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The Magazine



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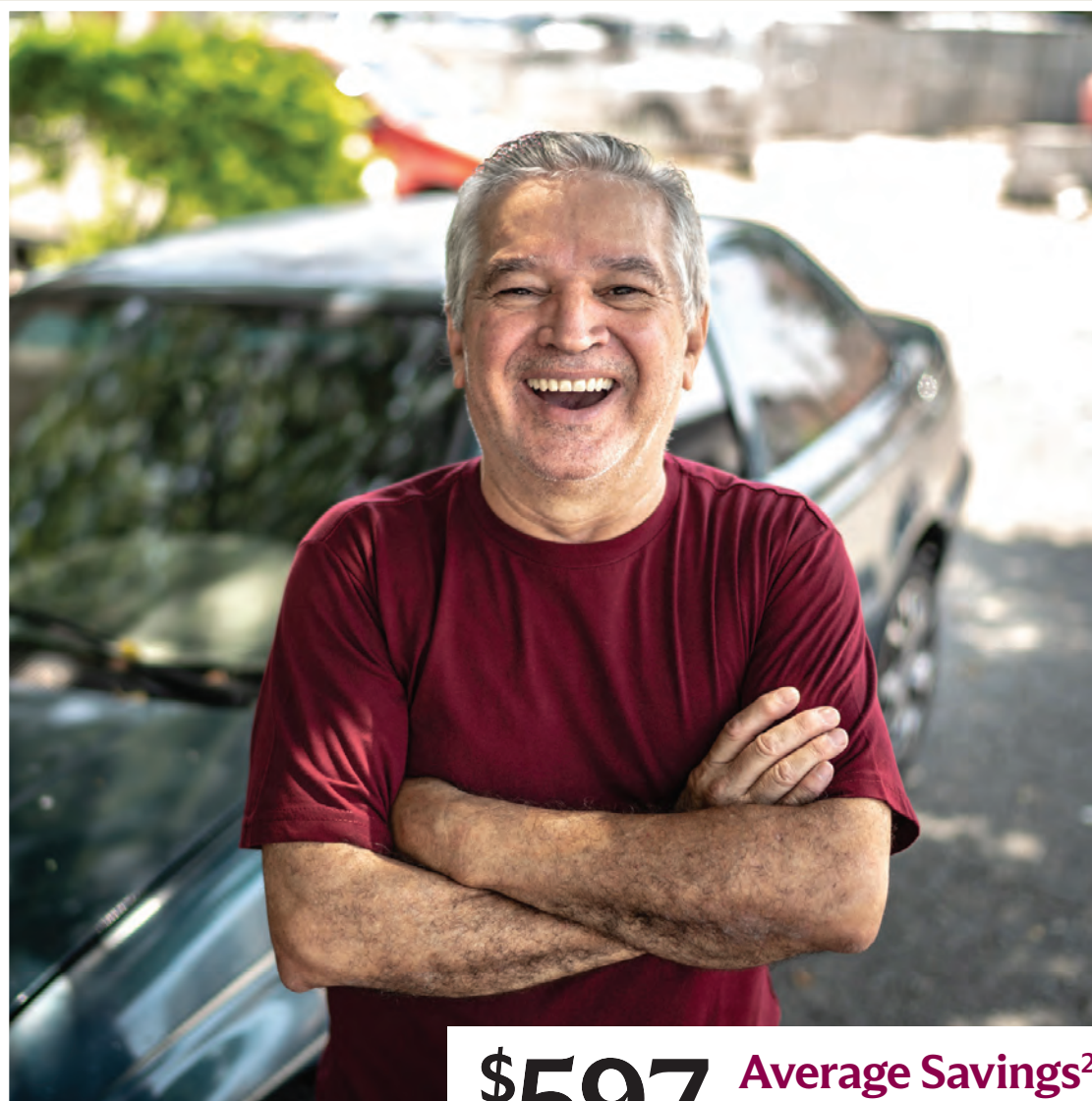
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\$597 Average Savings²
on Auto Insurance

