late husband, Bill

### FASHION

## SNEAKY STYLE TRICKS TO LOOK SLIMMER



**Wear one color head to toe.** You'll get the sleekest look by keeping tops and bottoms in the same color family. Black creates a slim, monochromatic look, but blue is also a good choice. Try any shade of blue jeans, paired with a tonal-match top.



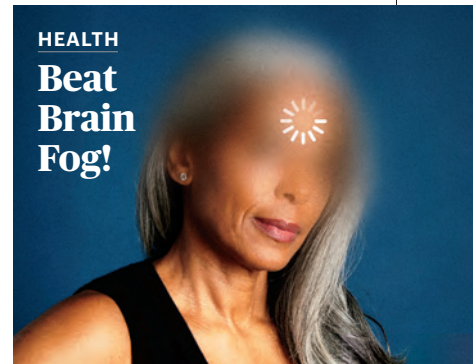
**Or pair black pants with a statement top.** Black's superpower is blanking out size, making things look smaller than they are. Color attracts the eye and holds it there, while prints attract attention and at the same time blur bulges away. Both create a focal point.



**Add some height.** Emphasize the vertical to minimize the horizontal. Many women in their 50s wisely live in flats, but a pair of low heels can be a wardrobe boost. A max heel height of 2 inches lengthens lines while minimizing foot and back stress.



**Throw on a tailored blazer or vest.** Women have relied on a tailored jacket's structure and sharp lines forever—or at least since the '80s. This strategically deployed garment firms up curves while giving a little edge to soft or casual pieces. —Lois Joy Johnson



### HEALTH Beat Brain Fog!

How to fight the forgetfulness that can come with menopause

**JENNY MOODY** often finds she can barely focus her attention on what she needs to do, even while doing it. "I'll be on my computer and forget what I was doing, how to say something or how to spell it," says the 52-year-old college admissions adviser, of Denver.

Moody calls it brain fog, and that's a real phenomenon many women experience during the onset of perimenopause and menopause. Research shows that more than 40 percent of women ages 48 to 55 report being forgetful.

Some tips that can help:

→ **Consider birth control pills.**

"They can be fabulous during perimenopause," says Dr. Mary Jane Minkin, clinical professor of obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive sciences at Yale School of Medicine. "We shut down the craziness in the ovaries."

→ **Consider hormone replacement therapy.** "Estrogen can be helpful for sleep," Minkin says.

→ **Prioritize good nutrition.** The MIND diet—whole grains, leafy greens, nuts, beans, berries and fatty fish—has been linked to a reduced risk of cognitive decline in women, says a 2024 study published in the journal *Neurology*.

→ **Exercise your brain.** Try word or number puzzles or perform mental math rather than using a calculator. Even memorizing your grocery list can help your brain, according to the National Council on Aging. —Maisy Fernandez

# How I Got Unstuck at 55

*The key was thinking—and living—like a 20-something*

**A**FTER MY TWINS went off to college, I couldn't get my head around my new reality: I was a single mom with nobody at home to mother. Worse, my writing career in print journalism had stalled. I was 55 and feeling old. And I hadn't a clue about my "what's next?"

So in a reverse of all those years of parenting, I looked to my kids for guidance. They were in their "what's next?" phase, flourishing and thrilled by the prospect of new adventures ahead. They were becoming masters at ... becoming. I took a page from their handbook and tried to approach change the 20-something way.

Your 20s are an experiment, a laboratory for an adult life. I was now at a similar juncture of life, only I was creating a second adulthood. As I watched one twin go to Colorado and the other to Arizona, I tried on an idea I hadn't considered since my 20s: Why not a new place? As fate would have it, suddenly an ideal job came open—in New York state, 2,200 miles from where I lived in New Mexico. I accepted the offer, and so began my experiment. Though I would not know it at the time, this would be the year when I moved across the country and back in one summer. And that's important, because in the 20-something mindset, it's OK to just try stuff.

My journey led me to a new mindset of looking at my thoughts and emotions with compassion and curiosity. When I try something and it doesn't work, I ask myself: *But did I like that? Would it work the next time? What if I changed how I did it?* The goal: to find a way to do more of what I love.

Here's what the experts I consulted—and those experts include my family and friends—say I did right on this journey, and what you can do too:

♦ **Turn off your emotional autopilot.** By age 50, experience has made our brains pretty good at predicting what feel-



ings and sensations to cue up when certain things happen, such as sadness when you sit at a table for one where there used to be three. But we can rewire our brains to produce other responses, says Lisa Feldman Barrett, author of *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain*. How? By noticing when you're interpreting events in a habitual way—reacting rather than responding. For example, instead of thinking an empty nest automatically leads to loneliness, I rethought and reframed it: The empty nest leads to a newly invigorated life.

♦ **Find a new way.** A big life event, such as kids moving out, can be stressful. I found relief in searching for things that give me pleasure, like attending an Irish acoustic jam night in Saratoga Springs. That led to a trip to Ireland, where I made new friends I now call my Irish family.

♦ **Create new stuff.** One's 50s can be a time of serious stagnation, says Gay Hendricks, a psychologist and author of *The Big Leap*. So "rebirth yourself," he advises. "Do what you really came here to do." And I did just that. From my empty-nest doldrums, I started working on a memoir on living boundlessly, and to my delight, it was published. Then I launched a writing retreat in Tuscany, Italy, that brings storytellers and songwriters together.

In the end, I learned that to live like a 20-something means to regularly ask yourself: *What if I did that?* With that attitude, my young adult kids are now flourishing. And so am I.

*Carolyn Dawn Flynn is the author of eight books, including the memoir Boundless: A Road Trip to Rejuvenation. She lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.*

## 4,124 miles

That was the length of the route for **Hands Across America**, held on May 25, 1986, to raise money for hunger. More than 5 million tried to create a human chain from New York to California, though gaps remained.





## Taking Up a New Sport in Your 50s

**E**NTERING YOUR sixth decade doesn't mean you're too old to find a new sport. While that annual tackle football game in the park may no longer seem like such a good idea, there are dozens of relatively safe activities, such as golf, cycling, yoga and swimming.

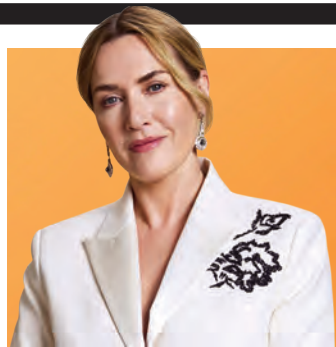
When I hit my 50s, I got more serious about golf. Some may think golf is not a workout, but if you walk the course with a pushcart, it absolutely is. Golf also provides an opportunity to socialize and engage in some healthy competition.

Then a minor injury helped me discover another new sport in my 50s. I had a case of golfer's elbow that kept me from the links, so I tried a spin class. I fell hard for it. When one of my instructors came up with a bum knee, I volunteered to ride the bike in front of the class as she continued to lead it. That inspired me to become an instructor too.

Not everyone needs to go to such lengths. One piece of advice is to go slowly to work your way into your new sport.

Dr. Robert Klapper, an orthopedic surgeon and host of ESPN's *Weekend Warrior* radio show and podcast, says that "exercise comes in two flavors—nurturing and abusive." Unfortunately, a lot of the sports that people love—such as pickleball, tennis and basketball—qualify as "abusive" because of the wear to the body. In that case, you should complement the sport with gentle strengthening practices such as pool exercises, riding a stationary bike, yoga, Pilates or tai chi. Klapper, 68, gets up twice a week before sunrise to surf.

And not all "abusive" exercise is the same. Some athletes find moving to a less demanding sport the way to go in their 50s. Former tennis pro Karin Ptaszek-Kochis, 54, has transitioned to pickleball, which allows her to fulfill her competitive spirit and stay active. "Once we hit 50, stuff happens," she says. "Mobility isn't quite the same." —Craig Rosen



"As I've gotten older, my life has only become richer and more interesting. I feel an overwhelming degree of compassion and empathy coming out of me. I appreciate being able to support young people. I appreciate being able to make young women feel good about themselves."

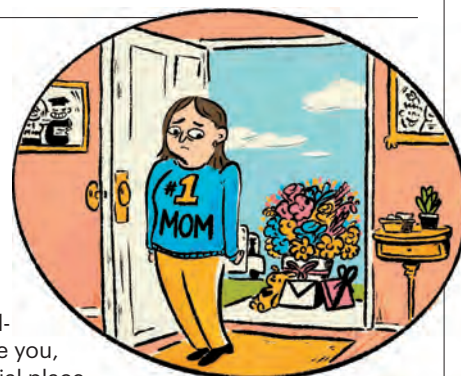
—Kate Winslet, who recently turned 50  
Go to [aarp.org/quickquestions](http://aarp.org/quickquestions) for her full interview.

### MY FIRST ... MOTHER'S DAY WITHOUT MY OLDEST CHILD

**I'VE SAVED** every Mother's Day gift my kids have ever given me. Every macaroni-framed picture, hand-print heart and "I love you, Mom" tile has a special place in our house. Early on, the holiday meant morning cuddles and burned toast in bed. Later, it evolved into grocery store flowers and sentimental Hallmark cards. Both my kids had always been home on Mother's Day, despite school events, college and internships.

Then came the first Mother's Day without my eldest. My son was moving into his first apartment and had work meetings on Monday, so he couldn't make the two-hour trek home. His sister and my husband lavished me with attention, gifting me jewelry and taking me to brunch.

Still, my son's absence hit me harder than I'd expected. It saddened me that I wasn't



with the person who first made me a mom. The shape of my Mother's Day had changed, and I wasn't ready.

That night, with my son on FaceTime, our family slipped easily into inside jokes, summer plans and updates on our new black Labrador retriever puppy. It wasn't the same as past celebrations, but, with the help of technology, it turned out OK.

After a little sniffing, I've learned the holiday can't be defined by Hallmark. I know there'll be many Mother's Days when my kids aren't physically with me. But the love between us bridges any distance—and we can celebrate that any day of the year. —Amy Barnes



#### GET STARTED WITH AARP REWARDS

Anyone can earn points to redeem for gift cards, local deals and sweepstakes entries with AARP Rewards. Plus, members get 1,500 points when they sign up, then earn 50 percent more points by completing quizzes, watching videos, playing games, trying recipes and more. Sign up for free at [aarp.org/earnnow](http://aarp.org/earnnow) or scan this code.



# Test Your Movie Music Moxie

**FORTY YEARS AGO**, Kenny Loggins' "Danger Zone" shot up the pop singles chart, thanks to the blockbuster film *Top Gun*. The '80s were a prime decade for soundtrack songs. Match these:



## SONGS

1. \_\_\_\_ "Call Me," Blondie
2. \_\_\_\_ "Eye of the Tiger," Survivor
3. \_\_\_\_ "Fight the Power," Public Enemy
4. \_\_\_\_ "Holding Out for a Hero," Bonnie Tyler
5. \_\_\_\_ "I Can Dream About You," Dan Hartman
6. \_\_\_\_ "If You Leave," Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark
7. \_\_\_\_ "I'm Alright," Kenny Loggins
8. \_\_\_\_ "It's in the Way That You Use It," Eric Clapton
9. \_\_\_\_ "(I've Had) the Time of My Life," Bill Medley and Jennifer Warnes
10. \_\_\_\_ "Magic," Olivia Newton-John
11. \_\_\_\_ "The Power of Love," Huey Lewis and the News
12. \_\_\_\_ "Shakedown," Bob Seger
13. \_\_\_\_ "Somewhere Out There," Linda Ronstadt and James Ingram
14. \_\_\_\_ "We Don't Need Another Hero," Tina Turner
15. \_\_\_\_ "Wind Beneath My Wings," Bette Midler

## MOVIES

- A. *American Gigolo* (1980)
- B. *An American Tail* (1986)
- C. *Back to the Future* (1985)
- D. *Beaches* (1988)
- E. *Beverly Hills Cop II* (1987)
- F. *Caddyshack* (1980)
- G. *The Color of Money* (1986)
- H. *Dirty Dancing* (1987)
- I. *Do the Right Thing* (1989)
- J. *Footloose* (1984)
- K. *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* (1985)
- L. *Pretty in Pink* (1986)
- M. *Rocky III* (1982)
- N. *Streets of Fire* (1984)
- O. *Xanadu* (1980)



## A PRODUCTIVE SUMMER FOR A COLLEGE STUDENT

Setting expectations is key to avoiding conflict

**COLLEGE STUDENTS** on summer break often want just that: a break. Their parents, meanwhile, typically want to see them gaining valuable experience, whether by working, volunteering or simply getting out of the house.

The problem boils down to "a mismatch of expectations," says Alyson Schafer, a family counselor and parenting expert in Kingston, Ontario. We asked experts how to set rules for summer without needlessly causing strife.

**Get them thinking:** In advance of summer break, ask your child, "What would you like to accomplish?" recommends Shane G. Owens, a board-certified psychologist on Long Island, New York. If they don't have a response, help them strategize. Maybe you know someone who could use their assistance around the office. Just be sure you're not offering so much help that you kill their initiative, warns Schafer.

**Set ground rules:** Brice Meade, 53, told his college-student daughter that she's welcome to stay with him over break—as long as she works a summer job and saves half her earnings for the future. Meade also looks for chances to be active and engage with his kid, suggesting a walk together or dinner out. Meade admits, "Strategically, I don't keep a lot of food in the house so we can have those moments."

**Stand your ground:** If you have agreed on a set of expectations for the summer and your child has not put in the effort, then perhaps they should look for a different arrangement elsewhere, says Schafer. Still, keep different ages and maturity levels in mind. And be prepared for some pushback.

—Robin L. Flanigan



ANSWERS: 1-A; 2-F; 3-I; 4-J; 5-N; 6-L; 7-F; 8-G; 9-H; 10-O; 11-C; 12-E; 13-B; 14-K; 15-D

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# The World According to Eva

**Eva Longoria is no longer a *Desperate Housewife*: She's the one in charge. At 51, the star of CNN's 'Searching For' gastro-travel series is directing films, building businesses, raising a son—in short, living exactly the life she created**

●●●●●●●●  
**By David Hochman**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRIAN BOWEN SMITH

**E**VA LONGORIA shows up for our interview in Los Angeles in full multitask mode. Dressed down in sweats and Uggs, with her hair in a ponytail, she's on the phone confirming tomorrow's 5 a.m. call time for *The Fifth Wheel*, the upcoming Netflix comedy she's directing Kim Kardashian in. She's also keeping an eye on her 7-year-old son, Santiago—"Santi, over here!"—as he drags a kid-sized director's chair down the corridor while the family's toy poodle, Gala, rocks around his legs.

Longoria asks if I can give her a second. Santiago snaps open the blue canvas chair. Gala springs into it like it was made for her. "She did it!" he yells. Longoria lets out that unguarded, room-filling

laugh—the one her former *Desperate Housewives* costar Felicity Huffman swears "could bring nations together"—and catches my eye with a this-is-my-life grin.

Eva Jacqueline Longoria Bastón recently crossed the half-century mark, and she's in the middle of her most ambitious chapter yet. If you haven't been paying attention since *Desperate Housewives* ended its eight-year run in 2012, you may have missed how the youngest and arguably most underestimated housewife—Longoria's character, Gabrielle Solis, was considered the impulsive "it" girl of Wisteria Lane—has steadily turned herself into a Hollywood power player: a successful producer, burgeoning director, entrepreneur, philanthropist and beloved



**Eva Longoria and Gala,  
photographed for  
AARP in Los Angeles  
on January 19, 2026**



advocate for Latino culture in America. She has built a career that spans continents and industries, and at 51, she no longer relies on being cast—because she’s the one doing the casting.

