AARP

The Magazine



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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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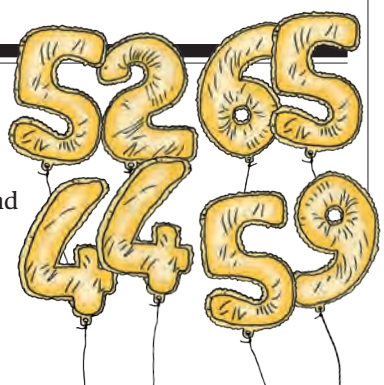
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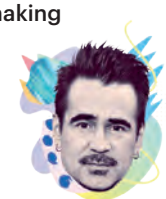
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Colin Farrell! And John Waters is 80!



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: Elan Bongiornio for Rouge Artists. Inset: Courtesy Red Rooster

Clockwise from top: Zohar Lazar; Matt Hawthorne; Sean McCabe; Peter Arkle; Kathleen Fu; Victor Protasio; Jeff Lipsky. Center: Courtesy Vernice Armour

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Margaret Guroff INTERIM EDITOR IN CHIEF

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** and on **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.)

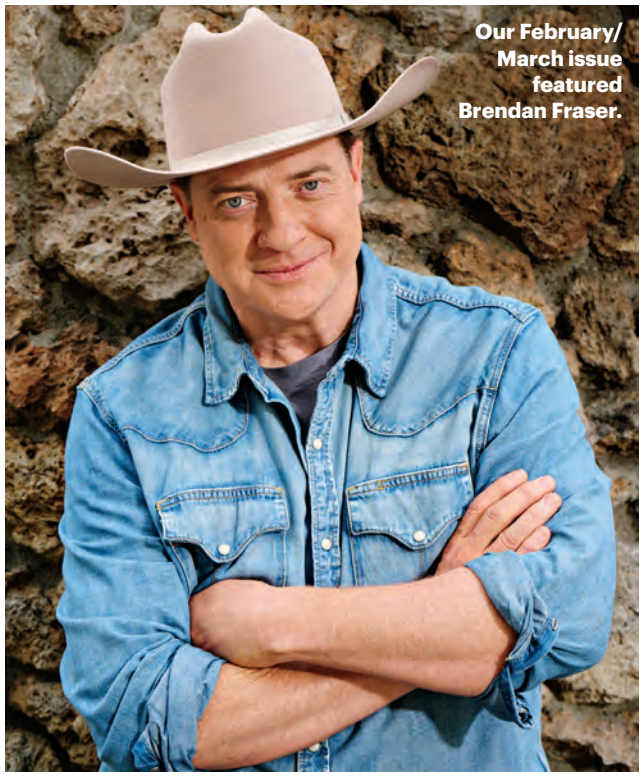
Meg

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** to learn more.

Photo credits on page 81





Our February/March issue featured Brendan Fraser.

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING

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

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*



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*

FLORENCE FOREVER

Marla Gibbs ["What I Know Now"] has wonderful comedic timing—I enjoyed watching her as Florence on *The Jeffersons*. And congrats on working into her 90s; impressive!

NANCYD994470, *Members Edition*

I always got a kick out of her talking smart on *The Jeffersons*.

VALARIE PAINE-BROWN, *Facebook*

May God continue to bless Marla Gibbs. She's a beautiful and hilarious actress.

LINDA ARTIS, *Facebook*

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Clockwise from top left: Peter Yang; Courtesy Nashville Public Square Park; Getty Images

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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.*

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Visit aarp.org/arsenio 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

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF LIPSKY

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 weeknight 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."

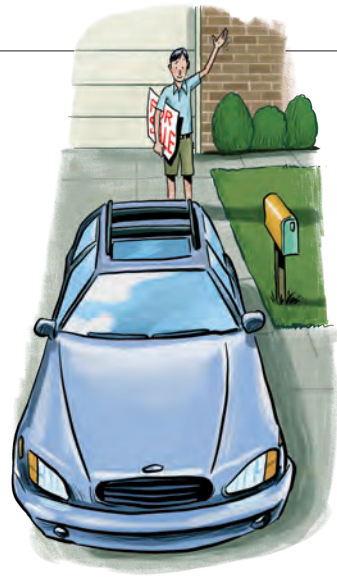
MEMBERS ONLY
For full recipes go to aarp.org/peas or scan this code.

PHOTOGRAPH BY VICTOR PROTASIO

Food stylist: Julian Hensarling; prop stylist: Christina Daley

Selling a Car Could Cost You

In some cases, your insurance bill increases



WHEN 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).

> **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 Conservatory.

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 active Santa Monica Pier, where you can take a selfie by the historic End of the Trail sign. Then ride the world's only solar-powered Ferris wheel, or bicycle down scenic Ocean Avenue.
—Deborah Gaines



Illustration by Zohar Lazar. Route 66, from top: Alamy; Getty Images; Shutterstock. Collage: AARP (Getty Images, 2; Alamy, 3; Shutterstock, 2). Museums, from left: Getty Images; Houston Astros/Getty Images; Aaron M. Sprecher/Getty Images; Thomas Kelley/Alamy; Getty Images; Hyoung Chang/MediaNews Group/The Denver Post via Getty Images

TAKE ME OUT TO THE MUSEUM

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



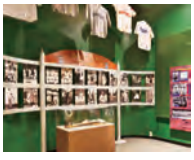
National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum *(Cooperstown, New York)*
See a selection of the museum's more than 40,000 historic items. *baseballhall.org*



Negro Leagues Baseball Museum *(Kansas City, Missouri)*
Interactive exhibits, videos and artifacts show the 40-year Negro Leagues' history. *nlbm.com*



Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory *(Louisville, Kentucky)*
Tour the factory, where 1.8 million bats are made every year. *slugger museum.com*



Babe Ruth Birthplace and Museum *(Baltimore)*
A former red-brick row house is now a museum that traces Ruth's story. *baberuth museum.org*



National Ballpark Museum *(Denver)*
Fans come here to see relics such as seats from historic stadiums. *ballparkmuseum.com —Gina DeCaprio Vercesi*

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Featured Itineraries

From the bustling cities of New Orleans and Memphis to the historic river towns of St. Louis and St. Paul, cruises along this legendary river celebrate the best of America. Guests on a **9-day Lower Mississippi River cruise** can enjoy mint juleps at Oak Alley, a Southern horse-drawn carriage ride in Natchez, and a visit to Graceland in Memphis. The **9-day Upper Mississippi River cruise** offers breathtaking scenery that has inspired the country's most legendary writers, artists, and musicians as well as a visit to the boyhood home of Mark Twain in Hannibal. The tributaries of the Mississippi River also carry stories of America's past and present. The **9-day Tennessee Rivers cruise** takes you along the scenic Cumberland River and Tennessee River Gorge where you will experience Civil War history, blues music, and incredible Southern cuisine. Step aboard for an unforgettable **9-day Arkansas River cruise** from Tulsa to Memphis, where winding waterways are framed by farmland, forested bluffs, and limestone cliffs.

Celebrating America

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Music Formats Over Time

How we listen just keeps changing





RECENTLY, 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 33⅓ 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 33⅓ 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.



8-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 midsong! **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.



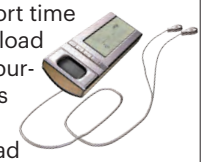
COMPACT DISCS

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.



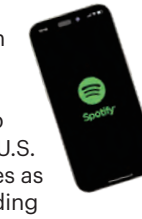
MP3s

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 Lazar; photo credits on page 81



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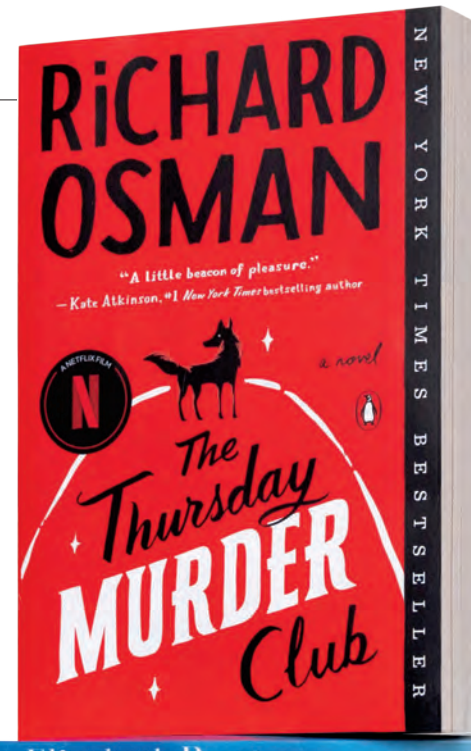
SCAN TO FIND YOUR NEAREST RETAIL STORE.

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 to check out our full list of 50 picks.

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

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*

Go to aarp.org/books for more reviews, author interviews and book talk.

AARP

Dog Food for Thought

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





Dry/Kibble ~ This is typically low-cost, 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*

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 she 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. It can be especially beneficial to older people. "As we age, our skin produces less oil and becomes thinner and more prone to dryness," says Dr. Geeta Yadav of Facet Dermatology in Toronto.

When shopping for a shower filter, look for one that uses activated carbon, which can pull out contaminants that include chlorine and PFAS. *—Michelle Mastro*

From top: Getty Images; Illustrations by Lucy Engelman (5); Getty Images



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.





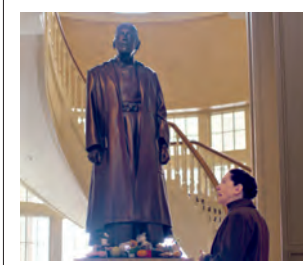
MALCOLM IN THE MIDDLE: LIFE'S STILL UNFAIR

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 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/Lionsgate; Robert Clark; Disney; Macall Polay/20th Century Studios; David Bukach/Disney; Carl Herse

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** *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 or scan this code with your phone.

PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY LUONG

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TOP 7 MEMBER BENEFITS FOR SPRING

AARP is here to champion your interests, empower communities and help you thrive with exciting benefits to make your spring more fun and affordable.