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ON THE COVER: Alfre Woodard photographed by Jim Wright in New York City on March 23. Producer: Elise Connert for 143 Productions; wardrobe stylist: Ira Hammons; prop stylist: Jesse Nemeth for Laird and Good Company; hairstylist: Tonia Renia Green-Editorio; makeup artist: Delina Mehdin. Inset: Getty Images

Clockwise from top: Lake Ourainville Lodge; Gregg Segal; Sean McCabe; Liam Eisenberg; Victor Prokhorov; Joe Pugliese; Center: Amber Day; Franklin; Joe McKeandry

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All Over the U.S., AARP Fights for You

It's not just in Congress. Our advocates speak for people 50+ in every state legislature—including yours

IF YOU'RE OLD enough to remember the 1976 bicentennial, you know what an absolute bunting explosion it was. That year it seemed like everything was red, white and blue: T-shirts, snacks, product packaging, even many fire hydrants, which were repainted in patriotic themes by communities around the country. In the long run-up to July 4, CBS ran nightly "Bicentennial Minute" spots, and ABC's *Schoolhouse Rock!* gave American history lessons. When Independence Day finally came, you felt *ready*.

The nation's 250th birthday—its semiquincentennial—may find you feeling less prepared, but there are still plenty of ways to celebrate. Along with major observances in key cities—you can find our coverage online at aarp.org/america250—there'll be exhibits and celebrations in every state. On page 46, we offer a look at historically important sites all over the country that are rolling out the red (white and blue) carpet for visitors this summer ("Beyond the Liberty Bell").

Also happening across the country: AARP's state offices are advocating for the interests of people 50 and over. While you may be familiar with AARP's advocacy on the federal level—where the association works to protect Social Security and Medicare and support family caregivers—many AARP members are not aware that we also have a presence in every state capital, as well as in the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Already this year, AARP's state offices and volunteer advocates have notched some impressive wins on issues that include fighting fraud and hunger and keeping utility bills affordable. Indiana, for example, enacted an AARP-backed bill to ban cryptocurrency kiosks, often used by



scammers to extract payments from their victims. In Wisconsin, West Virginia and Kentucky, AARP supported successful legislation to shore up state food assistance at a time when many older people with low income are in danger of losing their federal SNAP benefits due to cuts Congress passed last year. And in California, AARP advocates persuaded state regulators to adopt a plan that protects residents in the northern and central parts of the state from significant proposed hikes to their gas and electric bills. In every issue of our sister publication, the *AARP Bulletin*, you'll find a page with news about AARP's activities in

your state, and you can always go to aarp.org/advocacy to read our latest news. At that site, you can also volunteer to join AARP's efforts to empower older Americans.

It has been true for 250 years, and may it be true long into the future: Americans who make their needs and voices heard can change the way their government works. No matter how ready you are (or are not) for the semiquincentennial, that's something worth lifting a sparkler to.

Meg

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Our April/May issue featured Eva Longoria.



Inspiring to see how she's redefining success and making the most of every moment.

@nickalt, Instagram

[Her] elegance is timeless, and [her] smile reflects such a beautiful soul.

@daniel_dnica2903, Instagram

We agree, @eva longoria! Time is a precious resource!

@her.wisdomera, Instagram

Div! You're an inspiration. Sending love and kisses!

@reyesentertainment, Instagram

someone they served with in such a special way.

LINA INGRAHAM, Jacksonville, Florida

I so enjoyed reading the tributes from veterans to their fellow soldiers. I never served in the military and can't imagine the horrors these brave heroes endured, but it's wonderful to learn of the special bonds they formed and the friends that gave them strength and continue to do so. I am proud to donate monthly to Wounded Warrior Project to support these great Americans. Thank you to all who've served.