Two and a half years ago, Longoria directed her first feature film, *Flamin’ Hot*, a streaming sensation that brought grandparents and teenagers to the same couch and even landed an Oscar nod (for Diane Warren’s best original song). Her production company focuses on expanding Latino representation. She co-owns professional soccer teams on multiple continents, where fans call her *La Patrona*—the boss. She also does philanthropic work, supporting Latinas in education and entrepreneurship, while splitting time among Mexico, Spain and the U.S. with her husband of 10 years, José “Pepe” Bastón, a media executive.

Longoria’s latest gig is a dream assignment: croissants for breakfast, caviar afternoons, Michelin-starred dinners along the Seine. Three seasons in, CNN’s *Eva Longoria: Searching For* travel docuseries is exploring France after captivating audiences with journeys through Mexico and Spain. She broke up the network’s culinary boys’ club—see: Stanley Tucci, the late Anthony Bourdain. As a food guide, she asks the questions you’re thinking and makes you want to have what she’s having.

“France invented the restaurant, the menu, the sommelier, the soufflé, the sauté—everything,” says Longoria, who spends each episode nibbling, swirling and toasting *la différence*. Not bad for a kid from Corpus Christi, Texas, who flipped burgers as a teenager.

When her 50th birthday rolled around a little more than a year ago, Longoria threw a three-day Miami extravaganza involving 150 friends, multiple dance parties and enough tequila that she admits she can’t remember parts of it. But the milestone also clarified something: She’s orchestrating the exact life she wants. None of it was handed to her; she engineered it.

Bastón soon arrives to wrangle child and pup, and Longoria exhales. As she settles in for our conversation, there’s an unmistakable sense that this version of her—the one somehow managing it all (with a little help from her husband)—is one she’s been building toward all along.

### A ‘Texican’ From Way Back

Longoria carries nine generations of Texas ranchers in her DNA, and the legacy of that collective determination drives everything she does. Her forebears received some 4,000 acres of land along the Rio Grande in 1767 from King Charles III of Spain, land they held for more than a century even as borders shifted beneath their feet after the Mexican-American War. The youngest of four sisters, Longoria grew up hunting, skinning animals and learning to tend crops with her father. She identifies as “Texican”—a Mexican-American Texan (“y’all and all,” she says with a laugh) whose roots run deeper than most families can trace.

But it was her aunt Elsa who taught her what generational wisdom truly means. “She was the matriarch of our family,”

“I’m at a point where I don’t want to waste my days. We only have so many years left. How are you going to spend them?”



Longoria says. When Longoria’s mother—the youngest of 10 children—lost her parents at 5 years old, Elsa, the oldest, raised her. “So she was, de facto, my grandmother. She taught me how to cook, how to dress. She was everything to me.”

Elsa’s independence made an early impression that stuck. She was among the first women to work at the Army base in Corpus Christi. She drove a Mercedes. She traveled. She dressed well. She carried herself like she belonged in any room. “She was the one that said, ‘Don’t ever depend on anybody for anything—you do it yourself.’”

When young Eva wanted something, Elsa’s answer was consistent: You’d better figure that out.

Want to be a cheerleader? Figure it out. Want a quinceañera dress? Figure it out. “And you do,” says Longoria. On top of playing three sports and becoming head drum major in high school, she worked at Wendy’s, an ice cream shop, an oil change garage and a dentist’s office. “Because that’s the other thing Elsa taught me—the value of a paycheck.”

In 1998, Longoria won Miss Corpus Christi USA, which took her to Los Angeles to compete in a modeling and talent competition. By the end of it, 28 agents wanted to represent her.

When Elsa visited Longoria’s first L.A. apartment, she was horrified to find it



Visit [aarp.org/evalongoria](https://aarp.org/evalongoria) or scan this code to watch our behind-the-scenes video with Eva Longoria.

Producer: Kathy Nemelefer; wardrobe stylist: Meagan Reilly; for The Only Agency; hairstylist: Ken Paves for Rouge Artists; makeup artist: Elean Bongiorno for Rouge Artists; prop stylist: Rachel Fockstroh for Wanted PD

devoid of warmth. “She was mad that I didn’t have a plant, that I didn’t have curtains,” Longoria remembers. “She goes, ‘You make every house you have a home. Grow where you’re planted. Right now, you’re planted in L.A. You need to grow here.’”

To this day, even when Longoria checks in to a hotel for more than a few nights, she tries to make it feel lived-in, with candles and personal touches. “Aunt Elsa’s in my head, going, ‘You’re gonna be there for a while, right? Make it a home.’”

### The Role That Made Her Famous

Longoria’s path into TV acting looked effortless from the outside. It was anything but. It took two years before she found a speaking role (three lines of dialogue opposite Luke Perry in *Beverly Hills 90210*). In 2001, she landed a part on *The Young and the Restless* as an emotionally unstable woman who tried to kill one of the show’s central characters. Longoria worked as a headhunter during her two years on the soap to make ends meet. Her breakout moment came in 2004, when she auditioned for a new ABC drama, *Desperate Housewives*.

Her character, Gabrielle, had been conceived as a 6-foot-tall former runway model in her 40s. Longoria—5 foot 1—walked into the audition at age 27 in a leopard-print dress thinking, “*I’m never gonna get this, so eff it,*” and charmed her way on to what would become, over eight seasons, a global phenomenon with an audience in the hundreds of millions.

Instead of treating the job as a jackpot, Longoria approached it like a graduate program. On days she wasn’t filming, she showed up to shadow directors, learn the lingo and understand how productions actually come together. “I was curious about everything,” she says. “The lenses, the microphones, why they pointed that way. I realized I wasn’t reaching my full potential in front of the camera. I wanted to do more.”

In 2005, she launched a production company, UnbeliEVAble Entertainment, and began producing documentaries on farmworkers and food systems. Later, TV and film projects included *Devious Maids* and *John Wick*. (In 2023, the company was acquired by Hyphenate Media Group, a holding company she co-founded.) Longoria embarked on business ventures involving restaurants, fashion and fragrances. And she became a serious advocate for Latina economic mobility.

She also went back to school. While shooting *Desperate Housewives*, she earned her master’s degree in Chicano studies at California State University, Northridge, attending night classes after long days on set. Huffman recalls seeing Longoria surrounded by schoolbooks and paperwork during breaks on set and marveling at how mature and focused her costar was. “Eva was younger than the other actors on *Housewives* by a decade, but we somehow always looked to her as the wise one, the together one, the grounded one,” she says. “She never came across as young. We saw her as the grownup.”

Longoria saw it more as not wanting to be a showbiz cliché. “I didn’t want to be a dumb celebrity given talking points to say on a stage,” she says. “Everyone in my family had a master’s degree. I didn’t want to be the disappointment.”

## All About Eva

*The performer still acts and directs, but she also wears many other hats. Here’s a sampling*

### FILM AND TV PRODUCER

#### Hyphenate Media Group

The studio and holding company, which Longoria cofounded in 2023, acquired



John Wick

her prior production company, creator of film *John Wick* and TV show *Devious Maids*.

### BEAUTY QUEEN

**L’Oréal Paris:** Global spokesperson for the beauty brand for over 20 years

**Fragrances:** Two perfumes (Eva and EVAmour), launched in 2010 and 2012

### FOOD AND BEVERAGE PURVEYOR

**Casa Del Sol Tequila:** A premium tequila brand she cofounded in 2021

**Risa Cookware:** A line of nontoxic pots and pans, launched in 2022

**Siete Foods:** The maker of healthy Mexican-American snacks was sold to PepsiCo for \$1.2 billion in 2025; Longoria was an investor.



### SOCCER TEAM CO-OWNER AND INVESTOR

**Angel City FC** (Los Angeles women’s team)

▲ **Club Necaxa** (Mexico)  
**Inter Bogotá** (Colombia)  
**Wrexham AFC** (Wales)

### PHILANTHROPIST

▼ **Eva’s Heroes:** The San Antonio nonprofit (founded



in 2006) provides recreational programs for people

with intellectual disabilities, inspired by her sister Liza.

**Eva Longoria Foundation:** Her charity (founded in 2012) helps Latinas through education scholarships, business loans and mentorship programs. —D.H.

## From Celebrity to Changemaker

When Christiane Perkins-Garcia talks about her friend Eva, her voice catches and her eyes well up. They met during Longoria’s beauty pageant days, and in 2006 they cocreated Eva’s Heroes to honor Longoria’s older sister Liza, who was born with an intellectual disability and became the nonprofit’s first “hero.”

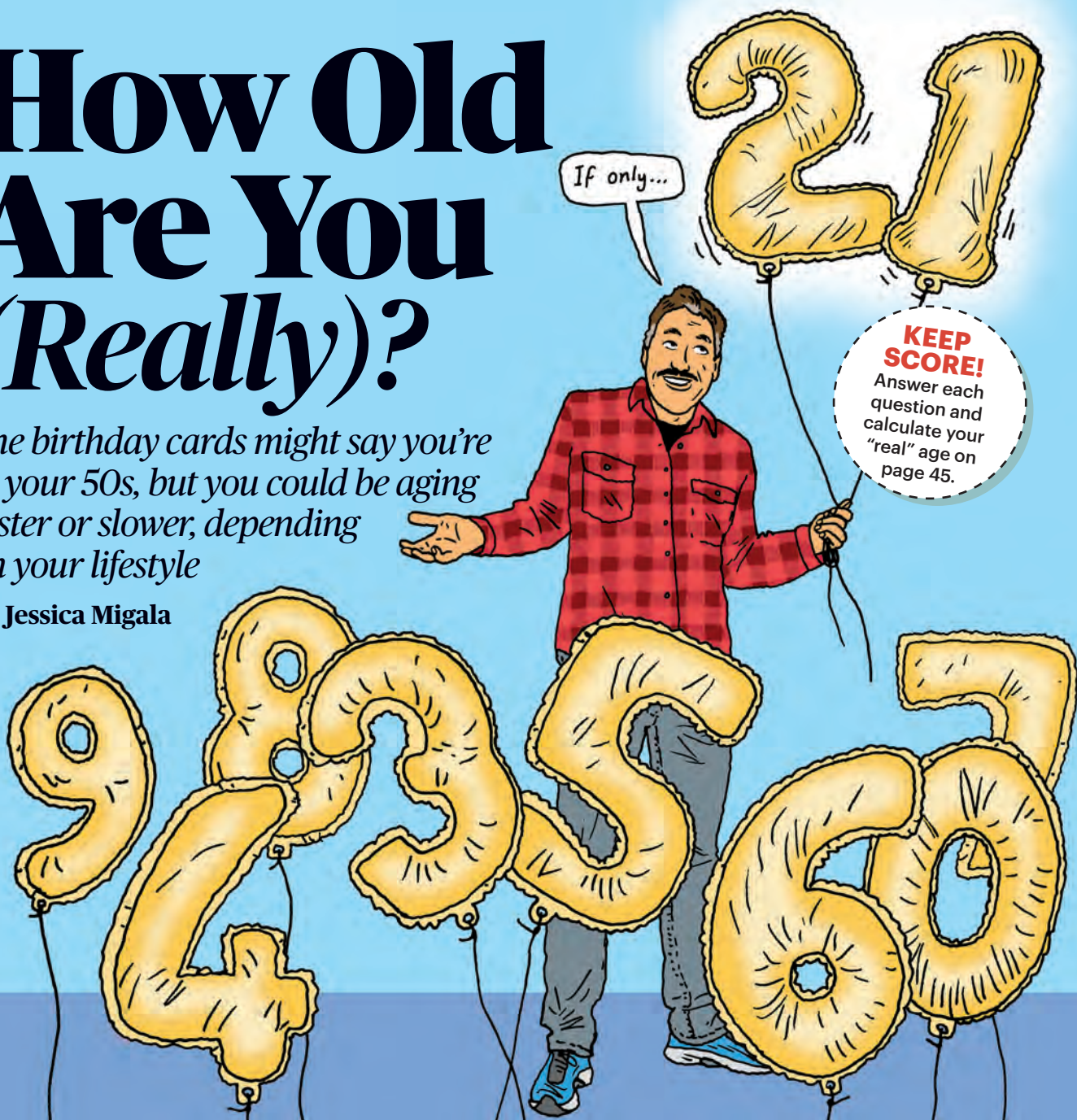
Twenty years later, Eva’s Heroes serves more than 3,000 participants annually—teens and young adults with autism, Down syndrome and other developmental challenges who have aged out of school systems and lost access to structured programs. The organization fills that gap with a seven-week summer series, four annual dances and an elaborate fashion show in which participants learn runway skills, get professional hair and makeup services, and take turns as DJ.

Longoria’s celebrity helps with visibility and fundraising, but it’s her consistency that moves Perkins-Garcia, who worked for more than a decade as a special education teacher before joining Eva’s Heroes full-time. “Come Thanksgiving, Eva shows up at the turkey line to work: serving food, asking about families, remembering names (CONTINUED ON PAGE 77)

# How Old Are You (Really)?

*The birthday cards might say you're in your 50s, but you could be aging faster or slower, depending on your lifestyle*

By Jessica Migala



**Y**OU'RE ONLY as old as you feel.

It's a cliché, but it's truer than we know: There's often a disconnect between our chronological age and our biological age.

"Chronological age is the number of years you have lived in this world. Biological age is the actual age of your body systems, organs and cells. It's the rate at which your body has been aging over time," says Zhe He, director of the Institute for Successful Longevity at Florida State University (FSU) in Tallahassee.

Biological age may be a more reliable marker for predicting how long—and how well—you're going to live. And recent data indicates two critical turning points in our biological

health where things start to go awry: around ages 44 and 60, the years when aging seems to be temporarily turbocharged. So, if you're in your 50s, you may be experiencing the ramifications of your body's midlife cellular changes. But at the same time, now is the moment you need to start tuning up for turning 60—to make sure you drive into that decade in the most well-maintained vehicle you can.

So, what's your true biological age? This series of DIY tests, questions and diagnostics can help you understand how well—and how quickly (or slowly)—you're aging. Plus, we'll outline some changes you can start making now to turn back the clock. Even small shifts can make a big difference in how much pep is in your step in the decades ahead.

# 1 How would you describe your usual walking pace?

- A** Slow
- B** Steady/average
- C** Brisk

*If you said (c) brisk, subtract as many as 14 years (women) or 20 years (men) from your chronological age.*

**YOU ALREADY** know that walking is one of the best ways to get daily exercise. But whether you're just out for a stroll, taking the dog for a walk, or consciously trying to get your steps in, the speed at which you move is critical.

People who rated their walking speed as brisk had the longest life expectancy out of nearly half a million middle-aged adults studied, compared with slow walkers—no matter their body mass index (BMI)—according to an analysis in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*. Women and men who hoofed it at a brisk pace had a

life expectancy of more than 86 and 85 years, respectively. Conversely, those who walked the slowest and also had the lowest BMIs had the lowest life expectancy, at roughly 72 years (women) and 65 years (men). Walking slowly and having a low BMI is associated with poor fitness and a higher risk of frailty, a combination that doesn't bode well for longevity.

"Walking is a powerful predictor of good future health," says Ryan McGrath, director of Healthy Aging North Dakota and an associate professor in the department of health, nutrition and exercise sciences at North Dakota State University in Fargo. "Staying mobile is important for preserving functional health," he says.