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2 HEALTHY LIVING

Measure any meal's nutritional value with the AARP® Personalized Nutrition Recipe Analyzer and jump-start your routine with on-demand classes from *Pilates Anytime*.



3 GIFTS & GROCERIES

Benefits are blooming with discounts on flowers and gifts from FTD and wine delivery, plus celebrity chef recipes and cookbooks.

4 DINING OUT

Members can treat themselves with discounts at Auntie Anne's, Rainforest Cafe, Moe's Southwest Grill and more. Plus, healthy eating tips and meal ideas.

5 STAY AHEAD OF SCAMS

Protect yourself against fraud by staying informed with the AARP Fraud Watch Network's free helpline, Watchdog Alerts and a scam-tracking map.

6 TECH TIPS & TRICKS

Build your online skills with fun, free tech classes through the AARP Technology Resource Center, along with discounts on how-to guides.

7 ELEVATE YOUR WEEKEND!

Explore ways to upgrade your weekend with dining, travel and entertainment benefits—as well as fun local offers.



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[2]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. [3]Terms and conditions apply. **Accident Forgiveness is not available to CA policyholders.** [4]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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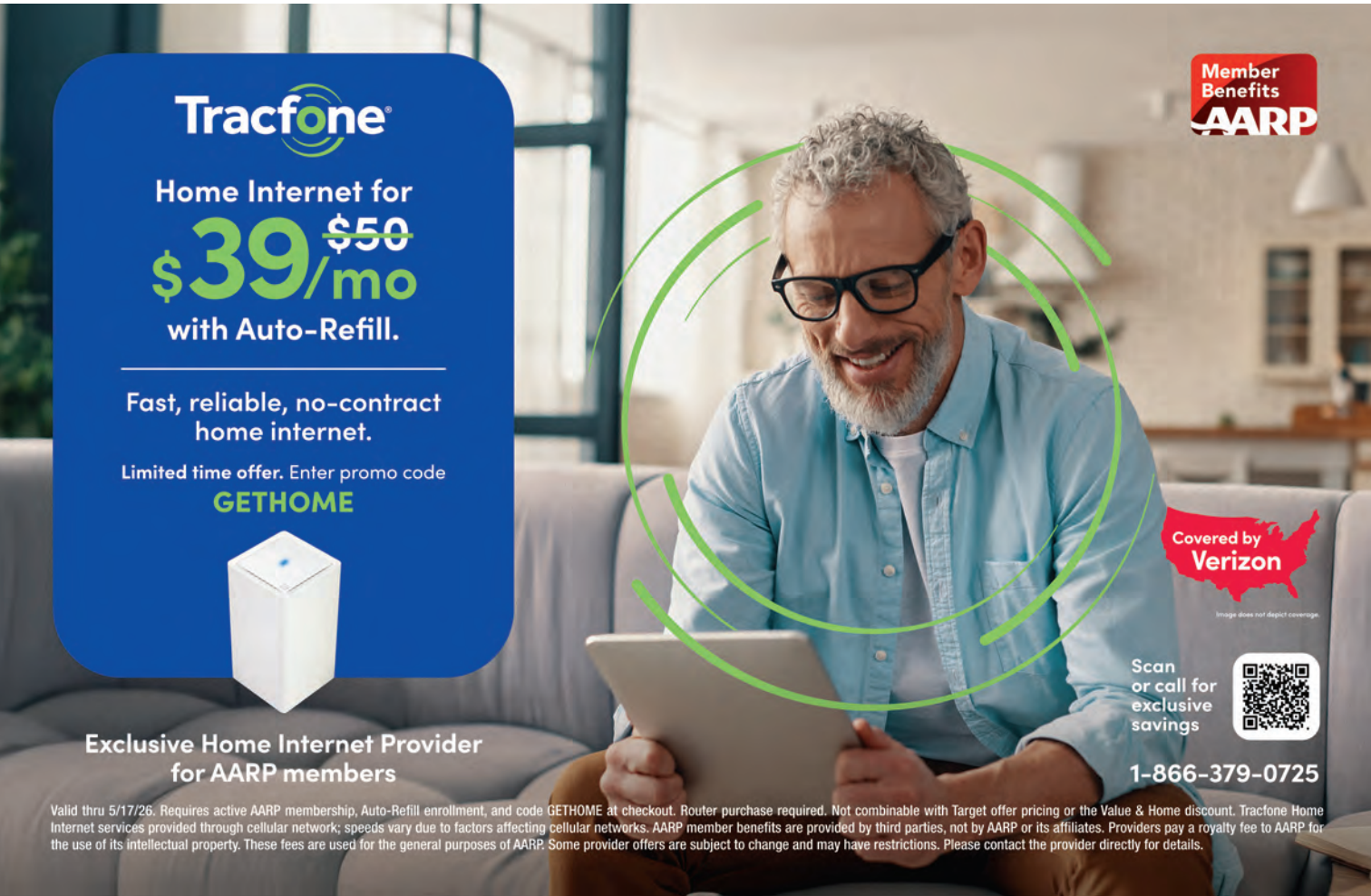
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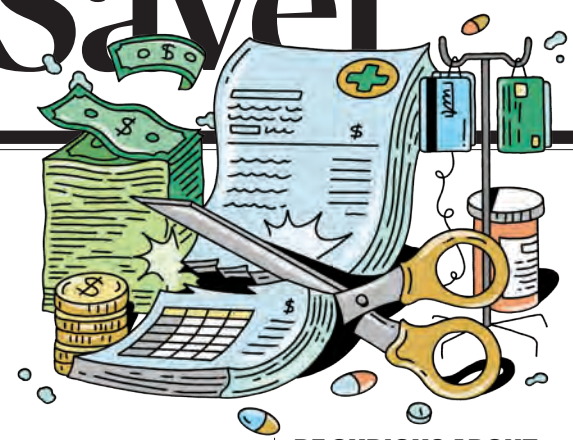
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INSIDE *Want a refund? Here's how to complain* P. 26 / *Pulling cash from an annuity* P. 30

MoneySaver



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 YOUR NO-COST EXAMS AND VACCINES

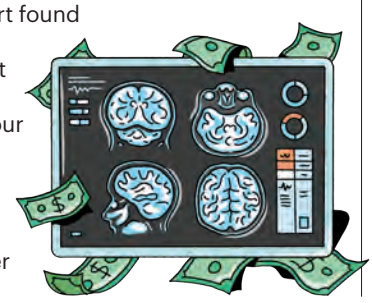
Original Medicare and most Medicare Advantage plans offer a wide range of free preventive services, such as annual wellness visits, mammograms, colonoscopies, bone density scans and recommended vaccines like those for the flu and pneumonia. Taking advantage of them gives you a chance to catch silent problems early, when treatment can be simpler and much less expensive. Yet millions leave these benefits on the table: In 2022, about 40 percent of eligible policyholders failed to take advantage of their free wellness visits.

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.

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.

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?





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 or call 800-532-5274 to connect with a case manager and learn whether you meet eligibility requirements.

*Visit **aarp.org/medicalbills** to learn 19 more ways to lower your health care costs.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KATHLEEN FU

Complain Like a Pro

Get the good customer service you deserve when things go wrong

By LAURA T. COFFEY



UNEXPECTED "GOTCHA" FEES. "Add-ons" that add no value. 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, action 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.** A human being you reach usually won't be 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;

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DOUG CHAYKA

How a Safe Step Walk-In Tub can change your life

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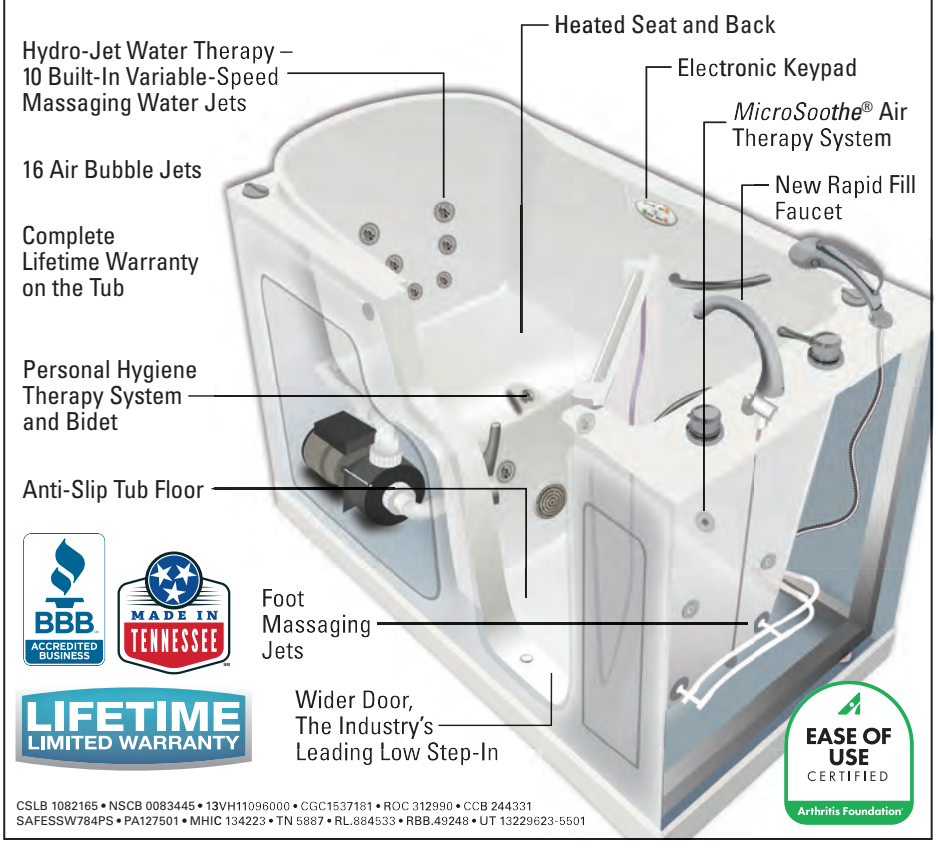
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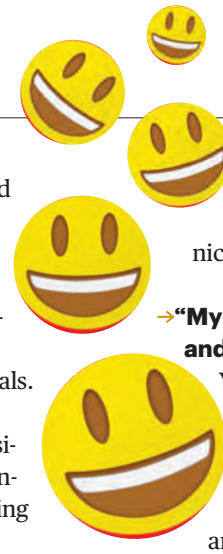
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screenshots of online chats; and copies of emails sent and received. Should your problem escalate, having all this material on hand can help support your case with company higher-ups, regulators and other government officials.