SCOTT CHAPMAN, Moscow, Idaho

MORE PEAS, PLEASE

I want to add to the choices in "Easy Peas-y." I have been making and taking this side dish to gatherings for years. Pour a large bagful of frozen peas into a bowl, toss in pearl onions, some Old Bay seasoning, celery salt and a bit of curry powder. Let it sit out to thaw, then add shredded cheddar cheese and a cup of mayonnaise and refrigerate. Stir well, and voilà!



MIKE CAPEVILLE, Long Beach, California

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

I could relate to the article "Complain Like a Pro." I had trouble with a reservation that a hotel unexpectedly canceled. I called and was getting nowhere, even with a confirmation number. I posted a note on Twitter with the corporate @hotelname, and within minutes, I got a direct message and a contact number. Sure enough, the issue was resolved when I called.

TODD F. SCHMITT, Point Pleasant, New Jersey



MEANINGFUL MEMORIES

A.J. Baime's collection of stories from members of our military who fought or served

in our many wars were interesting and heartfelt ["The Buddy I'll Never Forget"]. My father was wounded in WWII, and my brother and my husband were in the Vietnam War; another family member is currently serving in the Navy. There is a special place in my heart for members of our military. The individual tribute stories brought tears of joy and sadness to me, and I'm so glad that each of these former military members took the time to remember

BRIGHT IDEA

"One-Day Home Fixes" featuring the Property Brothers, Jonathan and Drew Scott, was a great

article. My husband and I have another aging-in-place trick: motion sensor lights in our bedroom and bathroom. They illuminate our pathway and help us navigate the darkness for our middle-of-the-night bathroom needs. The dim lights stay on just long enough and aren't so bright as to fully awaken either of us.

MARIDITH JANSSEN, Long Beach, California

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- ▶ Amplifying your voice alongside millions of fellow members



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Upfront The **A** List

6 Surprising Things About Ziggy Marley

1 His first performance? Opening for a legend

It was as the Melody Makers—me, my brother Stephen and two sisters—in a concert in Jamaica that also had my father on the bill, in 1979. We just opened our mouths and expressed ourselves. When I look back, it's kind of incredible the first show I did was a concert with Bob Marley.

2 They didn't have an indoor toilet or a lot to eat

Bob Marley wasn't Bob Marley then. We didn't have money, but we gave thanks because we weren't starving. I remember one day I found a loaf of bread, a tomato and some sugar. I made a sandwich and it was the best sandwich I'd ever had. We played in the dirt, barefoot, used a toilet outside, no

running water. I had no idea of any other life.

3 His dad taught by example, not lecture

My father would bring me around the big-men stuff, and I'd hear what they were talking about, how they act-

ed, playing sports or doing music or the religious thing. I picked up all that as a child.

4 Reggae is only one part of his musical repertoire

The reggae tradition is the spirit of what we do. But playing roots music doesn't

mean it's a thing from the past. Roots grow. I like AC/DC—I love the freedom of rock music. So I go back to my roots but into the future too.

5 A plant is a plant

You have rosemary, you have basil and you have ganja. It's just another herb we use when we need it.

6 His new album tackles mental anguish

A lot of my new songs deal with mental issues. The theme is accepting and facing our troubles—knowing there's a way out of those problems. Sometimes the world gets you down, but in the end, it always comes out to the light. I believe the tuning frequency I used is a more healing frequency, more uplifting. If I could control musicians in the world, I would tell them to switch frequencies. Let's have a mass experimentation! Start a revolution!

—As told to Rob Tannenbaum

“I have no musical boxes. I have no limits on my mind.”

—Ziggy Marley, 57

Los Angeles-based Ziggy Marley is a seven-time Grammy winner. Brightside, his new album, combines reggae, rock, funk and blues.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOE PUGLIESE

Fresh Picks for Picnics

Erin O'Brien, author of *Dig In!*, shares a movable summer feast that brings loved ones of all ages together

PHOTOGRAPH BY VICTOR PROTASIO



2



3



4



5



1



6

4 Best Ever Pasta Salad

This recipe from my mom, Guadalupe, is the pasta salad I grew up on. A zesty red wine vinaigrette ties the pasta, cheeses, salami and vegetables together.