More recent research found that having a faster walking pace is linked to longer leukocyte telomeres (the protective end caps of chromosomes in your white blood cells), which are commonly used as a marker of biological age. A brisk pace was even more impactful on telomere length than total physical activity. The takeaway? Make time for higher-intensity activities—research suggests that 10 minutes a day of brisk walking ought to do it.



## EXTRA CREDIT

### YOUR 50s: THE LONGEVITY PRIORITIES

Depending on your age group, there are different strategies for healthy aging you can follow, says FSU longevity researcher Zhe He. Here's what he recommends for people in their 50s.

To prevent chronic conditions and their risk factors:



Regularly check your blood pressure.



Get your blood sugar tested.



Maintain a healthy weight.



Manage your cholesterol.



Follow an exercise routine that includes weight training.

## 2 How many grams of added sugar from packaged foods do you eat in a typical day?

- A** Less than 48 grams
- B** 48 or more grams

If you answered (a) less than 48 grams, subtract 0.2 years from your chronological age.

**IT'S EASY** to identify added sugar: Manufacturers are required to include added-sugar grams on all Nutrition Facts food labels. Excess added sugar is linked to a variety of health problems, such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and heart disease. But a diet of foods with too much added sugar also damages DNA, causing an acceleration in cellular aging, suggests a study published in 2024 in *JAMA Network Open*.

We're not talking about the naturally occurring sugar in foods like fruits or dairy products. "Added sugar" refers to any form—including cane sugar, molasses, corn syrup and many additives ending in "-ose," such as sucrose, dextrose, fructose—that has been added to food during processing. These types of sugar are in foods like candy; soda; desserts; sweetened cereals, yogurts and nondairy milks; and condiments like ketchup and barbecue sauce. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends limiting added-sugar intake to no more than 48 grams (about 12 teaspoons) per day.



## 3 How much fiber do you eat per day?

- A** 13 grams or less
- B** 14 to 21 grams
- C** More than 21 grams

If you answered (c) more than 21 grams, subtract four years from your chronological age.

**MOST ADULTS** get only about 13 grams of fiber per day. That's far lower than the federal recommendation for adults age 51-plus, who should get at least 22 grams (women) and 28 grams (men) of fiber daily. These are good numbers to aim for; research shows you might be able to add years to your life by even modestly increasing your fiber intake. In one study, people who consumed 10 grams of fiber for every 1,000 calories (equal to 20 grams in a 2,000 calorie-a-day diet) had cells four years younger than their birthday-cake age.

Fiber—the digestive- and heart-friendly nutrient found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds—reverses the age of your cells, provided you're getting the amount your body needs. It may quash harmful

inflammation and reduce oxidative stress to keep telomeres long. Plus, it slows digestion and helps control blood sugar, reducing your risk of diabetes.

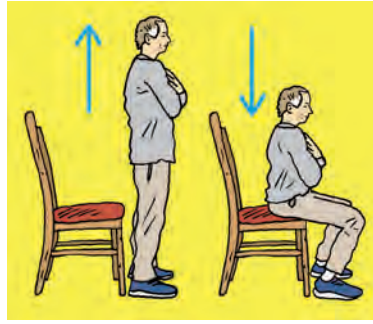
You can hit the 22-grams-a-day mark by eating half a cup of beans, a couple slices of whole wheat bread, an apple and half a cup of cooked broccoli. Want more foods to choose from? Here are some of the best sources of fiber:

Food	Fiber (grams)
High-fiber cereal (½ cup)	14
Lima beans, cooked (1 cup)	13.2
Artichoke, cooked (1 cup)	9.6
Navy beans, cooked (½ cup)	9.6
Small white beans, cooked (½ cup)	9.3
Yellow beans, cooked (½ cup)	9.2
Green peas, cooked (1 cup)	8.8
Raspberries (1 cup)	8
Lentils, cooked (½ cup)	7.8
Pinto beans, cooked (½ cup)	7.7
Blackberries (1 cup)	7.6
Black beans, cooked (½ cup)	7.5

**EXTRA CREDIT**

**STAND UP,  
SIT DOWN,  
LIVE LONGER**

**THE SIT-TO-STAND** test measures your lower-body strength and physical function. Use a slightly padded chair of a standard height with no armrests. Start seated with your feet flat on the floor. Crossing your arms across your chest, stand up completely, then sit back down, instructs Richard W. Bohannon, a fellow of the American



Physical Therapy Association. Time how long it takes for you to do five repetitions as quickly and safely as possible. “The results give us some idea of

the strength of your lower limbs,” he says. Women who can do five reps in six seconds or less—and men who can do the same in five seconds or less—are

fitter than 95 percent of all 50-somethings.

Struggling with this test? You may have less muscle control and balance, and be more likely to fall.

Women ages 50–59	Men ages 50–59	Percentile
6 seconds	5 seconds	95th
7–8 seconds	7 seconds	80th
10 seconds	9 seconds	50th
12–13 seconds	12 seconds	20th
18–20 seconds	18–19 seconds	5th

**4 | Rate the four questions below.**

	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Fairly often	Very often
In the past month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
In the past month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	4	3	2	1	0
In the past month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	4	3	2	1	0
In the past month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	0	1	2	3	4

*A total of 10 or more indicates high levels of perceived stress. Add 0.2 years to your age.*

“PEOPLE who go through difficult and challenging things—high stress, trauma, PTSD—are more likely to have health issues,” says Kyle Bourassa, senior research fellow in the psychology department at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. That much may be obvious, but he also wanted to look at whether these factors independently speed up biological aging. “And that’s exactly what we found,” he says.

Having a high level of perceived stress sped up aging more than two months each year—a magnitude similar to that of smoking, Bourassa’s 2023 research found. Why? In part because we often react to stress with unhealthy behaviors like drinking alcohol, having a poor diet, losing sleep and skipping social events. Stress also promotes inflammation that causes cells to age faster. (Although his study looked at adults 32 to 45 years old, Bourassa notes, “there is no reason to expect the link between stress and aging to be different among older adults.”)

But there’s more going on. The key is *perceived* stress, meaning what we think about stress and how we face it matters, since it affects how we age. “The hope is that directly lowering perceived stress may have slowing effects on aging,” Bourassa says.



EXTRA CREDIT

**FLEX TEST:  
CAN YOU SCRATCH  
YOUR OWN BACK?**

TO TAKE the test, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Extend one arm over your shoulder and down toward your middle back; place the other hand on your back, reaching up toward the middle of it. Try to touch the fingers on your opposite hand. If they won't touch, ask a partner to use a ruler to measure the distance between your fingers. Practice and test two times. Compare your best test score to the results below:

**Women**

Below average: More than a 3-inch gap

Average: Less than 3 in.; overlap up to 1.5 in.

Above average: Overlap more than 1.5 in.

**Men**

Below average: More than a 6.5-inch gap

Average: 0 to 6.5-inch gap

Above average: Overlap

This test is part of measuring fitness among older adults, since upper-body flexibility is needed for independence with age—think getting dressed and reaching for an object.

Shoulder flexibility starts to decline around age 55, with a more prominent drop-off starting at 70. Poor flexibility is associated with a higher risk of mortality from any cause. Do an upper-body stretch at least twice a week, focusing on neck, chest, shoulders and back.



**5 | Do you have  
prediabetes or  
diabetes?**

- A** Yes, prediabetes
- B** Yes, type 2 diabetes
- C** Yes, type 1 diabetes
- D** No, my A1C is in the normal range
- E** I don't know

*If you answered (a) yes, prediabetes or (e) I don't know, add 2.7 years to your chronological age. If you answered (b) yes, type 2 diabetes, add 12 years to your chronological age. If you answered (c) yes, type 1 diabetes, add 16.3 years to your chronological age.*

**PEOPLE WHO** have diabetes have a shorter life expectancy than those who don't. Chronic conditions like diabetes, as well as hypertension and obesity (which are frequently associated with it), can cause physiological changes that speed up the aging process, says FSU's He. Type 2 makes it hard for

the body to regulate blood sugar, which in turn compromises cellular repair and damages blood vessels. In type 1, the pancreas has difficulty producing insulin. Both conditions can cause the protective telomeres in your DNA to shorten, while the function of the cells' mitochondria is impaired, reducing the body's available energy.

But there's a caveat. Research indicates that added aging caused by diabetes can be stymied if both your blood sugar and your blood pressure are well controlled. The key to slowing the aging process is to be vigilant and consistent in your diabetes management.

And if you have prediabetes? You can prevent or delay type 2 and turn back the clock on your cells. Changing your diet, managing stress, losing a small amount of weight and staying physically active can slash your risk of type 2 diabetes in half. Keep in mind that although about 1 in 3 American adults have prediabetes, more than 80 percent of them don't know it, according to the CDC—which is why you should take "I don't know" as a warning sign. Talk to your primary care provider about getting your A1C tested to make sure your blood sugar is in a healthy range.

# 6 Do you expect more good things to happen to you than bad?

**A** Yes

**B** No

If you said (a) yes, subtract 4.4 years from your chronological age.

A **BRIGHT** outlook on life can make your day—and the days of those around you—more pleasant. But new research suggests that a generally optimistic attitude can do more than lift your spirits. Indeed, how you view the quality of your life can predict how much of it you'll be around to enjoy.

Women ages 50 to 79 who scored higher on a test measuring their levels of optimism were more likely to have a longer lifespan—and higher odds



of living to age 90-plus, according to a Harvard-led study published in the journal *JAMA Psychiatry*. These associations were independent of depression status, suggesting that optimism affects more than just your mood.

“This speaks to the benefits of maintaining a positive outlook on life,” says Aladdin H. Shadyab, associate professor at the Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science and the department of medi-

cine at the University of California, San Diego, a coauthor of the paper.

An example of the beneficial effects of optimism is famed anthropologist Jane Goodall, who lived to be 91. “She was always optimistic and purposeful in her life, which probably contributed to her longevity,” Shadyab notes.

It looks like optimism influences more than just how you see things—it’s an important driver in physical functioning, affecting things like strength and balance.

“We found that higher optimism is associated with stronger grip strength and ability to complete chair stands, two markers used as predictors of future health.” The glass-half-full approach is related to slower physical decline with age and may help people stick to habits like avoiding smoking, eating a healthy diet and maintaining robust social connections, Shadyab suggests.

His conclusion: “Optimism may be a modifiable risk factor that we can use to achieve healthy aging.”

## EXTRA CREDIT

### SOCIAL SUPPORTS KEEP THEM STRONG

**OLDER ADULTS** who reported stronger social ties across several domains—faith, community, friends, family—had slower biological aging and less inflammation, a 2025 study by U.S. researchers found. “Having a strong social network and being socially connected is an important factor for longevity,” says FSU’s He. At the same time, the other side of that coin—

loneliness—contributes to aging.

This is a call to examine your relationships and respond with a more resounding yes to invites from family, neighbors and community. And there’s one additional move you can make for a more youthful attitude: Pursue an age-gap friendship. Adults 60 and over who have friends more than 10 years younger than they are enjoy more positive perceptions of aging, according to research published in the *European Journal of Ageing*.



Supportive family and/or friends



Religion or spirituality



Positive relationship with your children



Engagement in your community

## 7 | Do you drink a couple cups of coffee every day?

**A** Yes

**B** No

*If you answered (a) yes, subtract two years from your chronological age.*

**COFFEE IS** packed with bioactive compounds like caffeine and polyphenols (a category of plant compounds) that provide antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties to boost cognition, reduce insulin resistance and lower the risk of chronic disease. Middle-aged adults who report drinking one to two cups of coffee per day add a couple of years onto their life expectancy compared with nondrinkers, per 2025 research. Most of that is due to a reduction in death from cardiovascular disease. Drink decaf? There are benefits there as well, but you'll need a higher intake: Those who imbibed



more than three cups of decaf daily showed a life gain of 3.76 years.

"Many studies show that coffee consumption lowers the risk of mortality, but those studies were largely performed in adults ages 40 to 60," says UC San Diego's Shadyab. In his 2020 research, however, those benefits

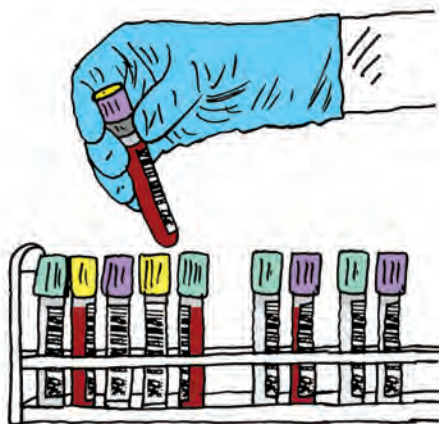
disappeared for older adults. The study, which looked at women with an average age of 72, found that coffee consumption was not associated with longevity, he says. It wasn't harmful (so keep drinking it if you like it), but a regular java habit didn't help folks reach the age 90-plus threshold, either.

### EXTRA CREDIT

## CAN BLOOD AND SALIVA TESTS REVEAL YOUR BIOLOGICAL AGE?

PLENTY OF companies have sprung up over the past decade or so with claims that they can provide an accurate overview of your health—all you need to do is send a few drops of your bodily fluids to their lab for analysis.

"There has been a rapid proliferation in these types of tests," says Dr. Douglas E. Vaughan, director of the Potocsnak Longevity Institute at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. The best of these tests, which can cost several hundred dollars, analyze DNA methylation patterns—essentially biomarkers that provide an estimated measure of biological age, says Vaughan. (You can find further



explanation in the "How does this test work?" info on the product.)

"This is a pretty well-validated test," Vaughan says, "but one single test doesn't tell you your whole story. These tests don't capture all functional or physiological changes that occur with age, and they can miss things or be misinterpreted." Other metrics, like ability to hear, gait speed, heart rate variability

and grip strength, are needed to provide a more complete picture of your biological age.

Programs like the Human Longevity Laboratory at Northwestern Medicine offer this comprehensive approach, but at a significant price: Such testing often costs thousands of dollars out of pocket.

If you do take an at-home test, you'll need to be prepared for what to do with the results, positive or negative, says Vaughan. "Most people take this positively. It motivates them to do something about their health."

One thing you shouldn't do:

"Don't run out to the store and buy 100 different supplements," says Vaughan. "Think about your lifestyle and exercise program, what kind of food you eat, how much you weigh, and how well you sleep and manage stress. See what you can do about those things."

# 8 Answer these four questions. Add up the corresponding numbers next to each answer.



Are you male?

- A** Yes (+5.36)
- B** No (+0)



Do you consume alcohol?

- A** Yes, I'm a current drinker. (+0.55)
- B** No, I'm a former drinker. (-0.45)
- C** No, I've never been a drinker. (+0)

*Your answer equals the years you add to (or subtract from) your chronological age.*

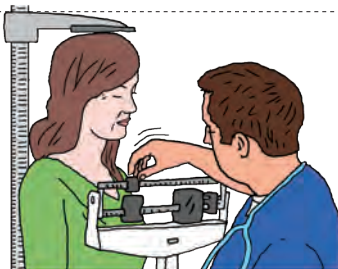
**THESE FOUR** characteristics were identified in research in the journal *iScience* as factors related to aging—and mortality risk. Each five-year increase was associated with a 53 percent higher risk of mortality for people in their 50s.

Smoking is known to shorten telomeres, and alcohol consumption has been shown to speed up brain aging. Men tend to age faster than women due to physiological differences and a greater tendency to adopt the health



Have you ever smoked?