→ **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) of customer service emails and phone numbers for scores of national companies. In case those don't help, 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, 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 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, work 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. 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.*

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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 surrender 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.

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CATCHING UP WITH CANDICE BERGEN

***After starring in iconic movies in the 1960s and '70s, and helping define female empowerment in her TV show* Murphy Brown*, Candice Bergen will turn 80 in May and has new a role in the Apple TV comedy* Shrinking.**

What's a priority for you these days?
My grandchildren [ages 3 and 5]. I love just sitting on my couch watching movies with them because then we're sort of together.... It's my joy.

You were the caregiver for your husband Marshall Rose, who died from complications with Parkinson's disease in 2025. What's the best advice for caregivers?
Take tiny breaks for yourself from time to time—short lunches with old good friends. Do things to keep yourself normal.

How do you feel about your big birthday coming up in May?
Oh, God. Oy. I'm in denial. I don't even want to talk about it. Being 80 is just unfathomable to me.... You feel like you always felt, except you walk a little bit slower and more carefully because you don't want to fall. So stepping off a curb is a big event for me.

You had a bike accident. Do you have any lingering problems?
The bike accident—I fractured my pelvis, which was a new kind of pain. I actually saw stars. You can't move, it's too painful. I had great care at a hospital in New York.

You made a huge cultural impact with the show *Murphy Brown*.
Playing Murphy was such a gift. And I just always made the effort and insisted on her not being too tough and being kind at the end of the night.

Do you have any regrets?
No, I don't believe in them. Also, turning 80 is not what it used to be. My father died at 75, and I remember thinking, *Well, that's a full life.* Hmph, I'm 79, and it is not a full life. I count on being there for my grandson's graduation from high school, hopefully my granddaughter's. That would make me almost historic. *—Gayle Jo Carter*

AARP members can read the full interview at aarp.org/quickquestions.

POP CULTURE

DOWN AT THE END OF LONELY STREET



On May 5, 1956, Elvis Presley first topped the Billboard music charts, with his first single for the RCA label: "Heartbreak Hotel."

The bleak tune was inspired by a story in a newspaper that quoted a suicide note: "I walk a lonely street." Or so said cowriter Tommy Durden, who brought the article to Mae Axton, a 41-year-old English teacher with whom he would write the song.

But it appealed to Elvis, who was red-hot after his early gyrating appearances on national television had riveted teenage girls. And 1956 would prove to be the year he redefined popular music in America.

FIT FOR LIFE

Why Simple Tasks Feel Harder at 70-plus

– and how to fix it



DOES WALKING to the mailbox or climbing stairs leave you winded? You may be experiencing a decline in VO2 max—a measurement of your body's ability to absorb and use oxygen while exercising. The good news is that even in your 70s and older, measurable improvements are possible—and crucial, says Dr. Benjamin D. Levine, founder and director of the Institute for Exercise and Environmental Medicine at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas.

Here's Levine's fitness plan:

First, get into the mindset that you must be active at least five days a week, every week.



2–3 days: Cardio (30-plus minutes). Walk, swim, cycle or row at a pace where you can talk but not sing.



1 day: Joyful movement (60-plus minutes). Tai chi, dancing, a walk—do something that you enjoy.



1 day: High intensity. Cycle, row or swim as hard as you can for four minutes, then slow your pace for three minutes. Repeat four times.



1–2 days: Strength training. Pilates, free weights or exercise bands will help preserve muscles and balance.

Levine says you can expect a 15 to 20 percent improvement, with the first measurable changes happening within about three months. Don't let aches and pains deter you. If your knee hurts, swim instead of walk. Consistency matters more than perfection. *—Barbara Hannah Grufferman, author of* Love Your Age

Clockwise from top left: AARP (Dimitrios Kambouris/Getty Images); Illustrations by Peter Oumanski; Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

FASHION

STYLISH AT THE BEACH OR POOL

Options to make summer outings stress-free



SHOPPING FOR a swimsuit or pool wear can be daunting at any age. But being 70-plus doesn't have to increase the angst. Sandra Davidoff, director of corporate marketing and public relations for Miraclesuit, says, "People over 70 still want to look their best."

For women, fabric technology and strategic design details in bathing suits can make all the difference, she says. "Look for features such as tummy control panels, built-in bust support, wider straps and sufficient rear coverage."

• Miraclesuit's best-selling Oceanus One Piece (1) offers all of the above and is available in sizes 8 to 24 and with DD and DDD cups ($172–$184).

• Landsend.com offers a "Find Your Best Fit Guide" for women's swimsuits, organized into categories such as Bum Coverage, Chest Support and Control Level. The selection includes rash guards with long sleeves for sun protection and skirted styles such as the Women's Tugless High Neck Swim Dress (2) ($135) for more coverage.



• Target sells an array of affordable one- and two-piece suits with built-in, figure-flattering features in standard and plus sizes, such as the Shade & Shore Women's Shirred Tummy Control Square Neck Full Coverage One Piece ($45).

For menswear, there are fewer parameters to consider. Hal Rubenstein, founder of the *Happy Grownup* podcast and newsletter, says, "First, you have to admit your body at 75 is not the way it was at 35." That said, he recommends square-cut trunks with waistbands that fall just below the navel and lengths that range from the upper to mid-thigh. "Closer fits are better than loose styles, which emphasize loose skin. If you aren't fit, keep it solid and simple, but if you have a rockin' body at 70, by all means wear a Speedo if you like."



• In addition to briefs, Speedo offers classic men's trunks such as the Lookout Volley 16-inch swim trunks ($76).

• Polo Ralph Lauren's 5.75-inch Traveler Classic Swim Trunks in seersucker ($99) and Old Navy's 7-inch Inseam Trunks (3) ($30) are smart alternatives.

• When it comes to cover-ups, shirts and beach hats, look into online brands that offer clothing with built-in sun protection, such as L.L. Bean, Tommy Bahama and Coolibar. Older skin is thinner and more sensitive to UV rays.

The bottom line? One of the joys of getting older is not caring so much what other people think. Be grateful for the body you have and protect it.

—Cindy Weber-Cleary

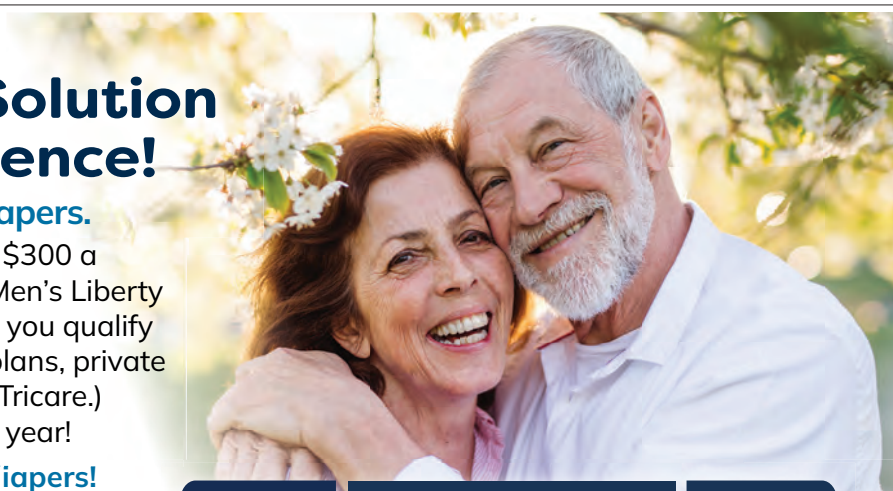
From left: Miraclesuit; Lands End; Old Navy

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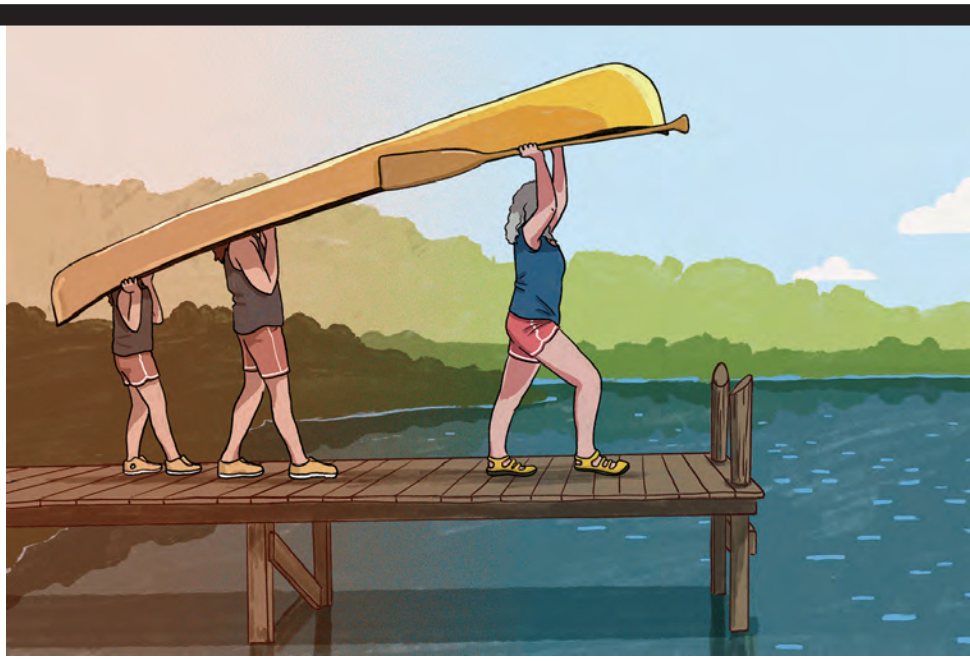
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My Happy Place—for More Than Six Decades

Some lessons can take on new meaning over many years

By IRIS KRASNOW



TWO WEEKS after the end of third grade, I left the nest of home, bound for the unknown. It was June of 1963, and my sister, Fran, and I boarded an overnight train in Chicago, headed to Camp Agawak for Girls in Minocqua, Wisconsin.