5 Loaded Brown Butter Chocolate Chip Cookies

Brown butter adds a rich, nutty depth that takes classic chocolate chip cookies to the next level. Making, forming and freezing the dough in advance improves flavor and texture for an easy, bake-and-go treat.

6 Sour Cream and Onion Chicken Wings

Inspired by my love of potato chips, these wings are perfect for summer entertaining. I elevate that nostalgic flavor with Parmesan cheese, lemon juice and lemon zest.

—As told to Lauren Dana Ellman

1 Summer Berry Sangria


Sangria is refreshing, fruity and fun to share. Making it the night before lets the flavors develop. For a non-alcoholic version, use sparkling lemonade instead of wine.

2 Spiced Chicken and Black Bean Taco Salad with Cilantro Lime Vinaigrette

A hearty salad with layers of crunch, color and bold flavor, from salty roasted pepitas to sweet corn.

3 Sweet and Spicy Mexican Fruit Salad with Tajín Vinaigrette

This recipe draws on my Mexican American roots and childhood memories, balancing sweet fruit, spicy peppers, tangy vinaigrette and creamy queso fresco. Dress it just before serving to keep crisp.


 **MEMBERS ONLY**
For the full recipes go to aarp.org/picnics or scan this code.

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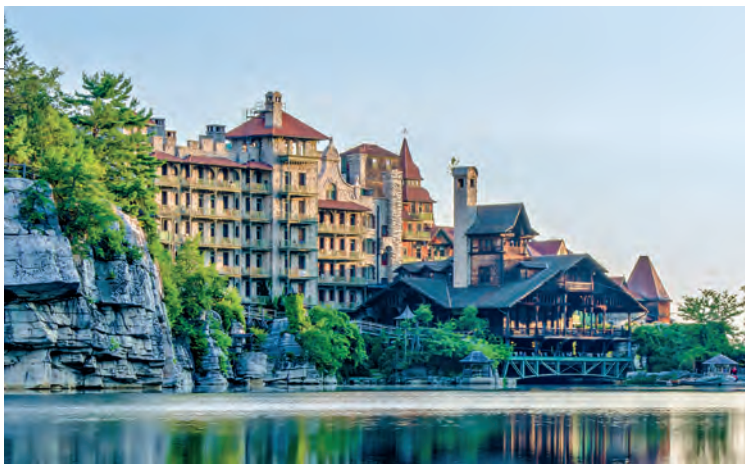
Escape the summer heat at a lake resort

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for a refreshing summer vacation on the water, you might want to skip the ocean—beaches can become scorching—and head for a lake resort instead for a more temperate clime.


MADISON, WISCONSIN The Edgewater Hotel

 Madison's urban resort sits on the shores of Lake

Mendota—the largest of the lakes bordering the city. Enjoy boating activities by the hotel's waterfront pier and don't miss the amazing sunsets, reflecting on the water. The resort also features multiple restaurants, a spa and wellness center, and the Grand Plaza, an open-air public space that hosts Sunday brunches, Friday evening fish fries and regular live music.



NEW PALTZ, NEW YORK Mohonk Mountain House

 More than 100 gazebo-like summerhouses—open-sided shelters, with most built between the 1870s and 1917 by hobbyist carpenters—dot the vast property. Supervised swims across the invigorating lake take place from Father's Day to Labor Day. The centerpiece of the resort is the Victorian-style mountain house, perched among the sheer white quartz cliffs.




QUINALT, WASHINGTON Lake Quinalt Lodge

 Tucked among the ferns, lichen and moss-draped trees of the Olympic National Forest's Quinalt Rainforest, this historic property offers ideal respite from summer's heat. Rent a kayak or canoe to explore the lake, watching for bald eagles above and playful river otters. Then relax in Adirondack chairs outside the timber-frame building. —Laura Kiniry



YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING Lake Yellowstone Hotel & Cabins

 The park's oldest operating hotel oozes Colonial Revival charm, and its location on the shores of Yellowstone Lake—more than 7,000 feet above sea level—allows for cool evening temps. While the water is generally too cold for swimming, motorboat rentals are available at nearby Bridge Bay Marina. Or opt for a guided sunset kayaking tour from Grant Marina.