- A** Yes, I'm a current smoker. (+0.60)
- B** Yes, I'm a former smoker. (+0.76)
- C** No, I've never smoked. (+0)



What's your BMI category?

- A** Underweight (<18.5) (+0.66)
- B** Healthy (18.5 to 24.9) (+0)
- C** Overweight (25 to 29.9) (-0.12)
- D** Obese (>30) (+0.36)

vices mentioned above. And while obesity increases inflammation, being underweight creates its own problems. Another study suggests that compared to having a normal weight, adults age 70 and over who are underweight have a 3.6 higher risk of dying in the next five years. With age, excess weight may actually be protective for your health.

As for being male—take it as a wake-up call to get your house in order with exercise, diet, monitoring your cholesterol and blood pressure, and getting preventive screenings. Of course, these are good ideas for women, too. ■

*Jessica Migala has written on health and fitness for Women's Health and Family Circle.*

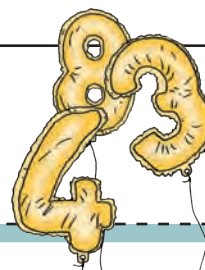
## YOUR SCORECARD



Tally your points based on how you answered each question:

### YOUR CURRENT AGE

Question	Your points
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
<b>TOTAL!</b>	
<b>YOUR "REAL" AGE</b>	



# The Buddy I'll

*We honor the men and women who served, those who serve today and the friendships they forged in war*

AS TOLD TO A.J. BAIME



Albion Bergstrom, left, and Victor Locke, center, March 1971

## VIETNAM WAR

# Sergeant Victor Locke

By Colonel Albion A. Bergstrom

*A New Englander who was awarded a Purple Heart after being wounded on March 25, 1971, Bergstrom, 78, earned three Legion of Merits, a Bronze Star and other decorations while serving in Vietnam and afterward. Today he is a professor in the Joint Military Operations Department at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.*

**I** STARTED COLLEGE at Boston University, and the ROTC program was a way of serving my country. I didn't think that I would end up in Vietnam, but it sure turned out that way.

I took over an armored cavalry platoon. Sergeant Victor Locke was my track commander, which meant he

was in charge of my command vehicle. In an armor or cavalry unit, a leader needs to know his people. You don't have to be loved, but as long as you're respected, things work well. The basic unit was 50-plus soldiers. Their lives depended on your ability to be a decent leader and to listen to them. Victor had a previous tour in Vietnam

and a lot more experience, so I came to trust him for his advice. That turned into a long friendship.

He called me L.T., for lieutenant, and he clued me in on things I needed to know. He'd say, "L.T., so-and-so seems to be down" or "L.T., the platoon sergeant is doing a great job but could use better backup." He was from Oklahoma. I was a farm kid, and Victor appreciated that because he had a country background also. As a farm kid, I was more aware of being outdoors than a city kid. When we were moving through territory, Victor would sometimes say I seemed to have a sixth sense, like what the enemy was up to or when there might be an ambush.

I had a lot of men wounded in my unit, and after I left, two soldiers were killed. But I never lost a soldier. I wanted to bring everyone home alive. We grew up seeing a lot of World War II and Korea movies about all the great battles. That gave us a baseline of what our forefathers had done. I still feel that we served our country well.

Victor got out of the service and had a family. But by the time I retired, in 1999, he was dying of cancer. Agent Orange took its toll. We dedicated my retirement ceremony to him. At the time, my daughter Victoria was 6 months old, and Victor thought that was cool—that we had named her after him.

The day after my retirement, Victor passed away. He had been living in Arizona, and I flew out there. The last time I wore my uniform was for his funeral.

I am thankful every day that I am alive, and I am thankful that I was able to serve with such great soldiers.

# Never Forget

WORLD WAR II

## The Death March Five

By Staff Sergeant Les Schrenk

Schrenk joined the U.S. Army Air Forces on his 19th birthday in 1942 and flew with the Eighth Air Force's 92nd Bomb Group, 327th Squadron. On February 22, 1944, while serving as a ball turret gunner on the B-17 bomber *Pot o' Gold*, his aircraft was shot down by the Germans. Schrenk joined thousands of other POWs in what became a death march. He survived, spent his career as a warehouse supervisor and is now retired in Bloomington, Minnesota, at 102.



**Above: Les Schrenk, 1943. Left: In front of a B-17 during training, August 1943. Top row, from left: Neil Byers and Schrenk; second from right: Bill Harman. Pete Guastella is not pictured.**



**WE WERE SHOT** down on our 10th mission. We had already bombed our target, and we were attacked by a large formation of Ju 88s, Bf109s and Fw 190s. We got hit in our right fuel tank, and it caught fire. Our plane was burning and exploding for 20 minutes, and the explosions kept getting louder and louder until one last explosion blew the right wingtip off. I came down with my parachute like

a ton of bricks. The German pilot had radioed ahead, so ground troops had a perfect circle formed right where I was coming down.

I spent six months in a prison camp called Stalag Luft IV, in Poland. When the Russians advanced, the Germans marched us from Poland to Germany over the next 86 days. We had one blanket for five people. During the night, five of us slept next to each other, sometimes in a farmer's barn, sometimes

in a snow-covered field. The people I shared a blanket with were Neil Byers, Frank Fox, Pete Guastella and Bill Harman. All but Frank Fox were part of my B-17 flight crew.

I made very close friends with them during the march because we relied on each other's warmth to stay alive. It was winter, and the guys on the outside of the blanket didn't quite get covered. So to be fair, we shuffled back and forth under the blanket during the night.

The death march started in Poland and ended up in a little town near Hamburg. We were so far gone by the end that we could barely put one foot in front of the other. I was 185 pounds when I got shot down, and I was 93 pounds when I was liberated.

I kept in touch with those guys and visited them over the years. Years after the war, I even became friends with the German pilot who shot down our B-17. But those men I shared a blanket with were the closest ones. They've all since passed away. I'm the only one left.



Misca Geter, left, and Vernice Armour in Iraq, 2004

IRAQ WAR

## Lieutenant Colonel Misca Geter

By Captain Vernice “Junk” Armour

Now an inspirational speaker based near Atlanta, Armour started her career in law enforcement and was the first Black female motorcycle police officer in Nashville. Commissioned as a Marine Corps officer in 1998, she graduated from flight school in 2001, piloting AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopters during Operation Iraqi Freedom. She served two tours in Iraq, becoming America’s first Black female combat pilot.

**W**HEN I WAS in ROTC in college, I saw a Black woman in a flight suit and knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a pilot. I graduated from flight school on July 21, 2001, when there was no war. But 9/11 happened less than 60 days later, and something in me knew I would be going. I moved into my operational squadron, and several months later, another Black woman joined the squadron, Misca Geter. She was from North Carolina and flew UH-1N Twin Hueys. We were two out of three female pilots, out of 67 pilots in our squadron. We deployed to Iraq together with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit. I was involved in the Battle of Najaf, the Battle of Fallujah and the Battle of Ramadi.

My friendship with Misca was a huge support in navigating the environment of being two of only three female pilots. We were like Forrest Gump and Lieu-

tenant Dan. We formed this amazing bond. There were no therapists over there. But I could talk to Misca.

And those were stressful times. Our Marines were going out on patrol. We were on the front lines, where everything was happening.

Whether it was combat stress or stress from the squadron with the guys, Misca and I had each other. All you had were your friends, and she was mine. We lived in the same tent together. We worked out together. We ate together. When things were really hard, she was the one who brought me back to sanity. I have said many times that Misca saved my life on and off the battlefield.

There is a picture that I will always cherish, with her aircraft behind us when we deployed to a forward operating base, which took enemy fire many times. Years later, it feels like no time has passed. It will always be that way.

GRENADA INVASION

## Major Patrick Giguere

By Colonel Hank Donigan

Retired Marine Col. Hank Donigan, of Fallbrook, California, served multiple combat deployments over 34 years of active duty, from the peacekeeping mission in Lebanon in 1982 to post-9/11 Iraq in the early 2000s. A brain cancer survivor, Donigan, 70, has run the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C., 30 times, including this past October. Pat Giguere was one of his “running angels.”

**I**'VE RUN 538 marathons and had many “running angels,” people who appear out of nowhere and become a running soulmate, someone with you who is reliable, who supports you. Pat was an AH-1T Cobra attack helicopter pilot, and we worked in the same office at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, early in my career in the Marines. He was our air officer, and we became friends. We ran together at lunchtime. Since I was single at the time, he and his lovely wife, Cindy, would invite me to visit.

When I got to Lebanon in 1982, I became part of a multinational peacekeeping force. Pat and I were on the same ship together in the Mediterranean, and we would run on the ship’s deck. Sometimes, you’re in situations where it’s not easy to stay fit. It’s easy to make excuses. But you cannot become sedentary. Pat and I ran. On some ships, three laps around the deck is 1 mile. On smaller amphibious ships with just a small helicopter pad, 11 laps around the deck equals a mile.

I spoke French, so I was designated to take a liaison team and join the French Foreign Legion. My lifestyle with the French was so much better. I got ahold of Pat and said, “You’re eating those rations at the Marine camp, and I’m out here with fresh food, vegetables and wine. I’ll come pick you up, and you can spend some

time with me.” We solidified our bond during that deployment. People like Pat become your family. You bond very closely, so you can help each other survive.

There is a longer story about Pat and his heroism and what happened one day. But the short story is that Pat, serving as the two-aircraft Cobra attack helicopter detachment commander, was responsible for providing security for my helicopter-borne infantry company during the landing on Grenada as part of Operation Urgent Fury in October 1983. Later that day, while flying missions in support of U.S. Army forces, both Cobra helicopters were shot down, and Pat was killed.

During my years on active duty, there were many with whom I served who are now deceased, who are now my running angels. But Pat is the one who is always with me. There are many moments when I am running—in the rain, in the cold—when he is there, challenging me, pushing me forward.

My wife, Naoko, and I were blessed with a “retirement child” when I was 51. Our fifth child, Patrick, named after Pat and born on St. Patrick’s Day, is now 20 years old. And every year on St. Patrick’s Day, we celebrate both of these beloved Patricks.



**Hank Donigan, left, and Patrick Giguere, far right, aboard the USS Nashville in July 1982**

## VIETNAM WAR

# Specialist 5th Class Francis Whitebird

*By Specialist 4th Class Paul Critchlow*

*A former newspaper reporter and later vice chairman of Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Critchlow, 79, grew up in Omaha and played football for the University of Nebraska. He received a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star for valor while serving in Vietnam. Critchlow is retired in Sarasota, Florida.*



**Above: Francis Whitebird in Vietnam. Left: Whitebird and Paul Critchlow, 2023**

**I**N 1968, I gave up my final year of college deferment, told my draft board I was ready to be drafted. I ended up a private first class, assigned to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade in Vietnam. Francis was the lead medic for the company. We connected quickly. We were both from the Midwest, me from Nebraska and he from the Rosebud reservation in South Dakota.

Francis had a reputation as a warrior. Medics don’t necessarily aspire to get into the fight, but he was a protector. I remember watching him run under fire to help save people. He was legendary for that. He gave the troops confidence. They knew that they could count on him if they got wounded.

It was a crazy place. Francis and I survived battles together. Every morning, he would wake up and say, “It’s a good day to die!” I’d say, “Francis, why do you keep saying that?” But it was his warrior credo. That meant “I’m ready to fight.” On August 19, 1969, our brigade was part of a tremendous battle in Que Son. We found ourselves surrounded—about 200 of us facing at least 1,000 enemy soldiers, possibly more. I was wounded at about midnight, and I endured numerous surger-

ies and six months in the hospital back in the States. I lost track of Francis. Then one day soon after I got out of the hospital, my phone rang. Francis said, “I’m at the bus stop in Omaha, and I want to come see you.” He was on his way back from Vietnam, and he came to see me before he saw his own family.

Over the next years, we had an inter-family relationship. I was the best man at his wedding, and my kids came to know his kids. When my mother died, I went back to Omaha for her funeral. I looked over and saw Francis. I was so touched, I could hardly speak.

In 2004, Francis called and said, “I would like to adopt you into my family.” I went to a powwow on his reservation in South Dakota. There was a traditional sweat lodge ... you sweat out all the toxins and evil in your body in preparation for the ceremony. Then I was adopted. Francis calls me Misun, which means “younger brother.” I call him Chee Yea, or “older brother.” We can’t forget what happened in Vietnam. We celebrate each other and that we’re still alive. But we also celebrate the ones we lost.



**Left, David Westrup and Cesar Rodriguez during Desert Storm in 1991; above, the two near Washington, D.C., in 2025**

**GULF WAR**

# Sergeant David Westrup

By Colonel Cesar “Rico” Rodriguez

*Rodriguez, 67, served as an Air Force fighter pilot from 1981 to 2006, earning numerous medals while flying under the call sign Rico. He had two air-to-air combat victories against enemy MiGs during the Persian Gulf War of 1991–92 and a third while serving with NATO forces in Yugoslavia in 1999. Today he lives in Arizona, where he runs Splash 3, a veterans’ and children’s charity he founded.*

**W**HEN I think of battle buddies, I think of all the “fingerprints” on the mission. When I got to the flight line, I didn’t just see the airplane I was about to fly in combat. What I saw was the fingerprints of so many people—from family to community, from airmen to technicians to engineers. When I think about the fingerprints on my airplane, I want to say thank you. And during my time flying combat missions, the fingerprints were personified by Sergeant Dave Westrup.

When I went to war in the Persian Gulf, Dave was the crew chief for the F-15C Eagle, aircraft 85-0114, assigned

to the 58th Fighter Squadron at Florida’s Eglin Air Force Base. He was from Kentucky. He was the one who made sure the fuel truck was there, made sure the weapons were checked, made sure the electronic warfare systems were ready to go. Of the thousands of airplanes that I’ve flown, Dave is the crew chief who sticks in my mind because he launched me on the two sorties that I flew in Desert Storm where I scored two air-to-air victories.

What I always remember about Dave is that, as I would come out to the jet, there were so many things going through my mind as the mission commander. There was no time for small talk. Dave would salute me, and

I would salute him back. I would say, “How is the jet doing?” He’d say, “Hey, boss, she’s ready to go.” His words and actions gave me incredible comfort.

Dave was a career crew chief, and he retired after 20 years of service. He went back to Kentucky, where he works on his farm. He and his wife, Becky, have a beautiful family, with kids and grandkids.

On August 13 of last year, Dave and I were side by side when aircraft 85-0114 landed for the last time, at Washington Dulles International Airport. It was headed for restoration, then to the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum collection.

It was an amazing reunion. I watched Dave and another crew chief circle the aircraft. It was clear how much passion Dave had for 114, and we were flooded with memories of 1991. We felt so grateful that we could render a final salute to that F-15 and say, “Hasta la vista.”



For more stories about men and women at war, visit [aarp.org/warstories](http://aarp.org/warstories) or scan this code with your phone.

KOREAN WAR

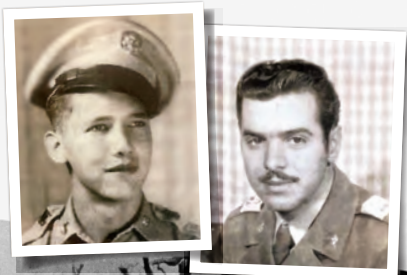
# Private J.C. Coffey

By Corporal George Sousa

*Sousa, 95, served in the Korean War from April 1951 to March 1952. He then spent his career as a tuna fisherman based in San Diego and became a captain on large tuna vessels. Here, he recalls his friend J.C. Coffey.*

**I** GOT MARRIED in December 1950 and was drafted into the U.S. Army in February 1951. I had never heard of Korea. I did three months of basic training and was shipped over to Korea to join the 2nd Infantry Division. I was 20 years old.