I spent the next 10 summers there as a camper and counselor. I am now 71. Thirteen years ago, I returned to my happy place on Blue Lake and resurrected the camp magazine where I got my literary start. I've been returning in the years since to edit the magazine, and it has brought back vivid memories. Writing in the woods, under an open sky, ignited a long-running career as a journalist and author.

This is the place I learned to shoot a bow and arrow, swim six strokes, portage a canoe in a cold rain, do flips on a trampoline and slam a serve in a tennis match. Most important, this is the place I learned how to get along with kids far different from me, sleeping in rustic cabins. This is where I learned how to be a good friend.

I am one of many older women who count summer camp as their happy place. I still gather with my cabinmates, and we sing with perfect recollection words of the songs we learned some 60 years ago. We remember the names of campers who dived into the dirt under the legs of the guards to win Capture the Flag for their teams in 1965 and 1968. We laugh about how hot dogs and marshmallows charred over campfires tasted better than the arugula and quinoa we eat today.

We are a family, bound not of blood but of history and loyalty.

We talk about how our cookouts,

SAVING AT 70+

Downsizing the Right Way

Maybe you can make a few bucks while shedding the past

By JODY ROHLENA

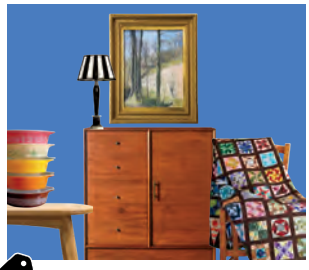
YOUR wedding china. The quilt your mother made. The cherrywood dining room set where holiday celebrations were held. To you, they're priceless. To your heirs, they might be encumbrances they're not interested in inheriting, or even a giant burden they'll have to deal with after you're gone.

Laura Olivares, cofounder and president of Silver Solutions, says too many people take the attitude "Let them figure it out when I'm dead." But that's a recipe for stress among heirs, she says.

So how do you separate what is worth selling from what should be donated?

Look for special pieces, high-end brands, unique and useful items—those are your best bets to sell, says Polly Ann Blythe, owner of Polly Ann's Vintage Market in Mount Vernon, Iowa. A local vintage shop owner might do an assessment for you. Or you can find a reputable professional at appraisers.org, the website for the American Society of Appraisers.

Olivares and Blythe recommend donating stuff with limited value to local thrift shops as a way to feel good about shedding the past.



SELL:

- Record albums
- Art, especially original artwork (The frame might be worth more than what's inside it, says Olivares.)
- Barware, like decanters and beer signs
- Lamps
- Quilts
- Tools
- Vintage kitchen items like McCoy pottery and Pyrex
- Wooden furniture, especially mid-century modern



DONATE:

- Dishes and glasses
- Knickknacks (Most mass-produced collectors' items are too common to be valuable, unless you have rare pieces, says Blythe.)
- Most clothing (although vintage clothing is hot, says Blythe, especially men's)
- Small appliances and household gadgets
- Tech like computers and cellphones
- Upholstered furniture

From top: Illustration by Michelle Kondrich; AARP (Shutterstock, 3; Getty Images, 3); AARP (Getty Images, 6)



canoe trips and long-standing friendships have infused us with qualities that compose the best of who we are today. Most of all, we credit camp for our ability to persevere after failure; it is our greatest and most enduring gift.

As children, we were dwarfed by the big skies and towering pines of Minocqua, yet we emerged at summer's end feeling like robust giants, pushing until we reached a desired goal. Camp makes you feel you can do anything.

My camp friends have stuck with me, as a chubby child, a skinny bride, over bumps in raising four sons and staying married to one husband. They have held me up through the sudden death of my father and the long illness of my late mother, and through the recurring sting of an empty nest.

We have shared some of the most enchanted hours of our lives, some of the saddest, some of the scariest—all of it.

These are my people. I knew this as a child in 1965, when I wrote in the camp magazine: "We will be together through happiness and heartbreak for a very long time."

Returning to camp as a gray-haired grandma, I feel ageless and hopeful. I am dressed in sweatpants and a flannel shirt that smells like dirt and fire. I am rooted in these woods, along with century-old pines and decades of memories.

It is my good fortune to be in my happiest of places, and to help young girls write their hearts, as I did at their age. I still feel like that 8-year-old who wrote this letter home in July of 1963: "Dear Mommy and Daddy: The nights are cold. The counselors are old. They are not as old as you, but don't worry! I am taking care of myself."

I learned to take care of myself as a young girl, and I am still learning this now as an old orphan. While summer camp is about communal living and teamwork, the overarching lesson is learning we always need to be big, strong girls on our own.

Iris Krasnow has written seven books, including Camp Girls, *and is the senior editor of* The Ethel. *Visit ethel.aarp.org to subscribe for free.*



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When Sid Caesar Redefined American Comedy

His time at the top didn't last long. But his influence is still felt today By DAVID MARGOLICK

SID CAESAR'S reign in television was brief. But from 1949 to 1960 or so, he helped define what made America laugh.

And thanks to his many, many disciples, his influence extended into, and remains in, every corner of comedy.

Caesar was among TV's first and most magnificent comic creations, someone who, rather than recycling vaudevillian wisecracks and nightclub shtick, fashioned a more intimate and cerebral brand of humor.

Tuning in weekly on their primitive DuMonts and Zeniths–first on *The Admiral Broadway Revue*, then on the legendary *Your Show of Shows* and finally on the largely (and unfairly) forgotten *Caesar's Hour*–viewers saw the full range of Caesar's extraordinary gifts for sketch comedy, soliloquy and pantomime and enjoyed his fluency in "pidgin" French, Italian, German, Japanese and Arabic.

His was a new kind of comedy: thoughtful, insightful, built around human nature rather than the silly or ephemeral. And viewers got a sense of the humanity of Caesar himself–forever sweating, stammering and coughing before their eyes and ears–that only live television could provide.

Working alongside him were some of the greatest comic talents of the era: not only his costars Carl Reiner, Imogene Coca (and, later, Nanette Fabray) and Howard Morris but also his writers, waging war with one another in his legendary writers' rooms. It was Caesar who discovered, then coddled and mentored, the young Mel Brooks. Joining him through the years were Neil Simon, Mel Tolkin, Joe Stein, Larry Gelbart and Woody Allen, among others.

Then there were all those who studied, and learned from, Caesar. Johnny Carson ripped off his routines for student shows at the University of Nebraska, while Dick Cavett played hooky from Yale to go to New York and watch him perform. Carol Burnett modeled her show after his. So, too, after a fashion, did *Saturday Night Live*, which, paying homage to him, had Caesar guest host a show in 1983.



Caesar with, *clockwise from top*, Mel Brooks; Imogene Coca; Howard Morris, Coca and Carl Reiner on *Your Show of Shows*; John Travolta; and Julie Andrews

Ten-year-old Conan O'Brien and, before him, 6-year-old Billy Crystal vowed to become comedians after seeing Caesar's landmark takeoff of the 1950s show *This Is Your Life*.

"Easily the best sketch comedian I've ever seen, without a close second," says *Seinfeld* cocreator Larry David.

Exhausted by TV's insatiable demands, increasingly impaired by alcohol and pills, and supplanted by blander fare as television expanded from its urban base into the hinterlands (it was Lawrence Welk who knocked him off the air), Caesar fizzled out. Television's first comic creation became its first victim.

For the next 20 years, he remained too impaired to do much of anything, and even after sobering up, he proved too rigid, and too proud, to repurpose himself. And because his shows, unlike *I Love Lucy* or *The Honeymooners*, weren't bite-sized sitcoms suitable for syndication, he stayed vanished. When he died in 2014, at age 91, he was largely unknown to internet generations.

But thanks largely to YouTube, "youngsters" who knew him only from cameos in *Grease* and *It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World* can discover him with the click of a mouse.

They can see Morris waving a pickle under his nose in a classic sketch from *Your Show of Shows* and Doris Hickenlooper (played by Coca) dragging her carnivorous husband (Caesar) to an early health food restaurant. There are movie spoofs of *From Here to Eternity*, *On the Waterfront* and *High Noon*. And, in a wrenching bit of autobiography, Caesar is a heartbroken, alcoholic father in a silent film sketch titled *A Drunk There Was*.

Collectively, these sketches remind us not only of how Caesar inspired generations to come but how his work still stands proudly–enduringly–on its own.

David Margolick's book When Caesar Was King: How Sid Caesar Reinvented American Comedy *was published in late 2025. He is a longtime contributing editor to* Vanity Fair *and a former reporter at* The New York Times.

From top: Harry Langdon/Getty Images; Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images; Disney General Entertainment Content via Getty Images; Alamy Stock Photo; Paramount/Getty Images; Getty Images; CBS via Getty Images



LIFE AT 70

OLD JOURNALS AND LETTERS: SAVE 'EM OR BURN 'EM?

By KATHY JESSE

IN ANN PATCHETT'S novel *Tom Lake*, a mother shares with her three adult daughters the story of her long-ago romance with a man who went on to become a movie star. Isolated from the outside world by the pandemic, the family spends the summer working in their cherry orchard as the story of this love affair unfolds, day by day.

The mother tells them a lot—but not everything.

After looking through my old journals recently—mostly written when I was in my 20s—I've come to the same conclusion. My two adult daughters know a lot about my past, but they're not entitled to know everything. (Tim? Who was Tim? And why does he take up so much real estate in my journal?)