Illustrations by Brian Scagnelli. Photographs clockwise from top: Steve Miura/Courtesy Mohonk Mountain House; George Rose/Getty Images; Getty Images; Courtesy Xanterra Travel Collection; Courtesy The Edgewater



Luxury Hotels Have Gone to the Dogs

Some perks are available only to guests who are pets

WHILE MORE budget-friendly hotels have opened up their rooms to travelers with pets for several years, the trend is now hitting luxury properties. “When we create special moments for dogs, we’re creating lasting memories for their humans too,” says Courtney Griffith, general manager of the Hotel Teatro



in Denver. (It can book dog services such as canine massage and “pawdicures.”) Other examples:

► At the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio, dogs can get a chef-curated dining experience including short rib, chuck and brisket, with food prices up to \$14.

► Sanctuary Beach Resort, by Monterey Bay in California, offers a group workshop led by a pet psychic, who can help you discover an intuitive bond with your pet (\$55).

Go to BringFido.com or AKC.org for info on dog-friendly hotels. —Judy Mandell

Save the Sounds

Use your phone for more than snapping vacation pics



THE CLAMOR OF vendors in an open-air market, waves crashing against rocks, a variety of Irish accents. Karen Gershowitz, 74, a photog-

rapher and author of *Travel Mania: Stories of Wanderlust*, recommends recording the sound of places you visit: “You can’t capture those things in writing or in photos.” She uses her phone’s free recording app and names the tracks for their locations. —Berit Thorkelson

📌 Go to aarp.org/traveltips to read about other creative ways to capture vacation memories.



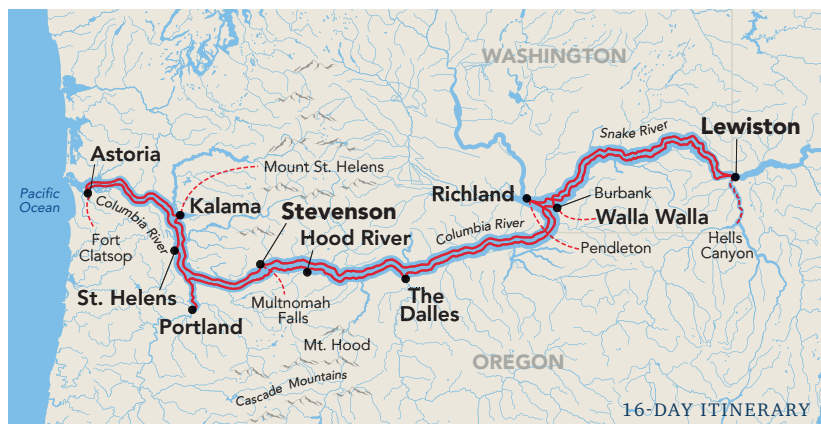
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Small but Street-Legal

Older drivers can get around the neighborhood in a battery-powered cart



GOLF CARTS HAVE been used as basic transportation in vacation communities for years. But increasingly, a similar type of vehicle—light and low-speed—is being accepted across America.

Resembling golf carts but outfitted with required safety features such as speedometers and windshield wipers, low-speed vehicles (LSVs) or neighborhood electric vehicles (NEVs) are street-legal in 18 states and in many more municipalities in other states—provided they stick to roads with speed limits of 35 mph or less.

These can be an attractive option for older drivers who want to get around their neighborhoods easily, without traveling on busy roadways. They are also easier to enter, exit and maneuver than cars.

LSVs generally cost \$8,000 to \$12,000, are easy to maintain because they're battery-powered and are less expensive to insure than cars. They plug into a standard wall socket and can travel up to 40 miles after a five-hour charge.