My unit was started out at a place called the Punch Bowl [the Haeon Basin in the Gangwon province of what was then North Korea], and that's where I met J.C. He was from West Virginia, and he had lied about his age and joined the Army at 16. When I met him in 1951, he was 18. He was kind of short,



with curly hair—a good-looking kid.

We shared a foxhole, and the temperature sometimes reached 25 degrees below zero. We couldn't make any fires because that would give away our position. When you live in a foxhole, you get pretty close to the people around you. J.C. was tough as nails and afraid of nothing. We fought together in the Battle of Bloody Ridge, and from there, we moved to Heartbreak Ridge. In that battle, North Korea had the advantage. They were occupying the ridge, and we were trying to take it. At one point, a North Korean tank came around a corner and fired three rounds. These shots wiped out my squad, and I was the only survivor. J.C. got shrapnel in his face, and he died right there. I took shrapnel in my stomach and my foot, and I was sent to Japan to a hospital for a month. Then I was sent back to continue fighting.

I got home in June of 1952. I felt it was my duty to call J.C.'s mother because I was the last one to see him alive. That was tougher than fighting in the war. J.C.'s mother had me crying on the phone. She said, "He was my only son. He was only 16 when he left. I begged him not to go!" I can still hear her voice, all these years later. That's why I salute J.C.'s picture, which is on the wall of my office, every morning.

**J.C. Coffey, far left, and George Sousa; below: troops secure "Bloody Ridge" in North Korea, 1951**



VIETNAM WAR

# Lieutenant Edie Meeks

By Captain Diane Carlson Evans



**Edie Meeks, left, in Vietnam, 1969; Meeks with Diane Evans, 2025; Evans in Vietnam**

*As Army nurses, Meeks, 81, and Evans, 79, saw unspeakable things in Vietnam. Years later, Evans and her "sister veteran" Meeks led the charge to build the Vietnam Women's Memorial, which was dedicated on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., in 1993.*

**E** DIE AND I arrived in Pleiku in Vietnam in January 1969. We shared a hooch—which is what we called the building where we lived. We introduced ourselves and realized we were both from Minnesota. It was an instant bond. She was a city girl. I was a farm girl. I was 22, and she was 24. There we were, two Army nurses, in the last six months of our tour of duty, near the Cambodian border. Even if you're in the middle of a war zone, Edie makes you laugh. She may have been crying on the inside but was laughing on the outside. Edie and I saved each other's lives in Vietnam—and afterward too.

One night we were in our hooch when our camp was hit with rocket fire. I crawled to her room, and she was under her bed eating peanut butter and crackers. I said, "Edie, how can you eat at a time like this?" Laughing, she said, "If I die, I'm not going to die hungry!" We stayed under the bed and felt safe together, in this insane situation, until the sirens stopped blaring.

When we went (CONTINUED ON PAGE 78)

# ONE-DAY H

The Property Brothers take us through quick improvements to make your home more livable as you age

By David Hochman ILLUSTRATIONS BY KYLE ELLINGSON



Brothers Jonathan, left, and Drew Scott

**JONATHAN SCOTT** is walking through his Los Angeles home, pointing out upgrades that “anyone at any age” can do to make life better now and far into the future. “Trust me, I think about aging,” he says. Wood-slat sound panels buffer noise so everyone can hear each other. Motion-sensor hallway lights mean no one—young, old or in-between—fumbles in the dark. A desk-mounted charging station eliminates having to bend down to reach an outlet.

Joining the video call, Jonathan’s twin brother, Drew—the other half of HGTV’s *Property Brothers*—describes the simple, aging-in-place upgrades he’s been testing for their parents, Jim and Joanne Scott, 92 and 81, who live nearby: a facial-recognition door lock that opens as if by magic, sofa legs raised a

few inches so standing up feels less like a full-body workout, and clear plastic stair treads he calls “a no-brainer for safety.”

The real appeal is how doable these all are. No demolished walls. No parade of contractors (though a few fixes might require a quick assist from a pro). “You can do these things in minutes or hours, not

weeks,” says Jonathan. “And you’ll feel like a hero doing most of them yourself.”

Now turning 48, the brothers are thinking more about what they call “forever home” design: changes that make sense today and will keep working as you age. “Don’t wait until something goes wrong,” Drew says. “Make things better now. You’ll feel good immediately—and keep feeling good every single day.”

What follows is their room-by-room guide to one-day fixes that yield results fast in safety, comfort and peace of mind. They’ll make your house easier to move through, calmer to live in and maybe even better by tonight.

This page: Courtesy: HGTV; other pages: Stefanie Keenan/Getty Images

# HOME FIXES

## ENTRYWAY + FRONT DOOR

Coming home to chaos can be stressful. A well-organized doorway setup reduces clutter, bending over and slip hazards—three things that get more annoying (and riskier) over time.

### AROUND THE HOUSE TIPS

**Dare not to glare:** Jonathan says putting UV-reflective solar film on your windows is a quick, easy way to cut cooling costs and increase privacy.



### UNLOCK CONVENIENCE:

Drew says it's easy to install a smart lock, which eliminates fumbling for keys if you're carrying groceries or have arthritis. Companies like Schlage, Yale and Chamberlain have models with cameras and more. His dad, he says, loves his lock's facial recognition: "He literally stares at the lock and it opens."

### REFRESH THE THRESHOLD:

A doormat covering more of your entryway will lower your fall risk. "Three by five usually works great," Jonathan says. "Just make sure it's machine-washable, nonslip and thin enough for door clearance."

### HAVE A SEAT:

"A low-profile bench with storage gives you a place to sit, put on shoes and hide all those hats and tote bags," says Jonathan, adding that built-ins are a worthy splurge.

### BENCH STORAGE FOR WHEN SURPRISE GUESTS ARRIVE:

You want enough space for shoes, backpacks and the dog leash so you can "shove things away fast" when the doorbell rings, Drew says.

### HANG IT UP:

"Wall-mounted flip hook racks fold away but pop up when you need them," Jonathan says. Wayfair, West Elm and the Container Store sell them for under \$100.

### CARE FOR YOUR PUPS:

A dedicated dog-washing station (either with an ad hoc hose attachment or a permanent plumbed pet shower) contains the mess to a mud-room or laundry room near the entrance. You may need a plumber to extend a water line.

# LIVING ROOM + FAMILY ROOM

Your living room works harder than any other room in the house, which means that upgrades here pay off every single day. Here's how to move more freely in the place where life actually happens.

## REDUCE THE NOISE:

If your living room sounds like an echo chamber, Jonathan suggests wood-slat acoustic wall paneling: "It kills the reverb and looks beautiful." The Scotts partner with the Wood Veneer Hub (WVH), but you can buy wood-slat sound buffers at Home Depot and Lowe's.

## AROUND THE HOUSE TIPS

**Update outlet plates and switch plates:** Fresh white plates (or a coordinating color) are cheap and "make the room look cleaner in 10 minutes," Drew says.



**ELIMINATE CORD SPAGHETTI:** Dump your old electrical splitters, Jonathan says. His upgrade: a low-profile surge protector with multiple outlets and USB ports, mounted so it can't slide around.

## UPLIFT YOUR COUCH:

Getting up from a low sofa is easy—until it isn't. Drew has a simple fix: Since most furniture legs use a universal screw, you can swivel on taller (and preferably thicker) legs to raise the seat.

**HIDE THE SUPPLIES:** Drew loves furniture that doubles as container space. Games, puzzles, paints, drawing pads—"It can all be stashed away," he says, "so you're not living in a permanent craft store."

# BEDROOM + CLOSETS

For the spot where your day begins and ends, do this to reduce nighttime stumbling, improve storage and, most important, get a good night's rest.

**1. Splurge on a smart system:** A smart mattress, while pricey, can transform your sleep. Sensor-dotted bed toppers can track snoring and temperature shifts (including hot flashes) and can cool or warm you to keep you comfortable. Jonathan notes that some systems can respond automatically: "If you're snoring, it auto-elevates the head." Top models include Saatva Solaire, Eight Sleep Pod 5 Ultra and Sleep Number Climate 360.

**2. Sleep flexibly:** "Adjustable bed frames aren't super cheap, but they allow you

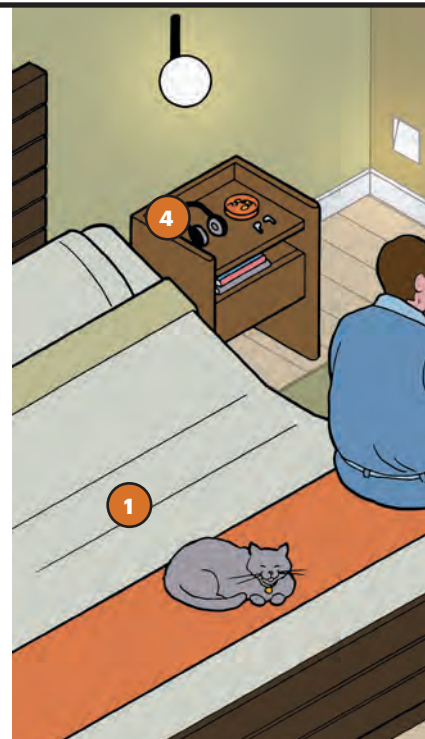
to sit up, raise your head or legs easier and take pressure off the back and hips with the touch of a button," says Jonathan, who says he loves his adjustable bed "to an embarrassing degree."

**3. Warm the landing:** Drew loves "having warmth under your feet when you're getting in and out of bed." If your rug doesn't cover enough flooring, "just get a runner for both sides."

**4. Tune out the noise:** The brothers' low-effort solution to TV-in-bed battles: Many smart TVs have Bluetooth

connectivity. "Connect Bluetooth headphones to your TV so your partner doesn't hear anything," says Jonathan.

**5. Get more into (and out of) your closet:** Most people waste bedroom closet space by hanging everything on a single rod. The brothers call it "rod void." By adding shelves or drawers, "double stacking" your rods, or adding a telescopic valet rod (that angles out to hang a single suit or dress for steaming), "all of a sudden it doubles or triples the amount of stuff organized," says Jonathan.



**PREPARE TO BE AN EXPANSIVE HOST:** In-person social connections matter as you get older, so be ready for anything without cluttering the room. Drew's fix is furniture that expands when you need it: "Stacking stools, nesting tables and gateleg console trays are great for game night or surprise visitors."

**AROUND-THE-HOUSE TIPS**

**Show your collectibles:** "If you aren't showcasing what you're collecting, you shouldn't be collecting it."

**PROTECT YOUR STUFF FROM FURRY FRIENDS:** A small layout tweak can prevent pet-induced disasters. "Add a slim console behind the sofa and suddenly there's a safe spot for drinks and breakables," says Jonathan.

**AROUND THE HOUSE TIPS**

**Freshen air:** Dust and allergens can make your breathing harder and make sleep less restful as you age, which is why Jonathan recommends "a good air purifier with a medical-grade filter."



## HALLWAYS + STAIRS

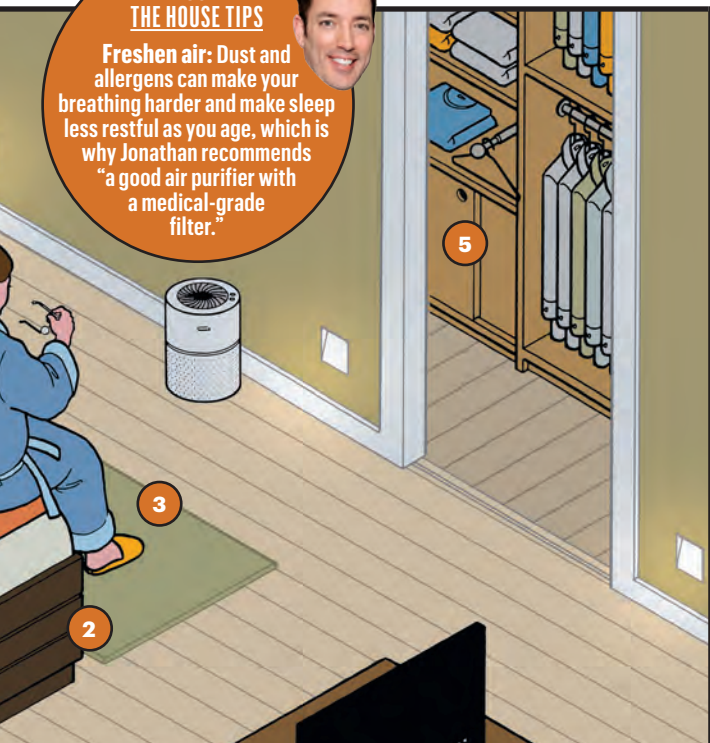
*These are full of the sneakiest hazards. The good news: The fixes are fast, cheap and satisfying.*

**1. Make stairs safer:** Falls are the leading cause of injury for adults 65-plus. One of Jonathan's favorite one-hour upgrades is installing transparent anti-slip stair treads on wood or other hard surfaces. Or, for a classic look, call in a pro to add a carpet runner. "With families, with older people, with anyone who wears socks, this is a no-brainer," he says.

**3. Light the way:** Motion-activated lights in hallways, staircases and bathrooms are "nonnegotiable" for safety, Drew says, illuminating your path without blinding you. Battery-powered stick-on LED strips work great and install in minutes—no electrician needed. For stairs, Drew suggests adding lights at both the top and bottom so you're never navigating in shadow.

**2. Add depth with trim and paint:** High-contrast trim colors (say, sage green against a white wall) help define visual boundaries, making navigation safer. You can add contrast easily with a chair rail: Just measure, attach pre-primed trim with adhesive and a few nails, then paint. Basic wainscoting takes more time but remains a manageable project. Both options protect walls from scuffs, transforming plain hallways into more inviting spaces.

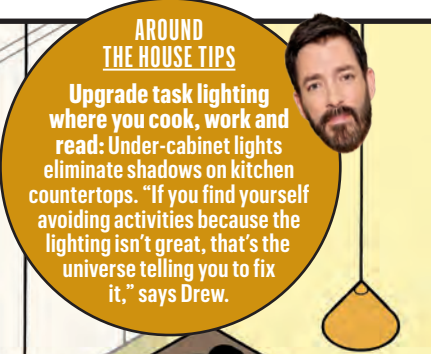
**4. Touch up walls and trim:** Buffing away the scuff rewards you immediately with clarity and safety. A quick paint touch-up or repainting trim in a warm, neutral semigloss shade brightens hallways and improves visibility without a full paint job. (Heck, even using one of those eraser-style sponges can make a difference.) "It can make an old space new in an afternoon," Jonathan says.



# KITCHEN + DINING ROOM

The brothers' best one-day kitchen upgrades focus on safety, smarter flow and heading off major repair bills down the road.

## AROUND THE HOUSE TIPS



Upgrade task lighting where you cook, work and read: Under-cabinet lights eliminate shadows on kitchen countertops. "If you find yourself avoiding activities because the lighting isn't great, that's the universe telling you to fix it," says Drew.

### INSTALL INDUCTION:

Consider buying an induction range, which heats cookware without a flame or heated coil. "The cooktop can shut itself off so you don't set a fire," Jonathan says—safer for anyone with memory concerns.