Now in my 70s, I need to decide what to do with these books. If I don't want anyone to read them after I die, I should probably get rid of them now. But how? Trash them? Aren't they worth a more dignified ending?

Yes, they are, according to Robin Chaddock, a certified life coach. "A person has to ask, 'Am I done with this?' If the answer is yes, have a party, bring your journals, enjoy a special drink and have a bonfire."

The decision to share a journal with children should not be taken lightly, says Chaddock. "What would it accomplish? It might not be in everyone's best interest to leave that journal behind."

So what's the bottom line? Chaddock offers this tongue-in-cheek prayer for journal writers:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
Please throw my journals in the lake!"

Kathy Jesse is a former journalist who is now a writing coach. This essay is adapted from AARP's The Ethel *e-newsletter. Visit ethel.aarp.org to subscribe for free.*

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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



EVA 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, rockets 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 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* gastro-travel docuseries is exploring France after captivating audiences with journeys through Mexico and Spain. "France invented the restaurant, the menu, 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.

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'alls and all," she says with a laugh) whose roots run deeper than most families can trace.

Her aunt Elsa passed along generational wisdom. "She was the matriarch," says Longoria. 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, everything."

Elsa 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 it 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.

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 tries 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

Visit aarp.org/evalongoria or scan this code to watch our behind-the-scenes video with Eva Longoria.

Producer: Kathy Nemeker; wardrobe stylist: Maeve Reilly for the Only Agency; prop stylist: Rachel Rockstroh for Wanted PD; hairstylist: Ken Paves for Rouge Artists; makeup artist: Elan Bongiorno for Rouge Artists. Wardrobe credits on page 81

A Conversation with Kevin O'Leary and Boost Oxygen Founder Rob Neuner

"Shark Tank" investor Kevin O'Leary—also known as *Mr. Wonderful*—sits down with Boost Oxygen founder Rob Neuner to discuss how a simple idea grew into a category-defining wellness brand. Neuner appeared on *Shark Tank* in 2019, where he struck a deal with O'Leary.

O'Leary: People must ask you, *"Who wakes up one day and decides to can and sell air?"*

Neuner: (Laughs) That's a common misconception. The air we breathe is only about 21% oxygen—most of it is nitrogen. Boost Oxygen contains 95% or higher pure supplemental oxygen, which is nearly five times more oxygen than normal air.

O'Leary: How does that help people in everyday life?

Neuner: Many people experience what we call temporary oxygen insufficiency—shortness of breath that can happen during physical activity or even routine tasks like climbing stairs or walking uphill. Boost Oxygen is lightweight and portable, making it easy to keep on hand so people can stay active and continue doing the things they enjoy.

O'Leary: And no prescription is needed?

Neuner: That's right... Boost Oxygen is not a substitute if you've been prescribed Medical Oxygen, but many people who experience occasional shortness of breath find that pure supplemental oxygen helps them feel more comfortable and confident during daily activities.

O'Leary: What kind of feedback do you hear from customers?



Neuner: We hear meaningful stories everyday yet the most powerful feedback comes from our loyal customers. Some tell us they were ready to give up activities like golf or exercise, but Boost Oxygen helped them keep going.

My proudest moments are personal. In the later stages of their lives, both of my parents used Boost Oxygen to improve their day-to-day quality of life. They had more energy, stamina, and confidence—and seeing that impact firsthand meant everything to me.

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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 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, UnbeliEVAble was acquired by Hyphenate Media Group, a holding company she cofounded.) 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," she says, "but 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."

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 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 from year to year, walking people to their cars," she says. "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 a global brand ambassador for L'Oréal Paris, meaning she has been professionally associated with "aging gracefully" for two decades. It helps that she takes excellent care of herself—lifting weights, taking supplements, bouncing on a rebounder trampoline.

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 (CONTINUED ON PAGE 80)

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 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 top: FX Necaxa; Photofest; Eva Longoria Foundation

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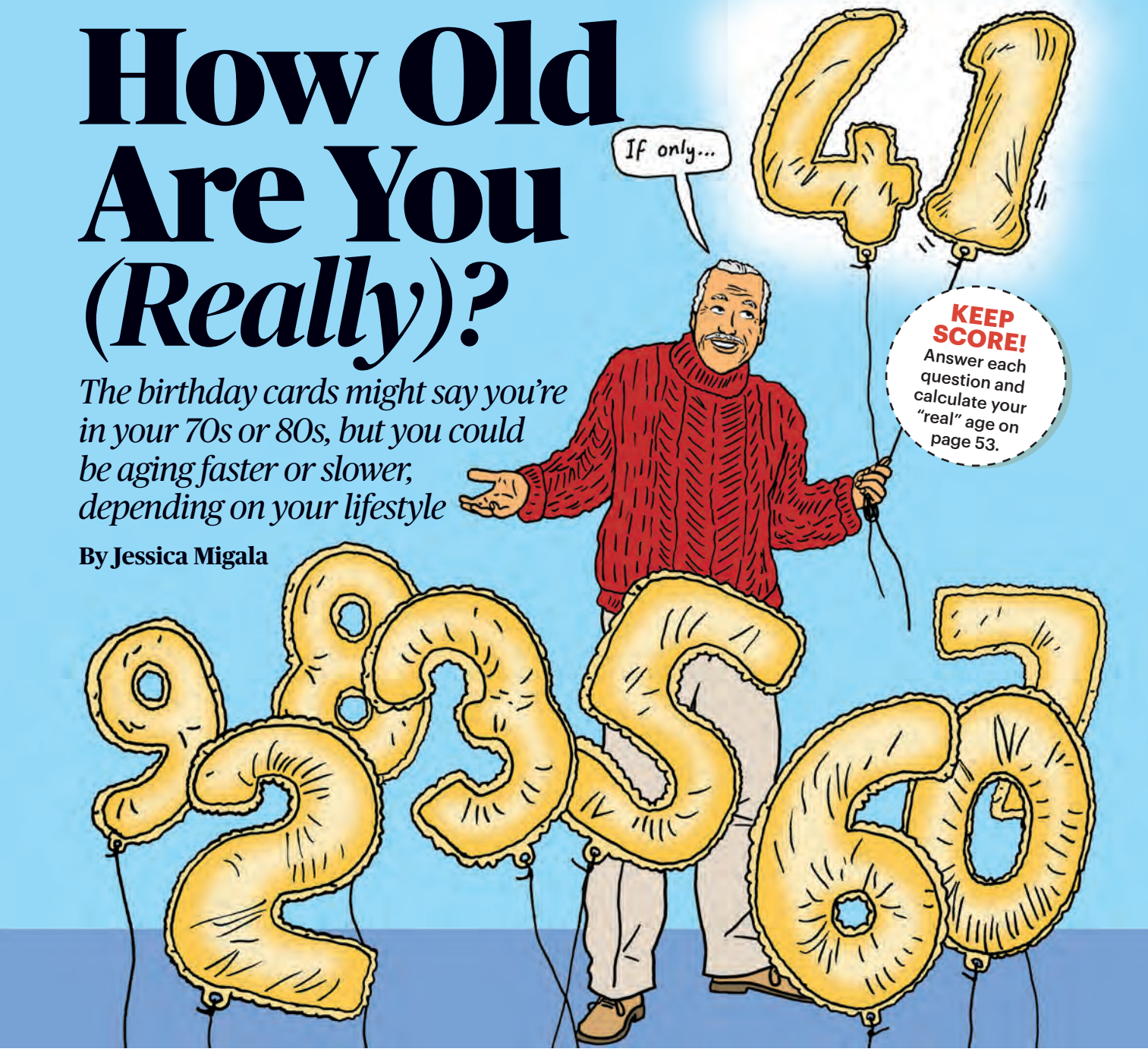
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How Old Are You *(Really)?*

The birthday cards might say you're in your 70s or 80s, but you could be aging faster or slower, depending on your lifestyle

By Jessica Migala



YOU'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. In a study of nearly 2,000 people around age 70, scientists calculated biological ages based on various aging data; they found that higher biological age was associated with an elevated risk of mortality and major age-related diseases, including coronary heart disease, diabetes, cancer, stroke, COPD and dementia.

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 years to come.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER ARKLE

1 How would you describe your usual walking pace?

- (A) Slow
- (B) Steady/average
- (C) Brick

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 70s AND BEYOND: 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 70s and up:

To avoid frailty and cognitive decline...



Maintain muscle mass and strength through physical activity.



Stay socially active and intellectually engaged.



Work with your doctor to manage chronic conditions.

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

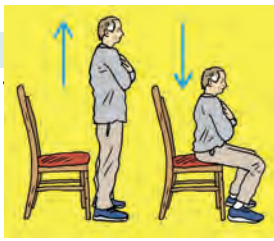
If you answered (c) more than 21 grams, subtract four years from your chronological age.

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 of 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 lower-body strength and 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, advises physical therapist Richard W. Bohannon. Time how long it takes for you to do five repetitions as fast and safely as possible. "The results give us some idea of the strength of your lower limbs," he says. People who can do five reps in 7 seconds or less are fitter than 95 percent of all 70-somethings. Struggling with this test? Strength training may help you improve your balance and reduce your risk of falls.

Women ages 70–79	**Men** ages 70–79	**Women** ages 80–89	**Men** ages 80–89	**Percentile**
7 seconds	6–7 seconds	8–9 seconds	7–8 seconds	95th
9 seconds	8–9 seconds	11–12 seconds	10 seconds	80th
12 seconds	11–12 seconds	13–15 seconds	13 seconds	50th
15–17 seconds	15 seconds	18–20 seconds	17–18 seconds	20th
20–23 seconds	20–22 seconds	25–28 seconds	23–25 seconds	5th

4 Rate the four questions below.

	Never	Almost never	Some-times	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 with the results below:

Women Normal range by age

- **70–74:** 4-inch gap to 1-inch overlap
- **75–79:** 5-inch gap to .5-inch overlap
- **80–84:** 5.5-inch gap or less
- **85–89:** 7- to 1-inch gap
- **90–94:** 8- to 1-inch gap

Men Normal Range by age

- **70–74:** 8- to 1-inch gap
- **75–79:** 9- to 2-inch gap
- **80–84:** 9.5- to 2-inch gap
- **85–89:** 10- to 3-inch gap
- **90–94:** 10.5- to 4-inch gap

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 Zhe 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.