Valued at \$2.59 billion in 2025, the LSV market is expected to nearly double in the next decade to \$5.75 billion. "People want to keep up with the Joneses. Your neighbor gets one, you get one," says Jared Stokes, owner of Tigon Golf Carts in Hatfield, Pennsylvania.

Some might worry about colliding with a car, but advocates say the risk of injury is reduced by keeping LSVs on side streets, and with a top speed of about 25 mph, they're less likely to be involved in a serious crash. Plus, their open-air styling has no vision-blocking quarter panels.

Lynn Sperling, 63, got a four-seat LSV to navigate her neighborhood in Margate City, New Jersey. Now she and her husband, Neil, slip into what would have been tight parking spaces for cars and run errands with ease. "When the weather's nice, we do not drive our cars." —June D. Bell



AARP SMART PICKS

SLEEP WELL ON THESE MATTRESSES

The AARP Smart Picks lab team tested 26 mattresses from 11 brands and got input from older-adult testers

BEST OVERALL

Nectar Luxe Hybrid
(\$1,099-\$2,598)



• **Solid comfort.** One of our testers, 60-year-old Donna, praised the mattress's pressure relief and spinal alignment: "I don't really feel any gaps or areas where it's not supporting me." And while memory foam often traps heat, this mattress's rows of coils allow air to flow through. We confirmed this by checking the mattress's temperature with a thermal gun.

BEST VALUE

DreamCloud Classic Hybrid
(\$349-\$1,100)



• **Supportive construction.** This hybrid mattress has a responsive, memory foam feel and quality construction. "I feel very even, and my spine is aligned with my hips and shoulders equally balanced," said tester Karin, a 54-year-old side sleeper. The mattress has strong edges, which were among the strongest we tested, thanks to its reinforced coils.

BEST ADJUSTABLE

WinkBed Luxury Firm
(\$1,000-\$2,000)



• **Most compatible with adjustable bases.** The 13½-inch WinkBed Luxury Firm was one of the few taller mattresses that conformed to adjustable-base movements without gapping, tilting or bunching. "I usually like a more plush topper," says Dana, a 67-year-old tester, "but with this mattress, the firmness is good for the support." —Taylor Leamey

AARP Smart Picks provides unbiased, thoroughly researched and rigorously tested reviews. Go to aarp.org/smartpicks to read about more mattresses and other products. AARP may earn a commission through affiliate links on aarp.org. This does not influence our reviews.



SOME OLD SLANG IS FIRE

For real? Bet

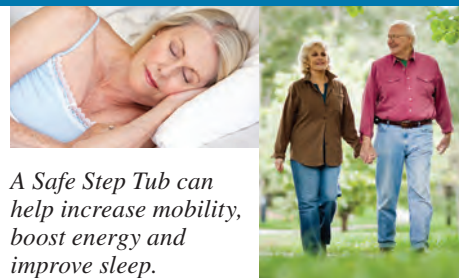
Back in fashion

- ✓ **Bro** Nicole Holliday, acting associate professor of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley, notes that "bro" is an older term that has reappeared; today it can be used for any gender.
- ✓ **For real?** The old slang—meaning "Are you serious?"—now often appears in text messages as "fr."
- ✓ **Fire** Use it to mean "amazing" or "stylish."
- ✓ **Bet** Why say "OK, sure" when you can just say "bet?"

Time for retirement

- ✗ **As if** Gen Z may appreciate the movie *Clueless*, but much of the film's lexicon is totally lame. (Also, don't say "totally" or "lame.")
- ✗ **Righteous, gnarly or bodacious** Not every *Bill & Ted* term has stood the test of time. "Dude," however, remains part of the lexicon.
- ✗ **Six seven** This expression spread last year, but now it's so 2025. "Adults ruin slang," Holliday says. "It is for young people." —Whitney Matheson

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



A Safe Step Tub can help increase mobility, boost energy and improve sleep.