### GIVE CABINETS A FACELIFT:

"Swap out old knobs with D-shaped pulls that are easier to grab and open," Drew says. If you've got dinks and chips, "add a little filler and some paint and you're done."

### DO A DECLUTTER:

"Go drawer by drawer, take everything out, then be honest with yourself," says Jonathan. Toss or donate what you don't ever use and store everyday items within reach so you're not bending and digging for basics.

### ORGANIZE BY TASK:

For example, instead of going around the kitchen every morning to collect what you need for coffee, Jonathan suggests setting up a simple coffee station with the machine, mugs, coffee, filters, spoons and sweetener all in one place.

### LET LEAKS

**"SHRIEK":** To keep a slow leak from becoming a massive problem, Jonathan says to add cheap leak-sensor "pucks" under sinks, behind toilets and near the water heater. They'll sound an alarm if they get wet.

### MAXIMIZE SHELF

**SPACE:** If you have shelves in a cabinet or open pantry, Jonathan recommends adding a deep pull-out tray system—"a life-improving one-day improvement, especially for older people," that keeps items accessible.

### BE LIKE KING

**ARTHUR:** "A round table matters more as you age," Jonathan says. "It keeps everyone equally close to the conversation, so you can hear each other, and nobody gets stuck on the 'far end.'"

### GET SMART

**CHARGERS:** Multiple generations living together means more gadgets to charge. Swap out a few old wall outlets for new ones with built-in USB ports so you can plug in charging cables without bulky charging blocks, says Drew.

### TIGHTEN THE

**WOBBLES:** "Don't flip out; flip your chairs," Drew says. Tighten every screw and bolt. Add felt pads to chair legs so they glide quietly and don't scratch floors. "You won't believe how satisfying this simple 20-minute fix can feel," he says.

# BATHROOM

*Bathrooms are small, slippery and used when you're tired, rushed or half-awake. The rule here: Focus on comfort, safety and better storage.*

**1. Reduce the noise:** Drew's biggest pet peeve in the bathroom: "that loud smashing sound of plastic against porcelain." So, he says, swap in a soft-close toilet seat. It's cheap, fast and makes the room feel less public restroom-adjacent.

**2. Go bidet (yes, really):** Jonathan calls an electric bidet "a life changer," especially in helping to maintain independence and dignity. "Having a toilet that cleans with water is more sanitary, and it can make the whole routine easier if flexibility or mobility isn't what it used to be." If you have an outlet near the toilet, a toilet seat bidet supplying warm water is a straightforward installation. If you don't, an electrician can add one in under an hour.

**3. Don't put your sink on a pedestal:** Jonathan is blunt about pedestal sinks: "Absolutely useless!" Replacing a pedestal with a cabinet sink creates a critical stability anchor for balance and brings helpful tools—magnifying mirror, electric toothbrush—closer. "It also lets you hide your toilet paper."

**4. Hide medicine in plain sight:** As the daily necessities of aging multiply, sharing a bathroom counter becomes a cluttered, risky endeavor. Jonathan recommends putting it all behind a recessed, mirrored medicine cabinet. "Most are designed to slip neatly between the wall studs," he says, creating essential, eye-level storage and space for a larger mirror. While installing one is a manageable DIY project—just be sure to check for wires first—hiring a professional guarantees a safe, perfect fit.

**5. Empower your shower:** If you've got a showerhead that's too low or hits at an odd angle, the brothers' no-demolition upgrade is a gooseneck extender that raises your showerhead and angles it outward, giving you more headroom and a better spray position. "Most people can install this without a plumber," Drew says. Wrapping Teflon tape over the new gooseneck's threads makes for tight seals when screwing it in.

**6. Use discreet grab bars:** They don't all look like the ones at a hospital, Jonathan says. Companies such as Moen, Zuxet and Grabcessories by Live Well make

stylish ADA-compliant bars that blend naturally with your home's decor, including some that double as towel racks and toilet paper holders.

**7. Soft-close everything:** As with toilet seats, so with cabinets: "Stop the slam," Drew says. Add soft-close hinges or dampers to vanity doors and drawers, preventing painful pinches. ■

*Property Brothers: Under Pressure is a new 14-episode HGTV series starring Drew and Jonathan Scott that tackles the emotional and financial stress of buying and renovating homes in a tough market. The series guides buyers through the entire process, from house hunting to functional design.*

## Got Bigger Plans? AARP Can Help

► The **AARP HomeFit Guide** is a 36-page, room-by-room checklist that helps you spot smart upgrades to make daily life safer, easier and more comfortable at every age—a practical blueprint for the bigger projects you may want to tackle next. Go to [aarp.org/homefit](http://aarp.org/homefit) for more.

► The free weekly **AARP Livable Communities newsletter** shares ideas for improving the places where we live—from walkability to housing options to community design. Visit [aarp.org/livable](http://aarp.org/livable) to enroll.

► And visit [aarp.org/homeandcommunity](http://aarp.org/homeandcommunity) for even more tips and tools for your housing needs.





**Kogi BBQ**  
truck's Korean  
short rib taco

# A Taste of America

Come along on our national food tour, with local chefs as your guides

AS TOLD TO KELSEY OGLETREE

**W**HEN WE TRAVEL, food is one of the main experiences we talk about—often in great detail—with our friends upon return. That savory meal in a stumbled-upon spot. Or the eagerly anticipated feast in the destination restaurant everyone’s buzzing about. Gastro-tourism is as common and thrilling as seeing the sights. And what gives you a better “flavor” for a town than actually tasting its culinary specialties?

In this mouthwatering tour across the United States, we talked with a number of older, experienced chefs about their local food scene—how it developed and what makes it special—and asked them to describe a signature dish. Tasty travels!

## WEST COAST

# LOS ANGELES

Chef Roy Choi on starting a four-wheeled food revolution

**Local food scene:** Los Angeles is an immigrant city, and you can see that story play out through its food trucks. They popped up in the 1950s and '60s, selling tacos to workers on break. By the '80s, these lunch trucks were everywhere. My family didn't own a truck, but my mom made kimchi, and we sold it by the jar out of the trunk of our car. We'd roll down the window at red lights, and I'd hop out to make the exchange. When I launched Kogi in 2008, Twitter and the iPhone were new, and we used them as our megaphone. Instead of waiting for customers to find us, we told them where we'd be. It felt revolutionary, but really, we were adding a modern twist to decades of street food culture.



**Roy Choi, 56,**  
founder of  
Kogi BBQ

**< My special dish:** The Korean short rib taco. We use bone-in short rib marinated in soy sauce, garlic, ginger, green onions, sesame oil, apple and kiwi. We grill it, chop it fine and caramelize it again so it gets crispy and sweet. It's tucked into small tortillas and topped with a salsa roja made of Korean and Mexican chiles, lime juice and rice vinegar, and a slaw of cabbage, green onion, sesame seeds and chile vinaigrette. The first bite is warm and juicy, with this mix of charred meat, acid and spice. You taste something familiar, like a taco you've eaten a hundred times, but then the gochujang and sesame come through, and it flips your palate. After 17 years, this taco still tastes brand-new to me.

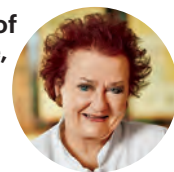
**Scampo's  
lobster  
pizza**



NEW ENGLAND

# BOSTON

Lobster is a key part of Northeastern cuisine, says Lydia Shire



**Lydia Shire, 77,**  
chef and  
owner of  
Scampo

**Local food scene:** Bostonians are so lucky to be close to fertile fishing grounds, and lobster has always been a big part of the makeup.

**▲ My special dish:** In 1983, I had just cooked and shucked all this beautiful lobster for brunch at my restaurant. I thought, *Why don't I make a pizza?* We sold it as a special, and it flew out of the kitchen. It became so popular, I had to add it to our regular menu, where it's been ever since. The experience of your first bite is magical. I've seen many couples get engaged over our lobster pizza, then come back to order it again for anniversaries.

# KANSAS CITY

Pitmaster Deborah Jones: A smoky means to burnt ends

**Local food scene:** In Kansas City, barbecue is a way of life. My sister and I grew up learning from our dad. He taught us how to build a fire and smoke meat the old-fashioned way. He opened Jones Bar-B-Q in the 1970s, and we're still carrying on his traditions. Here, it's all about the wood. Hickory logs burn hot, infusing every bite of meat with deep, smoky flavor.

▼ **My special dish:** Our burnt ends start with brisket cooked low and slow for hours over hickory. I'm usually at the pit by 2 a.m., watching the fire and trusting my eye. It's not about thermometers; it's about knowing when the brisket is just right. You have to really enjoy doing it, because it's an art. Once the meat is tender, we slice off the edges, rich with bark [the outer layer of the meat] and smoke, and chop them up. We don't use pre-cut cubes like other spots. We season simply, with just

garlic, black pepper and seasoning salt. Some customers like burnt ends straight; others order them on a sandwich. We always sell out fast. They're good with or without sauce. We keep our sauce a secret, but it's sweet and tangy.

I've seen first-timers take a bite and say, "Oh, my God." That gives me a boost you wouldn't imagine. For anyone coming to Kansas City, burnt ends should be the first thing on your list.



**Sisters Deborah, 69, left, and Mary Jones**



**Jones Bar-B-Q's burnt ends**



EAST COAST

# NEW YORK

Chef Marcus Samuelsson reflects on the flavors of Harlem

**Local food scene:** Harlem is a crossroads where Southern cooking, African heritage and New York energy collide. When African Americans came here during the Great Migration, they brought food, hospitality, arts, music and churches. Their recipes shaped the neighborhood's identity: fried chicken, collard greens, corn bread.

You see the culture here everywhere—music spilling out of clubs, gospel on Sundays and restaurants where generations gather over a meal. Red Rooster sits right in the middle. We



**Marcus Samuelsson, 55, owner of Red Rooster Harlem**

Red Rooster's  
fried chicken



have live music five nights a week.

I opened my restaurant to reflect Harlem's spirit: welcoming, vibrant and deeply rooted in tradition. No one comes here just because they're hungry; they come to be part of an experience: live music, art and a plate that feels like home.

▲ **Myspecial dish:** Our fried chicken, called Yardbird, is Harlem on a plate. It starts with a good bird—about 4 pounds—brined in salted water, then marinated overnight in buttermilk, coconut milk, salt and spices like cumin and white pepper. We fry it twice: The first fry cooks it through; the second makes it shatteringly crisp.

It's savory, not too spicy, and we serve it with house-made pickles. The acid cuts through the fat. Add collard greens or sweet potatoes to round out



your meal. We also serve fried chicken and waffles drizzled with hot honey, a nod to the jazz musicians in the '30s, who'd eat them together after late sets.

If you're coming for the first time, show up for Sunday brunch. Harlem is proud of its culture, and it really comes to life through the food and the music.

❗ **Vacation discounts:** AARP members can get deals on hotels, car rentals, cruises and more when booking through the AARP Travel Center Powered by Expedia. Visit [aarp.org/travel](http://aarp.org/travel) for more information.

WEST

## LAS VEGAS

In this steak city, Chef Tal Ronnen is changing plant perceptions

**Local food scene:** Las Vegas is a place where people come to indulge. Crossroads Kitchen comes across as an indulgent restaurant, largely Italian, but we don't serve meat or dairy. I became a vegetarian more than 30 years ago. It was tough back then; a lot of my culinary school friends thought I was insane. Now a lot more people eat this way. I'm not the weirdo in the room anymore.



**Tal Ronnen, 50, owner of Crossroads Kitchen**



**Crossroads Kitchen's lion's mane mushroom steak**

▲ **Myspecial dish:** Las Vegas is known for steaks, so we serve one made from lion's mane mushrooms. Ninety percent of our guests aren't vegetarians, and when they try this, they say, "Wow, that's a mushroom? That's crazy." A farmer in California grows huge ones for us, up to 10 inches across. We cut them into filets, marinate them in beet ponzu to impart a red color like beef, and grill them. When you cut into one, you see the texture that you would in steak. And it takes on the flavor of the umami-rich Bordelaise sauce we serve on the side.

Saltbox Seafood Joint's shrimp roll



# SOUTH **DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA**

Chef Ricky Moore says cooking with fresh seafood is how this state rolls

**Local food scene:** The North Carolina coast has always been famous for fresh seafood pulled straight from the Atlantic. Seafood here is as seasonal as any vegetable. Some fish only swim near the coast certain months of the year. At Saltbox, I wanted to bring that heritage inland to Durham—the menu shifts with the tides. You won't find freezers here, just a chalkboard listing what's fresh that day.

▲ **My special dish:** If you're visiting Durham, start with our shrimp roll. It's inspired by the shrimp burgers I grew up eating at a drive-in on the way to the coast: a soft bun filled with fried local shrimp and slaw. My version begins with boiled shrimp peeled by hand. I

simmer the shells in butter with herbs and spices, creating a rich shrimp butter we slather on the roll.



**Ricky Moore, 56, owner of Saltbox Seafood Joint**

The shrimp are dredged in seasoned corn flour and fried until crisp, a style we call Calabash. Then they're loaded onto the bun and topped with a bright, herba-ceous slaw dressed in a light citrus vinaigrette. People often say, "I've had fried shrimp, but this is different." That's exactly the reaction I hope for: a familiar dish transformed into something unforgettable.

## **Kitchen Confidential**

*Pro tips on finding a great restaurant on the road*

### **SKIP THE LATEST OPENINGS.**

Instead, look for spots that have been around for more than 20 years. They still exist for a reason, "and it's not because they suck," Zucchero says. Try searching "family-owned restaurants" or "restaurants with history" online.

### **PUT GOOGLE MAPS TO WORK.**

Search in your map app by typing in a specific dish, rather than type of cuisine, Moore says. Read any bad reviews

critically. The negative comments can show a misunderstanding. "Complaints like 'too salty' or 'no substitutions' often mean serious food," he says.

### **ASK A STRANGER.**

"When I'm traveling without leads on hidden gems," Samuelsson says, "I ask the people around me—my seatmate on a flight, a driver, a hotel concierge: 'What would you order if this were your last meal here?'"

# HOUSTON

Chef Hugo Ortega says Texas food is wrapped in tradition

## Local food scene:

Many people think of brisket in Texas, but there's another meaty tradition with deep roots: barbacoa. In Mexico, people would wrap meat in leaves and cook it with peppers and seasonings. That evolved and made its way to Houston.

▼ **My special dish:** I first saw barbacoa being made when I was 9 years old, at a cousin's baptism in Mexico. They dug a pit, filled it with river stones, cut some leaves and wrapped goat meat inside, then cooked it overnight. That was an incredible experience.

Today, I honor that tradition at Hugo's. Health codes don't allow underground pits, but we have a method that creates a similar flavor. We source young Spanish goats and Dorper lambs from a friend in Midland, Texas, who raises the animals humanely. Then we season simply, wrap in charred agave leaves and slow cook it in a wood-fired



**Hugo Ortega, 61, owner of Hugo's**



**Hugo's barbacoa**

oven. It's served with hand-pressed corn tortillas and a rich Mexican corn broth made from the drippings.

Barbacoa has always been a celebratory dish, made for life events like baptisms or weddings. When guests try it, you see the surprise and joy on their faces. It's not just a meal. It's a taste of something older than Texas itself.



**Mr. Beef's Italian beef**

# CHICAGO

At the restaurant that inspired TV's 'The Bear,' the sandwiches are not gourmet but serious beef

Local food scene: In Chicago, Italian beef is the real deal—our root food. My dad, Joe, took over Mr. Beef in 1979. He didn't invent Italian beef, but he knew how to make it right. People come in expecting something fancy because of the TV show, but it's just a humble sandwich shop.