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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, an associate professor at the Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science and the department of medicine 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," says Shadyab. 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

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How did Anna start to enjoy life to the fullest?

At the age of 56, a back operation left me dependent on a cane, significantly impacting my daily life. Simple tasks like going to the store or meeting friends became challenging, and I even had to cancel a long-awaited anniversary trip to Italy.
My husband purchased a scooter for me, but it was cumbersome and uncomfortable for everyday use, leaving me feeling more constrained than liberated. However, everything changed when I came across the ATTO SPORT. This remarkable scooter proved to be a game changer. Not only is it robust and reliable, but it also conveniently splits into two pieces, allowing me to effortlessly lift it into my car trunk on my own. I was even able to stow it in the overhead compartment on the plane, enabling us to finally take that trip to Italy! I am now independent once more, able to go wherever I please and do so with a striking sense of style. In fact, I now find that my husband struggles to keep up with me!

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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.

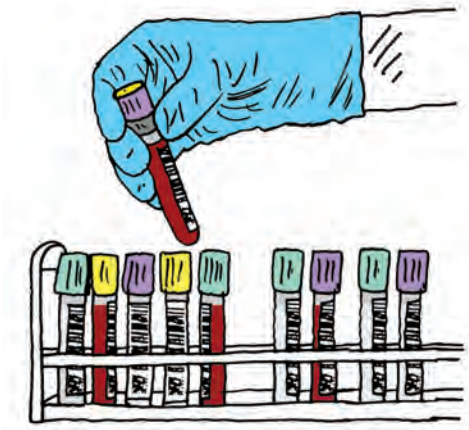


COFFEE IS packed with bioactive compounds like caffeine and polyphenols (a category of plant compounds) that provide antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties to boost cognition, reduce insulin resistance and lower the risk of chronic disease. Middle-aged adults who report drinking one to two cups of coffee per day add a couple of years to their life expectancy compared with nondrinkers, per 2025 research. Most of that is due to a reduction in death from cardiovascular disease.

But the benefits seem to accrue earlier in life. "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, which looked at women with an average age of 72, Shadyab found that coffee consumption later in life was not associated with longevity. It wasn't harmful (so keep drinking if you like it), but a regular java habit didn't help older folks reach the age 90-plus threshold either. And if you were, or are, more fond of decaf? There are benefits there as well, but only at a higher intake: Those who imbibed more than three cups of decaf daily at midlife showed an average life gain of 3.76 years.

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 the 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)



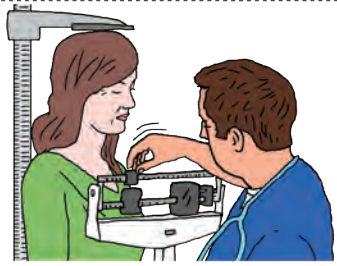
Do you consume alcohol?

- **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)



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)

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 38 percent higher risk of mortality for people 70 and older.

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 vices mentioned above. And while obesity increases inflammation, being underweight creates its own problems. Another study suggests that compared with 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 about health and fitness for Women's Health *and* Family Circle.

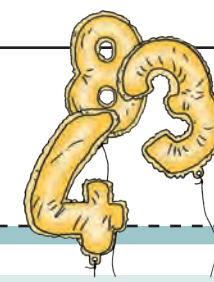
YOUR SCORECARD

Tally your points based on how you answered each question:

YOUR CURRENT AGE

Question	Your points
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	

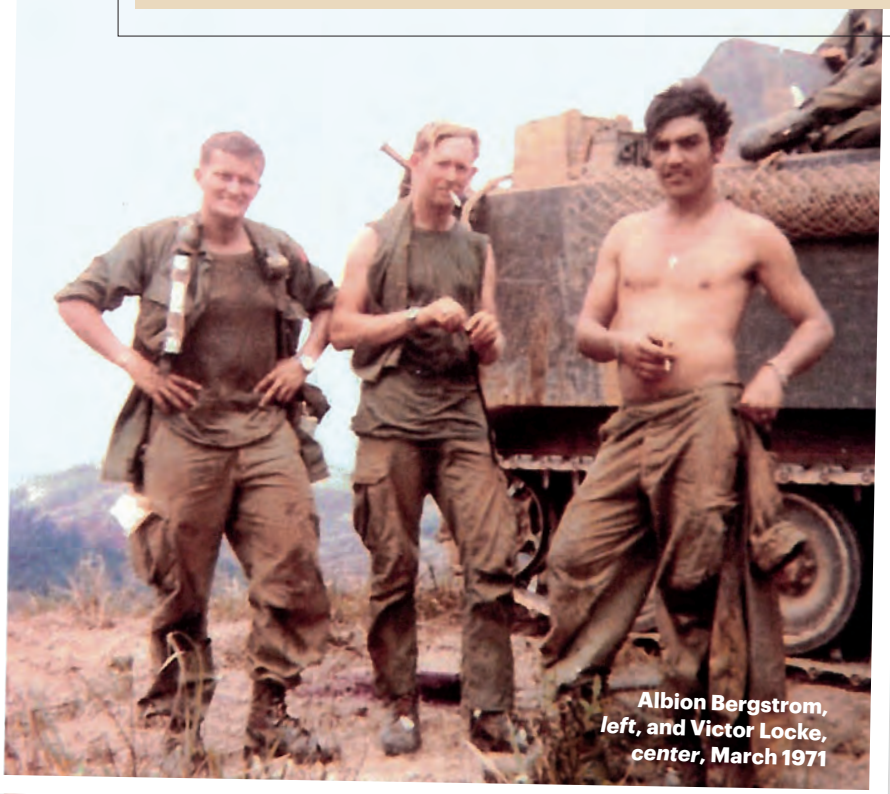
TOTAL! YOUR "REAL" AGE



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.

Photo credits on page 81

AARP offers help and advice at aarp.org/veterans for veterans and military families.

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, Bf 109s 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.

WHEN 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 Lieutenant 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.



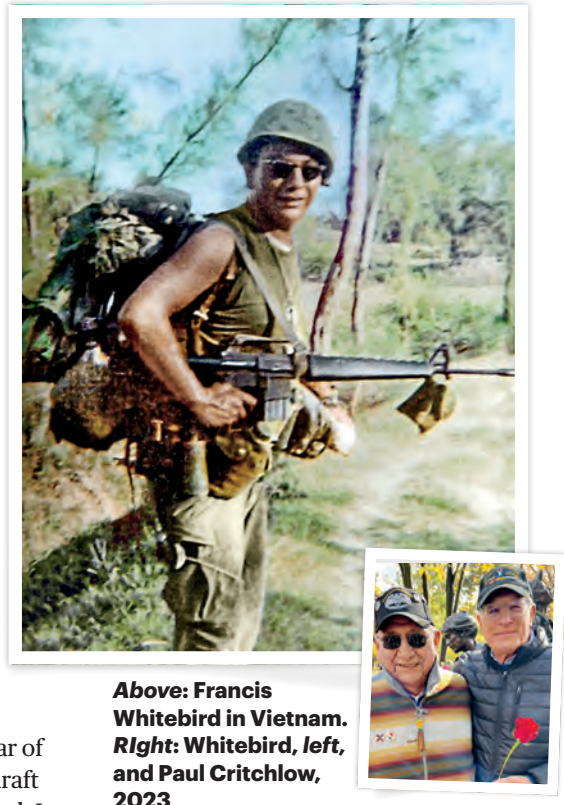
Hank Donigan, *left*, and Patrick Giguere, *far right*, aboard the USS *Nashville* in July 1982

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. _RIght_: Whitebird, _left_, and Paul Critchlow, 2023

IN 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 surgeries 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 interfamily 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.

WHEN 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 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.

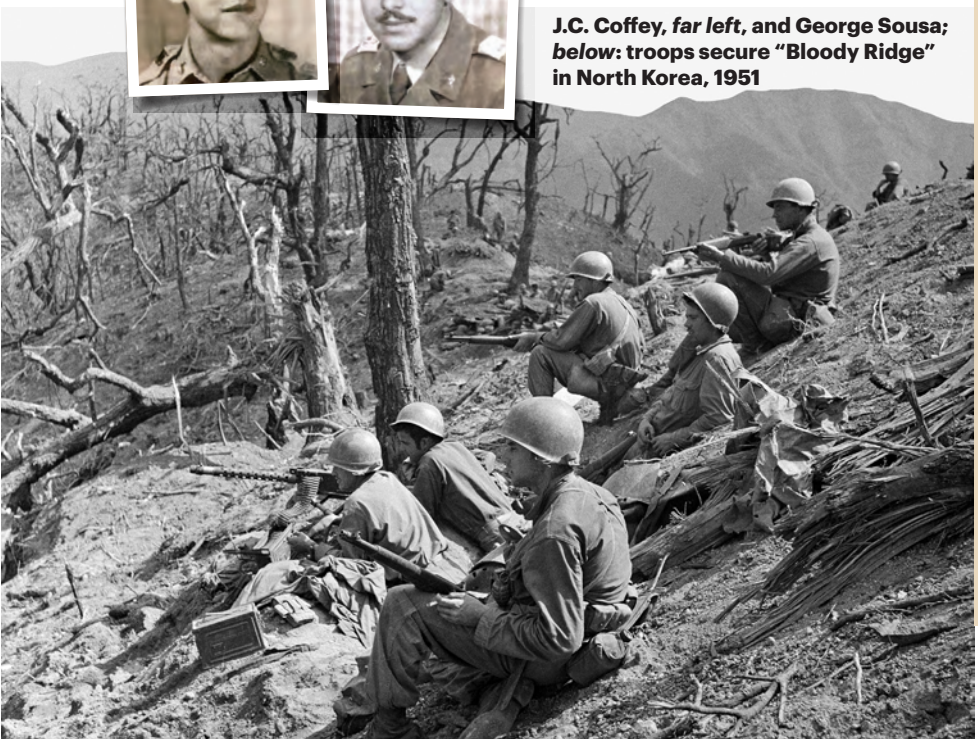
I GOT MARRIED in December 1950 and was drafted into the U.S. Army in February 1951. I had never heard of Korea. I did three months of basic training and was shipped over to Korea to join the 2nd Infantry Division. I was 20 years old.