Remember when...

Think about the things you loved to do that are difficult today — going for a walk or just sitting comfortably while reading a book. And remember the last time you got a great night's sleep?

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Personal Checklist:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Lower Back Pain | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Circulation |

Then read on to learn how a Safe Step Walk-In Tub can help.

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Big Summer Reads

Escape with the season's standouts

Land by **Maggie O'Farrell** (June 2)
The author of *Hamnet* sets her absorbing, atmospheric novel in Ireland in the wake of the Great Hunger—as the Irish call the Famine—and centers it around a struggling family, each member's trauma and their dreams of escape.

Whistler by **Ann Patchett** (June 2)
Middle-aged Daphne encounters her beloved former stepfather after decades apart and reckons with the accident that tore him from the family when she was a child. By the best-selling author of, among others, *Tom Lake*.

The Tiny Slice

“It's harder to find a good coffee table than it is to fall in love.”

—From **Cool Machine** by **Colson Whitehead** (July 21)

Daughters of the Sun and Moon by **Lisa See** (June 9)
See (Snow Flower and the Secret Fan) portrays three Chinese women, Dove, Petal and Moon, making their way in the dusty Wild West of 1870s Los Angeles.

The Children by **Melissa Albert** (June 2)
YA author Albert goes for a grownup fantasy in this story



about the adult children—estranged siblings—of a famous fantasy author as they contend with their bizarre childhoods and legacy as characters in her books. Stephen King dubs it “a page-turner ... dusted with magic.”

Lost in the Summer of '69 by **Eliza Knight** (June 9)
Former musician Eleanor Bell hits the road with her guitar for a California music festival and a last blast before her dementia ties her down, with her daughter and granddaughter hot on her heels. Feel-good, nostalgia-steeped fun.

Villa Coco by **Andrew Sean Greer** (June 9)
In this sunny novel by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Less*, a young man is hired to assist an eccentric Italian widow (Coco) in her Tuscan villa; his job includes trying to find her long-lost love.

Red Sheet by **James Ellroy** (June 9)
The author of *L.A. Confidential* plunges us into 1960s Los Angeles, where police investigator Freddy Otash is tasked by the feds with rooting out Communists. The noirish tale includes cameos from figures like Richard Nixon and Hugh Hefner.

The Frenzy by **Joyce Carol Oates** (June 16)
Oates' fiction is as dark and brilliant as ever—as evidenced by her engrossing new short stories, which dive unblinkingly into the minds of troubled characters struggling with destructive impulses and desires.
—Christina Ianzito



ALSO OF NOTE

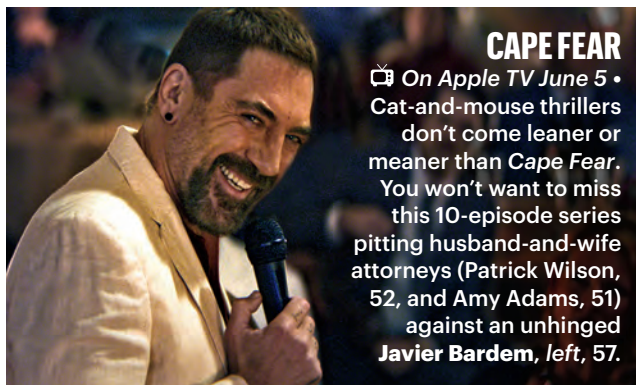
CRIME
The Yahoo Boys: Love, Deception, and the Real Lives of Nigeria's Romance Scammers by **Carlos Barragán** (June 9)

MEMOIR
Transcendent by **Laverne Cox** (June 9)

CULTURE
Ageing Out: An Exploration of Caregiving, Corporations, and How Americans Grow Old by **Lucy Schiller** (July 14)

Now Playing

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

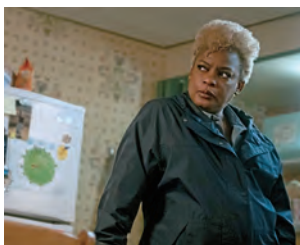


CAPE FEAR

📺 On Apple TV June 5 • Cat-and-mouse thrillers don't come leaner or meaner than *Cape Fear*. You won't want to miss this 10-episode series pitting husband-and-wife attorneys (Patrick Wilson, 52, and Amy Adams, 51) against an unhinged **Javier Bardem**, left, 57.