▲ **My special dish:** Our Italian beef starts as thin-sliced roast beef cooked in its own gravy until it's tender as hell. It sits in a big hot pan behind the counter, soaking up all that flavor. You can get it "dry," "dipped" or "extra juicy," where the bread's basically soaked through with meat juice. Then, pick your pep-



**Christopher Zucchero, 45, owner of Mr. Beef**



pers: sweet roasted or giardiniera. Our giardiniera isn't blistering hot on purpose. My dad always said if you need it that spicy, you're covering up lousy beef. It comes wrapped in wax paper, ready to eat standing up. That's how it was meant to be: no plates, no pretense. ■

*Kelsey Ogletree is a regular contributor to AARP THE MAGAZINE's food pages. She has also written for Travel + Leisure, Condé Nast Traveler, Southern Living, Midwest Living and other publications.*



**MEMBERS ONLY | Five chefs in this story share their recipe secrets. Go to [aarp.org/tasteofamerica](http://aarp.org/tasteofamerica) to learn more.**

- Mr. Beef's giardiniera (Zucchero)
- Kale salad with root vegetables and apple (Samuelsson)
- Barbacoa de Borego, or slow-roasted

- lamb (Ortega)
- Hush honeys (Moore)
- Skirt steak with Japanese perfection sauce (Shire)



# REAL/PEOPLE



*Inspiring stories  
of friends and  
neighbors, in  
their own words*

**INSIDE** His search for family led to a shockingly sweet discovery **P. 66**

A recovering addict took in a dog for a friend going into rehab. That kind gesture turned into a new calling **P. 70**



**Lockhart and Rosa compete in Fort Worth, Texas.**

## *The Ride Stuff*

# At 60, She's a Rodeo Champ

Barrel racer Lisa Lockhart faces down competitors who are decades younger

**W**ALKING INTO the arena in Phoenix last November, I looked around at the other barrel racers invited to compete at the Hondo Rodeo Fest. They were incredible riders of all ages, some 30 or 40 years younger than me. But when it's time to run, no one's age matters to me. I breathe, trust my horse and let the chips fall where they may.

I fell in love with barrel racing as a child. It's a sport where you pilot your horse through a clover-leaf pattern around three barrels as fast as possible without knocking any over. As a professional barrel racer, wife and mother of three, I've balanced my career and family life, keeping family at the forefront. When my kids were young, I'd drive from rodeos across the country to our home in South Dakota for important moments. My kids are grown, but career and family are still a balancing act.

I made my first National Finals Rodeo at age 41 and have qualified every year since: 19 consecutive years. I've won at the highest levels of the sport, and I'm still going strong, though I've faced injuries over the years and my body has aged.

The years have given me valuable experience, though. I know how to read a course, when to slow down and when to push my horse. I still get nervous in high-pressure situations, but I know how to perform when it matters.

In the final round at the Hondo last year, I was the last to go in a field of eight competitors. The footing was rutted from prior runs, and all the other competitors' times were fast. I felt the pressure and the electricity in the building. But my horse and I gave it our all—and won our second Hondo championship buckle.

I don't see myself as an inspiring person, but I'm honored when others see me that way. If I can push someone to follow their dreams, whatever their age, that's worth more than a championship. Titles and awards come and go. Winning in life is what really matters. —As told to David Hochman

*Lisa Lockhart, 60, is on track to become the first \$4 million barrel racer in Women's Professional Rodeo Association history. She lives in Oelrichs, South Dakota.*



Hunter and Lindsey at the bakery where they got to know each other

## Baking Up a Sweet Reunion

Vamarr Hunter and Lenore Lindsey were friendly acquaintances—until he decided to track down his biological mom

**L**ENORE LINDSEY: I thought everything in my life was winding down. In 2022, I was being treated for breast cancer while working 12 to 15 hours a day, trying to keep my bakery open. I'd been running the business solo for 14 years. My daughter, Rachel, was on the other side of the world, teaching English in Beijing. I was worried I would have to close the shop.

**Vamarr Hunter:** I'd been a regular at Give Me Some Sugah for about 10 years, ever since moving to my Chicago neighborhood. The bakery felt like home to me. For a while, I was

engaged, and Miss Lenore took a liking to my then-fiancée, Meagan.

**Lenore:** I did like Meagan, and I thought, *Why is this guy hanging around her?*

**Vamarr:** I held a good job for nearly

20 years as a logistics and supply chain manager, but otherwise I was just moving along in life, trying to keep the ground under my feet. I first became a father when I was 17, and I had three more kids after that, with

three other mothers, including Meagan, with whom I share a 7-year-old son. He and his siblings—ages 18, 30 and 34—are close.

**Lenore:** I also became a parent at 17, but I gave the baby up for adoption.

**Vamarr:** I knew I was adopted, but I had never looked for my biological mother. I guess maybe I was afraid she would be somebody like my adoptive mother, with whom I did not have an ideal relationship, though the rest of my adoptive family was great. Finally, when I was 47, I got curious enough to hire someone to help me find my birth mother.

**Lenore:** One day, I got a call from an investigator, telling me my son was looking for me. She gave me his number. I didn't know what kind of drama that would bring. This could be someone who was an opportunist or a drug addict. Given everything else that was going on in my life, I decided to call Vamarr and tell him, "I can't deal with this right now." Just in case things went bad, I called him from work.

**Vamarr:** My phone rang, and the caller ID read "Give Me Some Sugah." I thought, *But I didn't order anything.*

**Lenore:** I started talking, and then he interrupted, saying, "Miss Lenore? It's Vamarr. You know, Vamarr and Meagan." And I thought, *Oh, the boyfriend.* Then we started screaming and crying.

**Vamarr:** It could have been somebody I wished I'd never found, but she's a pillar of the community, someone I already liked and respected.

**Lenore:** When I learned that he hadn't gotten along with his adoptive mother, it broke my heart. But despite everything he has been through, he's so kind. In fact, Vamarr and I are so much alike, it's just unbelievable. I needed help, and he pitched in right away. You know, this is a son who I never did anything for. He didn't owe me a thing. And yet he said, "I'm helping." That was the miracle of it all. I felt like I could take a breath, because he was there. I was able to keep the



**"Before this happened, I felt like I was approaching the end," Lindsey recalls. "But when I heard his voice, something jumped in my spirit."**

bakery open and complete my treatment. Now I'm cancer-free.

**Vamarr:** For two years, I went to the bakery most days after work so I could learn how to bake. Now she says my cakes are better than hers! Two years ago, I quit my job so I could take over the bakery and let my mom retire. The local newspaper eventually got hold of our story, and we went a little viral.

**Lenore:** Before this happened, I felt like I was approaching the end: the end of my business, the end of my life. But when I heard his voice on the phone, something jumped in my spirit. You never know what things still lie ahead. I thought, *No, I'm not done yet. I've got to keep my eyes and heart open because there's another chapter coming.* —As told to Susan Hauser

*Vamarr Hunter, 51, is the CEO of Give Me Some Sugah bakery in Chicago's South Shore neighborhood. Lenore Lindsey, 68, is retired from the bakery, which she founded. A film about their reunion is scheduled for release later this year from Tyler Perry Studios.*



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# The Happily Temporary Dog Dad

Recovering addict Stephen Knight cares for pets whose owners are in rehab

**S**TEPHEN KNIGHT was 51 years old—and just eight months sober—when he got a knock at his front door in Dallas. It was a friend, a struggling addict, and she was holding her dog, a Maltese-dachshund mix named Jayde.

The friend had decided to return to rehab, but she needed Knight's help. "She told me, 'I need you to take me down to the shelter so I can surrender Jayde, because I have nowhere to put her,'" says Knight, who's now 66. He looked into Jayde's eyes and instantly felt a connection. So rather than help surrender the scruffy black dog, he offered to take care of Jayde himself. "It was kind of life-changing," he says.

Within the year, the former school-teacher would start fostering dogs for other addicts on the road to recovery, eventually opening a nonprofit called Dogs Matter, which he says has helped more than 2,500 dogs and cats when their owners had nowhere left to turn.

But Knight had none of this in mind when he took Jayde in, back in 2012. He just wanted a reason to feel normal again. Although he had managed to stop using crystal meth, Knight worried about relapsing. Many of his closest friends and family had given up on him, and he felt "very much alone."

Until Jayde entered the picture.

For Knight, it was entirely new terrain. He was suddenly responsible for another living thing. "I had to wake up in the morning and walk her. I had to feed her," he says. "I just couldn't lay in bed and feel sorry for myself."



**Knight with, from left, Cora, Piper and Lady at his Dallas home**

When Knight realized that his friend wasn't the only fellow addict who needed pet care while she was in rehab, he decided to do something. His original goal was to foster just a few dogs a year while their owners were in treatment. But that first year, he took in nine dogs. By 2015, Dogs Matter had become a registered nonprofit, requiring participants to complete a recovery plan before they got their pets back, then continuing to support them in their recovery for a year with counseling and respite pet care. Today, Knight shares his home with four dogs—including 18-year-old Jayde, who developed such

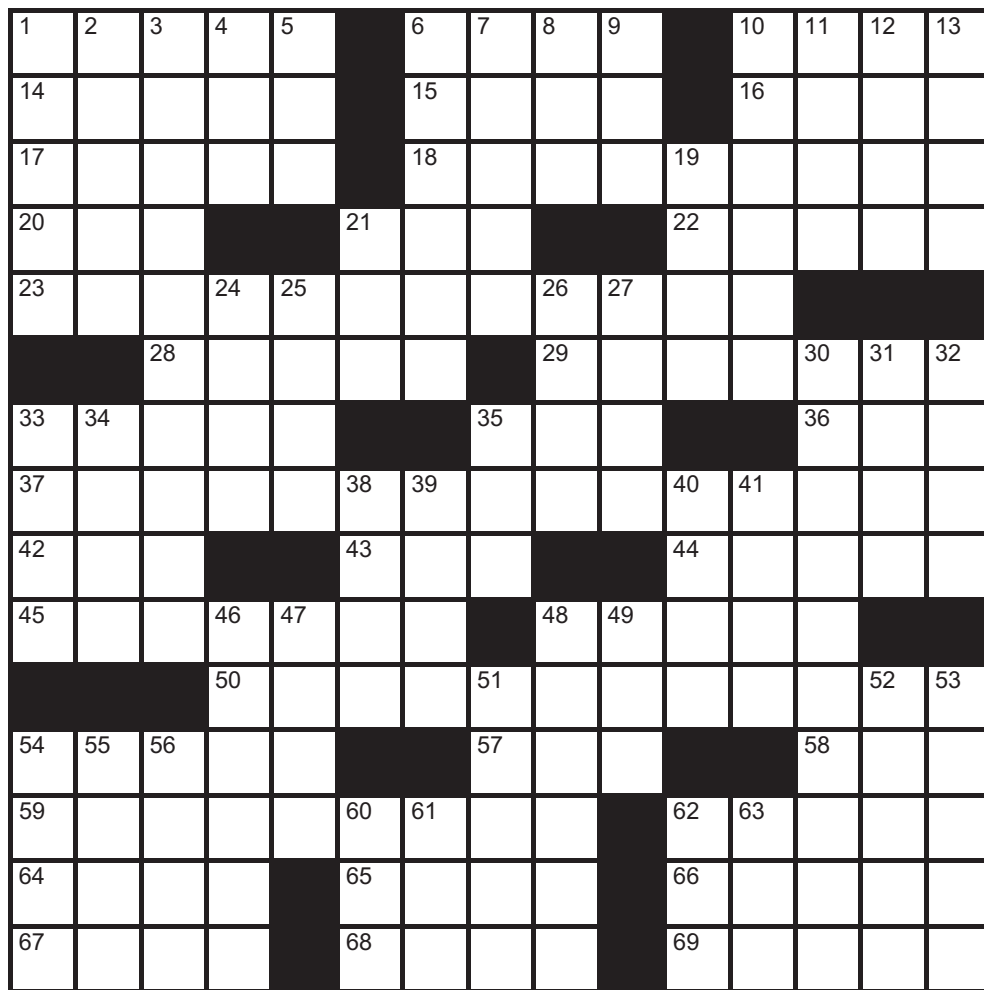
a bond with Knight that she became a permanent member of his family.

About 25 percent of the pet owners his nonprofit helps are over 50—an age at which some addicts wrongly think that their time for recovery has passed. "So many people have given up on themselves after the age of 50 and just say, 'This is the way I'm going to die,'" says Knight. "I've been there, so I know that it's never too late to change your life." —Eric Spitznagel



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video interview with Knight.

PUZZLES BY STANLEY NEWMAN



- 4 Sphere
- 5 ER professionals
- 6 *Honor Thy Father* author Gay \_\_\_\_
- 7 Wed on the run
- 8 DVR button
- 9 Demonstrate curiosity
- 10 Sets of eight
- 11 Cattle calls
- 12 Shaving cut
- 13 Color cartridges' contents
- 19 Meal from a slow cooker
- 21 Emailed file format
- 24 Music player error message
- 25 K through 12
- 26 Unknown: abbr.
- 27 Furnish for a while
- 30 Approximately
- 31 Goofs
- 32 Roll-call votes
- 33 Coup d' \_\_\_\_
- 34 Classy "Me neither"
- 35 Vacation rental
- 38 Check the ID of
- 39 Warmhearted
- 40 Type of flat screen
- 41 Paintings at a *museo*
- 46 Bowler holder
- 47 \_\_\_\_ Day (vitamin brand)
- 48 Winter Olympics race
- 49 German article
- 51 Conclusion to a children's song
- 52 Supernaturally strange
- 53 University bigwigs
- 54 Back talk
- 55 \_\_\_\_ pricing (comparison shopping tool)
- 56 With no purpose
- 60 Thieve
- 61 Letter before sigma
- 62 Tic-tac-toe non-winner
- 63 One in a pod

**CROSSWORD**

## TRIPLE TRIO

**ACROSS**

- 1 La Guardia, Daley or McCheese
- 6 More than mega- or even giga-
- 10 Prefix for -present and -directional
- 14 Squirrel snack
- 15 Brewpub output
- 16 Bit of change
- 17 Ticket remnants
- 18 With 59 Across, everything
- 20 Reunion group
- 21 Lively energy
- 22 To-do list items
- 23 With 50 Across, officially complete

- 28 *The Right Stuff* author
- 29 Cronkite, Brokaw and Holt
- 33 He begat Methuselah
- 35 One side of an issue
- 36 "Are you a man \_\_\_\_ mouse?"
- 37 Typical guys
- 42 Consist of
- 43 Broadcast
- 44 Attire
- 45 Small-timer with big-shot airs
- 48 Brief squabble
- 50 See 23 Across
- 54 Hotel room upgrade
- 57 Singer Janis
- 58 *Do the Right Thing* director
- 59 See 18 Across
- 62 It might be grand, comic or rock

- 64 Cylindrical storehouse
- 65 Wright Brothers' home
- 66 Marks, as some ballots
- 67 Mythical river
- 68 Upsurge
- 69 Desert havens

**DOWN**

- 1 Some Halloween wear
- 2 Intermission follower
- 3 Taylor Swift's biggest fans, stereotypically

**WORDPLAY**

### AGE-OLD WISDOM

Find the three words hidden in the sentence at right that, in their current order, make up a well-known phrase.