My unit was started out at a place called the Punch Bowl [the Haean 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.

EDIE 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 80)



Kogi BBQ truck's Korean short rib taco

A Taste of America

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AS TOLD TO KELSEY OGLETREE

WHEN 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.

Taco: Gregg Segal. Other photo credits on page 81

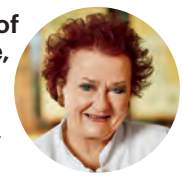


Scampo's lobster pizza

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.

PLAINS

KANSAS CITY

Pitmaster Deborah Jones: A smoky means to burnt ends



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

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 precut 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.





Jones Bar-B-Q's burnt ends



EAST COAST

NEW YORK

Chef Marcus Samuelsson reflects on the flavors of Harlem



Marcus Samuelsson, 55, owner of Red Rooster 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



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.

My special 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.

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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

My special 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, herbaceous 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?'"

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SOUTHWEST

HOUSTON

Chef Hugo Ortega says Texas food is wrapped in tradition



Hugo Ortega, 61, owner of Hugo's

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



Hugo's barbacoa

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

MIDWEST

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.



Christopher Zucchero, 45, owner of Mr. Beef

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 peppers: 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 to learn more.

- **Mr. Beef's giardiniera** (Zucchero)
- **Kale salad with root vegetables and apple** (Samuelsson)
- **Barbacoa de borrego, or slow-roasted lamb** (Ortega)
- **Hush honeys** (Moore)
- **Skirt steak with Japanese perfection sauce** (Shire)



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REAL/PEOPLE



Inspiring stories of friends and neighbors, in their own words

INSIDE His search for family led to a shockingly sweet discovery **P. 70**

A recovering addict took in a dog for a friend going into rehab. That kind gesture turned into a new calling **P. 74**



Lockhart and Rosa compete in Fort Worth, Texas.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT HAWTHORNE

The Ride Stuff

At 60, She's a Rodeo Champ

Barrel racer Lisa Lockhart faces down competitors who are decades younger

WALKING 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 cloverleaf 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

LENORE 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. 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 mom.

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

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARTINE SEVERIN



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 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 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



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

STEPHEN 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 small dog, 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 schoolteacher 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 in Jayde 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 new terrain. He was suddenly responsible for another living thing. "I had to wake up in the morning and walk her," he says. "I just couldn't lay in bed and feel sorry for myself."

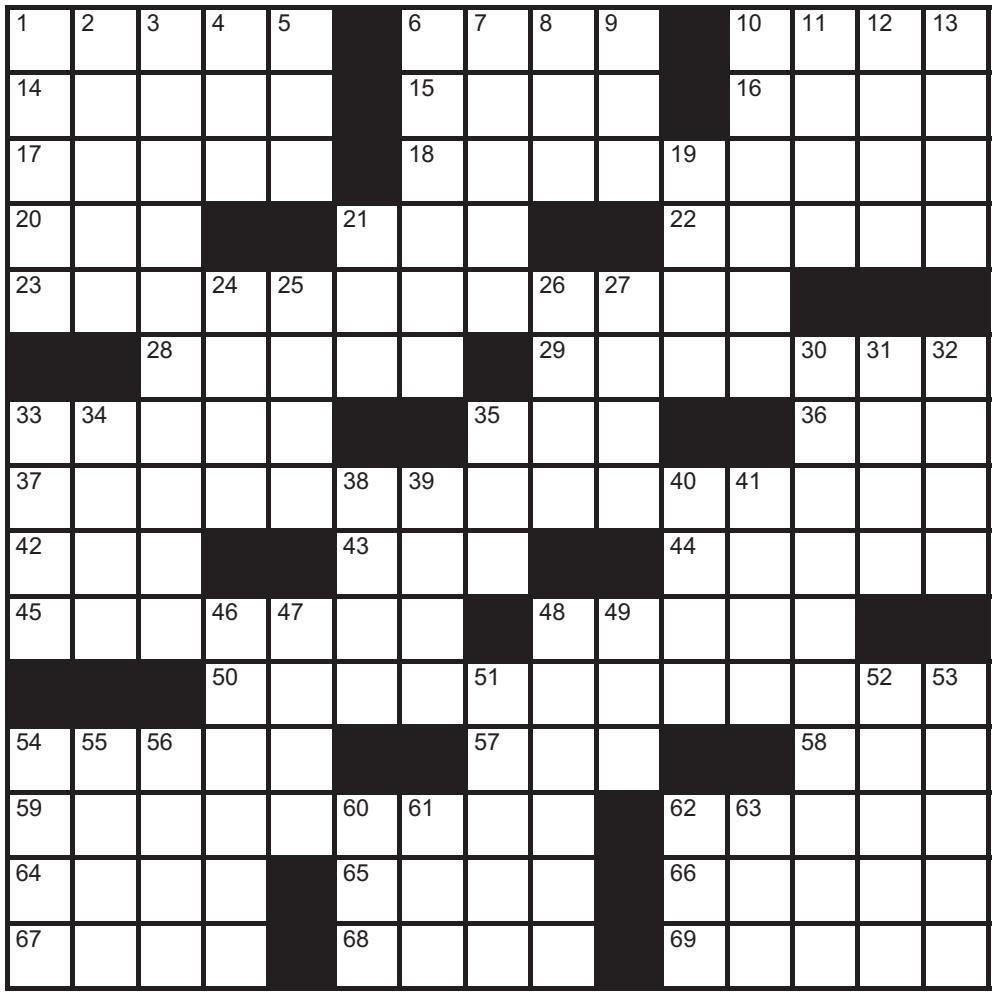
When Knight realized that his friend wasn't the only fellow addict who needed pet care while she was in rehab, he decided to do something. His original goal was to foster a few dogs a year for people in treatment. That first year, he took in nine dogs. By 2015, Dogs Matter had become a registered nonprofit, requiring participants to complete a recovery plan before they got their pets back, then supporting 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.

Many 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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PHOTOGRAPH BY ARTURO OLMOS

PUZZLES BY STANLEY NEWMAN



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
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

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.



Illustration by Sam Island

Go to aarp.org/brainhealth for resources, tips and up-to-date news on dementia and cognitive health.

Puzzle solutions are on page 81.

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New Ideas to Help Older Americans

AARP Foundation has a renewed vision to increase employment and economic security for those 50-plus

By CLAIRE LEIBOWITZ

MORE THAN 39 million Americans age 50 and over are either living in poverty or one tough break away from slipping into it. AARP Foundation, the philanthropic arm of AARP, has long played an important role in fighting poverty among older Americans, and it is refocusing its efforts to assist even more people.

The Foundation is expanding beyond direct service to also focus on improving and reshaping the systems and structures that keep people in poverty.

The goal is to create new opportunities for older workers while removing barriers to potentially life-changing benefits such as SNAP (food stamps) and Medicaid. Here's a look at what the Foundation is doing:

▸ **Increasing access to benefits:** Millions of older adults do not receive safety net benefits simply because the system is complex to navigate. AARP Foundation is funding technical experts to improve the systems behind programs like SNAP and Medicaid to make it easier for older adults to apply and stay enrolled.

For example, the Foundation is investing in improvements to automate renewals for Medicaid, a program that has seen millions of eligible people disenrolled in recent years because of administrative errors.

▸ **Going to court:** AARP Foundation's litigation team is building on decades of fighting for the legal rights of older adults at the highest levels of our legal system. New cases filed on behalf of Americans age 50-plus involve critical issues such as alleged bias in AI technology that unfairly discriminates against older job applicants.

▸ **Conducting vital research:** AARP Foundation is partnering with California on groundbreaking research to understand what older, low-income workers experience when they lose jobs, pursue retraining or seek help. The insights will inform policy changes to improve support for older workers in California—and create a model for other states. This is an ambitious expansion of the role the Foundation was created in 1961 to fulfill: to be the charitable and philanthropic arm of AARP.

Claire Casey, president of AARP Foundation, says the organization is continually seeking to expand its reach. "We're asking, 'How do we reach more people? How do we have a greater impact on their lives?' "

The new initiatives are in addition to more-established programs, including AARP Foundation Tax-Aide, the nation's largest free tax-preparation service for older adults (**aarpfoundation.org/taxaide**). Last year volunteers across the country helped 1.7 million taxpayers, most with low income, file their returns.

The Foundation also runs a free job coaching service called Back to Work 50+ that has given more than 100,000 older adults help with returning to the workforce. Visit **aarpfoundation.org/backtowork50+** for information.

"We're always looking for new ways to help older Americans have more security and fresh hope," Casey says. Go to **aarpfoundation.org** to learn more.

Illustration by Neil Jamieson (Clockwise from top left: envato, AARP, Zelman Studios, Greg Kahn, envato (2), Zelman Studios, Greg Kahn)

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HOW WE'RE FIGHTING FOR YOU

AARP WORKS FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

WHEN THINKING about retirement, some may daydream 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**) 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**) 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** 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** 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 42

in Wales, Mexico and Colombia. But she loves the challenge. "When you learn something new, your neurons change," she explains. "So me learning the world of soccer has been like learning a whole 'nother language."

The Person She's Becoming

While content with her career, she has some internal stretch goals—"releasing the person I was and stepping into the person I'm becoming," as Longoria puts it. What does that person look like? She pauses. "A compassionate human being who 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."