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HOW WE'RE FIGHTING FOR YOU

**AARP WORKS FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES**

**W**HEN THINKING about retirement, some may day-dream about that bungalow on the beach, but the reality is that a large majority—75 percent—of people 50-plus want to stay in their homes for as long as they can.

A more sobering reality: About half of older Americans lack confidence that their current homes and communities will be able to meet their future needs. That's a valid concern. Most homes right now don't have all the features that can support someone as they age. And too many of our communities pay little attention to the needs of older residents.

For decades, AARP has been at the forefront of making communities more livable for older Americans.

Our founder, Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, was a leading advocate for aging in place. A scale model of the "House of Freedom," codesigned by AARP to meet the needs of older Americans, was shared with President Dwight D. Eisenhower in early 1961. Built in downtown Washington, D.C., the actual concept house featured a step-free entrance, wider doorways, lower cabinets and an open floor plan.

AARP is still committed to its goal, working with lawmakers and industry partners. Here's how we're achieving it.

**Support for staying in your home.**

AARP offers tools and information to help understand the basics of home design and safety. The AARP Livability Index ([aarp.org/livabilityindex](http://aarp.org/livabilityindex)) scores neighborhoods and communities across the country on the services and amenities that affect older residents



the most, and the AARP HomeFit Guide ([aarp.org/homefit](http://aarp.org/homefit)) helps you assess your home for safety and comfort.

**Advocating for change.** AARP works with lawmakers to expand the supply of affordable housing for older Americans and to create age-friendly dwellings. This includes passing laws to allow options like small, flexible backyard suites known as accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Go to [aarp.org/advocacy](http://aarp.org/advocacy) to find out more.

**Community grants.** AARP will award over \$8 million in local grants this year to improve communities for older residents as part of our Livable Communities initiative, which supports the efforts of localities to become great places to live for those 50 and older. Now in their 10th year, our Community Challenge grants have invested more than \$24 million in projects, such as crosswalks and public space enhancements, to develop livable communities. Visit [aarp.org/communitychallenge](http://aarp.org/communitychallenge) to learn more.

For most older adults, having good housing options and communities that are responsive to their needs are top priorities. AARP is committed to making that a reality. —*Rodney Harrell, AARP vice president, family, home and community*

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## EVA LONGORIA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37

from year to year, walking people to their cars. “This is who Eva is when no one’s watching.”

The Eva Longoria Foundation works at the same human scale, focusing on closing the education gap for Latinas through parent engagement courses and mentorship programs, and also offering microloans to Latina-owned businesses. In 2024, Longoria was recognized with a \$50 million Bezos Courage and Civility Award, a prize intended to support her charitable work. Said Lauren Sánchez, who awards the annual prize along with her husband, Jeff Bezos, “This woman is going to make a huge difference in the world.”

### A New Definition of Success

If Longoria worries about Hollywood’s notorious expiration date for women over 40, she’s not showing it. She says she has never felt more powerful or more hopeful than she does at 51.

Last year marked her 20th as global brand ambassador for L’Oréal Paris, meaning she has been professionally associated with “aging gracefully” for two decades. She’s quick to admit it’s part luck. “When I was 20, I looked 15. When I was 30, I was still getting carded for alcohol. I’ve never looked my age. So it just followed me into my 50s.”

It helps that she takes excellent care of herself. Longoria lifts heavy weights. She’s loyal to supplements (magnesium for sleep, potassium for muscle cramps, electrolytes because she drinks too much coffee, she says). She bounces on a rebounder trampoline.

She and Bastón recently installed a padel court at their house (think pickleball’s more intense cousin). She’s also refreshingly willing to declare defeat when a trend doesn’t suit her. “I’m not a fan of Pilates,” she says. “I tried it for years. It was always too hard.”

Longoria is working her brain too. She didn’t know much about soccer before joining an investment group in 2021 (alongside fellow actors Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney) that has bought professional soccer teams

in Wales, Mexico and Colombia. But she loves the challenge of being a beginner again: “When you learn something new, especially after 50, your neurons change. And so, me learning the world of soccer has been so fulfilling, because it’s like a whole ’nother language.” (Side-note: Longoria, who says she grew up in “a very assimilated household,” didn’t learn Spanish until she was nearly 40.)

But time is the true measure of wellness. “I always ask myself what defines success for me,” she says. “As I get older, it’s not some superficial thing. I’m at a point where I don’t want to waste my days. We only have so many years left. How are you going to spend them? What are you going to do in this moment? That focus makes getting older exciting.”

Maybe so, but certain parts of aging, such as reading glasses, are less thrilling. “I need to carry these freaking readers everywhere,” she says, flicking a pair across the table with an *ugh*. “I swear, my eyesight got fuzzy overnight. We’re out at a restaurant and everybody’s happy, but nooo, I can’t read the menu. It’s so irritating!”

### The Person She’s Becoming

On the first day of 2026, while many people were nursing hangovers, Longoria was sitting alone on a beach, meditating. “I wanted time to think by myself,” she explains. “I needed to go figure out my intentions and write them down.” She spent almost the whole day there.

What did she come up with? Her to-do list is both practical and audacious. She’d love to direct the story of Rita Hayworth, née Margarita Casino. (“She was Latina ... and yet one of the biggest pinups in the world. I’m probably aging out of playing her already, but to bring her story to light as a director and producer would be a gift.”) She wants to film *Searching For* seasons in Japan, Greece, Turkey, Argentina and the Caribbean. She also fantasizes about returning to school to teach: “I love learning. I’m very curious. Being a professor somewhere would be amazing.”

Her stretch goals are more internal—“releasing the person I was and stepping into the person I’m becoming,”

as Longoria puts it. What does that person look like? “I haven’t met her yet. I’m still evolving to her.” She pauses. “A compassionate human being who cares about the world and can finally say what I really mean. People will give you permission—‘She’s lived a life, she can say that.’ But I’m not there yet.”

Still, she’s very content with where she is right now.

Motherhood is what seems to have brought it all together for her. Longoria became a mom at 43, after two earlier marriages—first to actor Tyler Christopher from 2002 to 2004, then to NBA player Tony Parker from 2007 to 2011. She met Bastón in 2013 through a mutual friend, and they married in 2016. “Once Santi was born, everything changed, and it actually made life easier,” she says, “because then you have that automatic answer. Everything goes through the lens of: Does this take away from my time with my son? Then no, I cannot do that.”

She talks about Bastón with unmistakable warmth. “I’m with an adult,” she says. “He’s the kindest human being in the world. Pepe brightens up every room he enters.” Not that it’s all perfectly curated serenity. They bicker about GPS navigation (“The map is right there on the screen in the car, and he makes a wrong turn”) and meal times (“He’s Mexican, so he wants lunch at 4 and dinner at 10. I want dinner at 5 or 6, and then I want to go to bed”). “We’re passionate about our differences,” she says, “but we always make up.”

Near the end of our interview, Bastón is back. The day is growing late, and yes, he’s hungry.

“See?” Longoria says, laughing.

Before she goes, I ask if there’s any sort of secret for the life she has created for herself. “I don’t think there’s a uniform formula for satisfaction,” she says. “You could do exactly what I did and not have the same outcome. I think everyone needs to find their own way.”

And how does one do that? As her aunt Elsa would say: You’d better figure that out. ■

*David Hochman is a longtime contributing editor for AARP THE MAGAZINE and the AARP Bulletin.*

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 51

outside, the hooch next to ours was gone—a big black hole in its place.

I was working as a head nurse in a postoperative surgical unit, getting wounded casualties under their beds for protection and throwing mattresses on those patients connected to ventilators and chest tubes. Edie's medical unit was dealing with FUO. That means "fever of unknown origin." These patients could be near death, and it was hard to diagnose—it could be malaria, a parasite or cholera, or typhoid or plague.

Our job was to help these young men survive. You wanted to save every soldier's life and did all that it took. There were no tears because you had to shut down your emotions to get through the day. When you have patients in front of you who need every ounce of your energy and nursing skills, their survival depends on how brave you are, how quick, how smart.

But this also became our lasting trauma. It's what we lived with when we returned home, remembering the patients we did not save, wondering if we could have.

When I called Edie years later about launching a program to build a women's Vietnam memorial, she was silent on the other end of the phone. She was still in the PTSD closet. I said, "Edie, I'm going to need help." She said, "I don't even talk about Vietnam." I said, "If we don't talk about it, how will people know?"

When she began speaking out, she was so sincere, honest and passionate. You loved Edie the moment you heard her voice. The Vietnam Women's Memorial was the first memorial in American history honoring military women and women who served in support of the armed forces. Its motto is "Healing and Hope." To me, Edie is the perfect example of why this memorial needed to be dedicated.

*A.J. Baime is a writer and journalist whose books include Go Like Hell: Ford, Ferrari, and Their Battle for Speed and Glory at Le Mans and White Lies: The Double Life of Walter F. White and America's Darkest Secret.*

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**SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES ON PAGE 71**

M	A	Y	O	R	T	E	R	A	O	M	N	I
A	C	O	R	N	A	L	E	S	C	O	I	N
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T	O	M	D	I	C	K	A	N	D	H	A	R
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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

# Colin Farrell

**(MAY 31):** The Irish actor prefers the simple life to his on-screen shenanigans.

**BREAKTHROUGH:** Farrell's early work includes the BBC drama series *Ballykissangel* and the 2000 drama *Tigerland*.

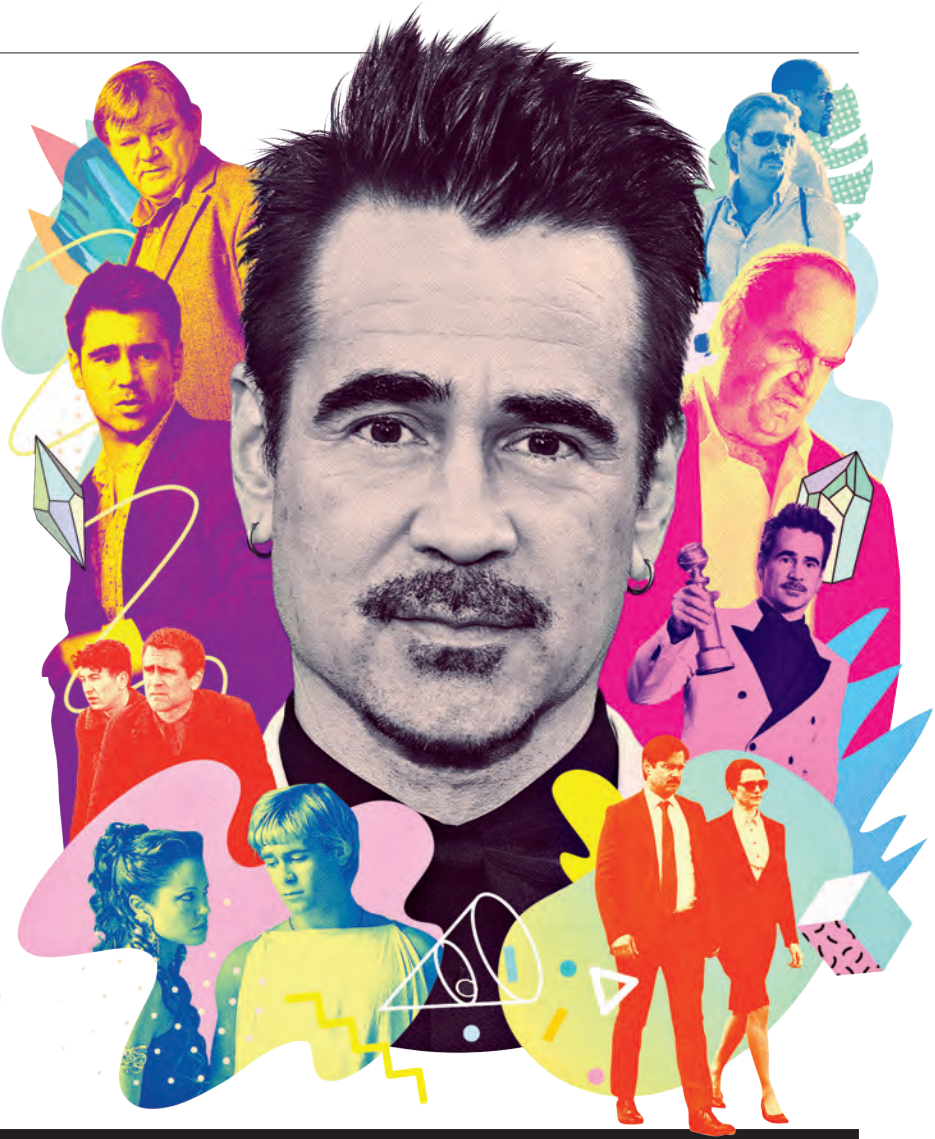
**SUPERVILLAINY:** Following notable roles in *Minority Report* and *Phone Booth*, Farrell played Bullseye in 2003's *Daredevil*. In 2022's *The Batman*, he portrayed the Penguin, a role he reprised in a 2024 HBO miniseries.

**OSCAR NOM:** Farrell has received one Academy Award best actor nomination, for *The Banshees of Inisherin* in 2023.

**CLOSE TO HIS HEART:** In 2024, Farrell launched the Colin Farrell Foundation to support adults with intellectual disabilities. The foundation is inspired by Farrell's son James, who was born with a rare neurogenetic disorder.

**NEW TWISTS:** Farrell has starred in remakes of *Total Recall* and *Fright Night*, as well as a film version of *Miami Vice*.

**LIFE AT HOME:** He likes to spend time outdoors and with his two sons. "Nature is the golden answer, it really is," he told *People*. "I like to jump in a river or go for a walk in a forest." —Whitney Matheson



**MORE MILESTONE BIRTHDAYS**

**Sterling K. Brown**  
**APRIL 5**  
 Former *This Is Us* actor plays a Secret Service agent on political thriller *Paradise*.

50

**Melissa Joan Hart**  
**APRIL 18**  
*Sabrina the Teenage Witch* actor costarred in the 2025 film *A Merry Little Ex-Mas*.

50

**Cillian Murphy**  
**MAY 25**  
*Oppenheimer* actor cofounded Big Things Films, which produced the 2025 drama *Steve*.

50

**Robin Wright**  
**APRIL 8**  
*The Princess Bride* lead directed and starred in last year's miniseries *The Girlfriend*.

60

**Janet Jackson**  
**MAY 16**  
 "Control" and "Nasty" singer wrapped her Las Vegas concert residency last year.

60

**John Waters**  
**APRIL 22**  
 Filmmaker voices all the characters in last year's audiobook *The John Waters Screenplay Collection*.

80



Photo credits and information on page 79

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52	\$21.40	\$16.85	\$41.80	\$32.70	\$62.20	\$48.55	\$103.00	\$80.25
53	\$21.65	\$17.60	\$42.30	\$34.20	\$62.95	\$50.80	\$104.25	\$84.00
54	\$21.90	\$18.10	\$42.80	\$35.20	\$63.70	\$52.30	\$105.50	\$86.50
55	\$23.20	\$19.25	\$45.40	\$37.50	\$67.60	\$55.75	\$112.00	\$92.25
56	\$24.35	\$19.75	\$47.70	\$38.50	\$71.05	\$57.25	\$117.75	\$94.75
57	\$26.00	\$20.60	\$51.00	\$40.20	\$76.00	\$59.80	\$126.00	\$99.00
58	\$27.05	\$21.00	\$53.10	\$41.00	\$79.15	\$61.00	\$131.25	\$101.00
59	\$27.25	\$21.45	\$53.50	\$41.90	\$79.75	\$62.35	\$132.25	\$103.25
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