Motherhood has helped enormously with her Becoming Eva journey. After two earlier marriages, Longoria met Bastón in 2013, and they married in 2016. She became a mom at 43. "Once Santi was born, it made life easier," she says, "because everything goes through the lens of: Does this take away from time with my son?"

She also talks about Bastón with unmistakable warmth. "I'm with an adult," she says. "He's the kindest human being and brightens up every room he enters." Not that it's perfectly serene. They bicker about GPS navigation ("The map is right there on the screen, and he makes a wrong turn") and mealtimes ("He's Mexican, so he wants lunch at 4 and dinner at 10.") "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 a secret to building the sort of life she has created for herself. "I don't think there's a uniform formula for satisfaction," she says. "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.

BUDDY I'LL NEVER FORGET

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 59

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 75

M	A	Y	O	R	■	T	E	R	A	■	O	M	N	I
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T	O	M	D	I	C	K	A	N	D	H	A	R	R	Y
A	R	E	■	■	A	I	R	■	■	D	R	E	S	S
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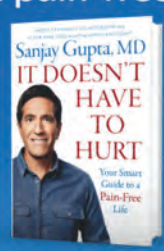
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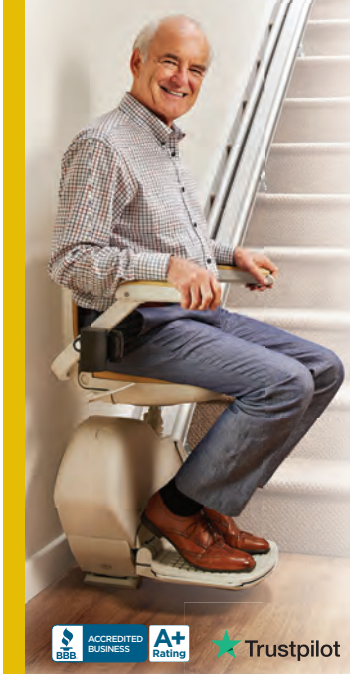
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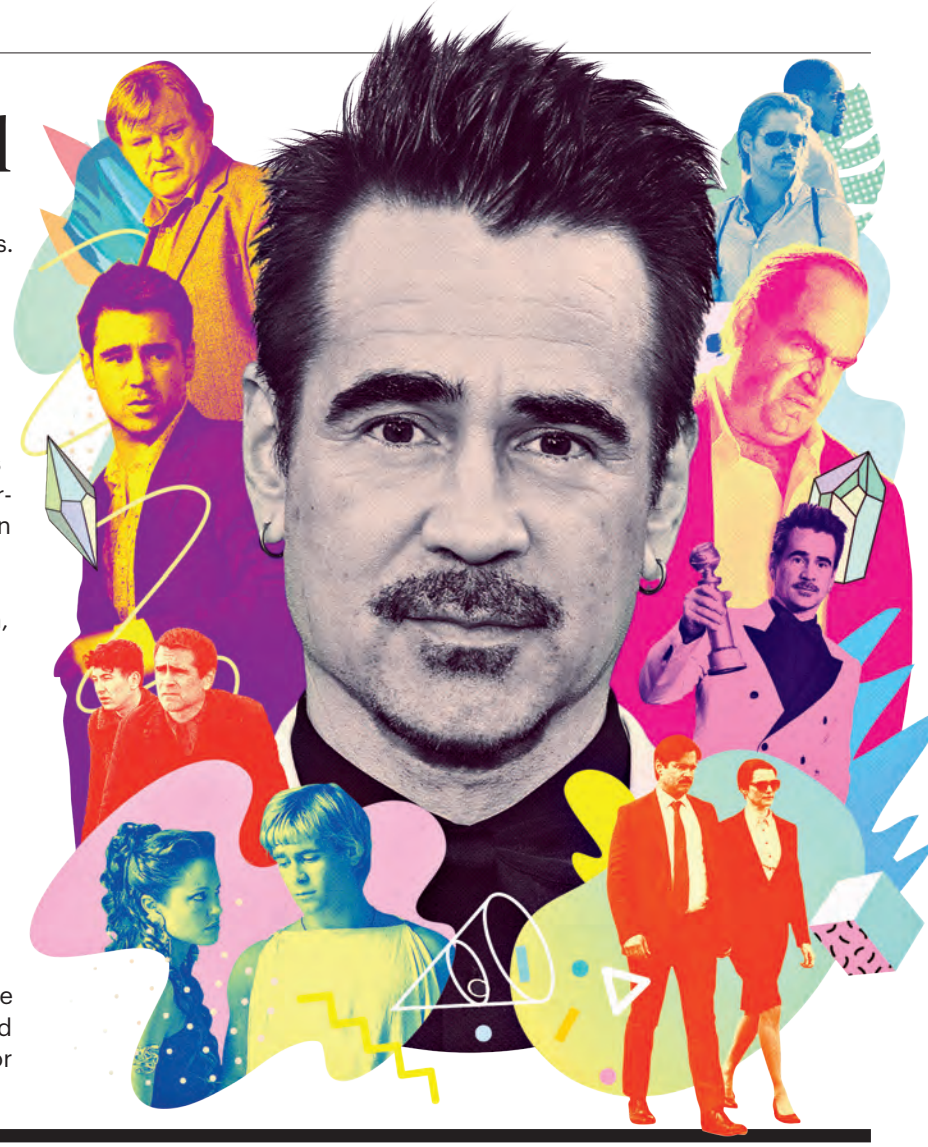


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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

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

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

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

Andy Garcia
APRIL 12
Celebrated actor plays a cartel boss on popular oil industry drama series *Landman*.

Sugar Ray Leonard
MAY 17
Boxing champ's foundation funds research and care for pediatric diabetes.

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

Reggie Jackson
MAY 18
Iconic candy bar named for the legendary baseball slugger is back on the market.

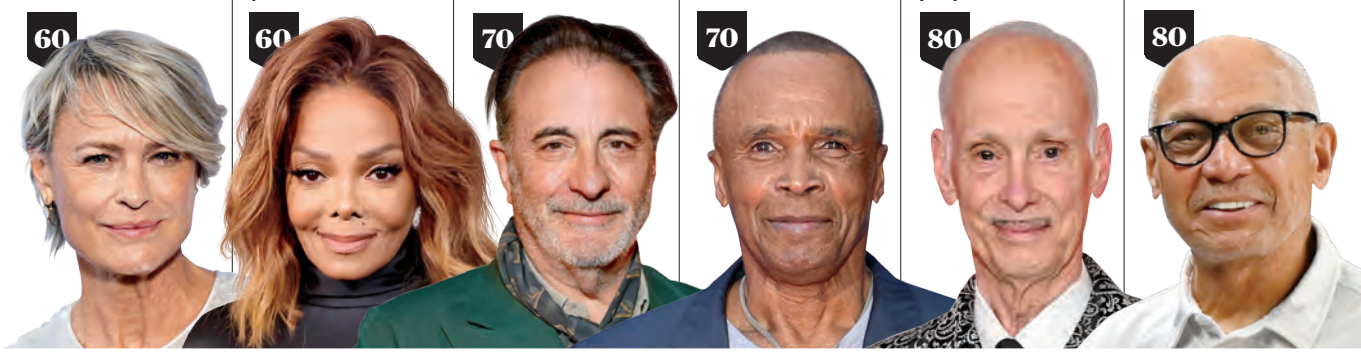


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64	$33.50	$24.55	$66.00	$48.10	$98.50	$71.65	$163.50	$118.75
65	$34.75	$25.50	$68.50	$50.00	$102.25	$74.50	$169.75	$123.50
66	$35.90	$26.35	$70.80	$51.70	$105.70	$77.05	$175.50	$127.75
67	$37.05	$27.25	$73.10	$53.50	$109.15	$79.75	$181.25	$132.25
68	$38.70	$28.95	$76.40	$56.90	$114.10	$84.85	$189.50	$140.75
69	$39.75	$30.60	$78.50	$60.20	$117.25	$89.80	$194.75	$149.00
70	$43.85	$32.45	$86.70	$63.90	$129.55	$95.35	$215.25	$158.25
71	$45.60	$34.25	$90.20	$67.50	$134.80	$100.75	$224.00	$167.25
72	$47.70	$36.00	$94.40	$71.00	$141.10	$106.00	$234.50	$176.00
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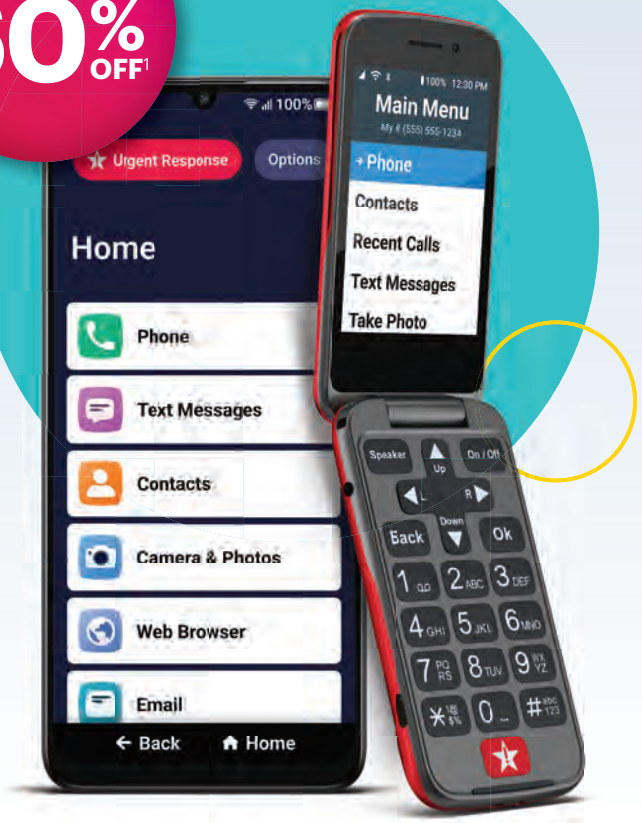
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