LUCKY

📺 On Apple TV July 15 • This buzzy summer series, with Reese Witherspoon in the executive producer role, stars Anya Taylor-Joy (*The Queen's Gambit*) as a con artist on the run from the feds and a brutal crime boss. Based on Marissa Stapley's best-selling novel (also a Reese's Book Club pick), *Lucky* features supporting turns from Annette Bening, 68, Timothy Olyphant, 58, and **Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor**, above, 57.



LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE

📺 On Netflix July 9 • Where were you on Monday nights back in the late 1970s? If the answer is: parked in front of a hulking TV set watching Michael Landon and a pigtailed Melissa Gilbert (now

62), then we've got big news! Laura Ingalls Wilder's family saga about life on the American frontier in the late 1800s has been given a Netflix reboot. We're cautiously optimistic.

THE ODYSSEY

🎬 In theaters July 17 • Christopher Nolan is a master at mixing smarts with spectacle. In his first trip behind the camera since *Oppenheimer*, Nolan, 55, aims high with his retelling of Homer's epic about a warrior's 10-year journey home following the Trojan War. A very bearded **Matt Damon**, above, 55, stars as Odysseus; Anne Hathaway plays his wife, Penelope; and **Zendaya**, above right, portrays his protector, Athena.



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Edward James Olmos

On childhood lessons, memorable roles and wanting to live at least another 40 years

A boyhood held dear

I was born on the east side of Los Angeles, and it was quite different than most people's upbringing. It was all cement. My great-grandfather used to walk me to preschool, and he would look at a stop sign and say, "See that? It says, 'Stop.' When you see that, I want you to stop and look around for a tree, look for birds, look for nature." From that moment on, whenever I saw a stop sign, I heard my great-grandfather's voice.

Baseball's life lessons

I played baseball for quite a few years. It taught me discipline, determination, perseverance and patience, the key ingredients to my life. By the age of 14, I had won the state batting championship in California for two years in a row.

One class

At 14, I quit baseball, got into a rock band and started singing. I finished high school and put myself through East L.A. Community College, where I took a theater class—drama, comedy, improv. And that got me to where I am today.

The big break

In 1978, I took a role as a Mexican American that required me to sing and dance and do comedy and drama. El Pachuco was a one-of-a-kind character, and Luis Valdez wrote a beautiful script that re-created a true story from 1943. After *Zoot Suit*, I never had to audition again.

The battles and the gifts

Discrimination, prejudice I felt right from the beginning. If the



"You're born to die, and in between, life asks you to do one thing: Be happy."



MEMBERS ONLY
For an exclusive video of Olmos, see aarp.org/olmos or scan this code.

character was stereotypical, I wouldn't do it. I am the first and only [U.S.-born] Mexican American lead actor who's ever been nominated for an Academy Award in the history of film [for playing Jaime Escalante in *Stand and Deliver*].

When fiction becomes reality

Battlestar Galactica and *Blade Runner* were good stories about what the AI world would be like. And now we are seeing that come to pass.

Listening to his grandkids

I spoil them. I'm permissive. And I talk to them directly. I just ask a question and listen to them. When you listen to people, things change. When you talk at people, it becomes something else.

Sounding the alarm on diabetes

I am working on bringing diabetes awareness to the forefront because of the amount of diabetic disease that is in my culture. Every male in my family has died of diabetes. The key is diet and exercise.

This age is a blessing

When you're my age, you can do what you want to do and you really know who you are. People say to me, "What do you most want out of life?" and I always say I want to be able to live to at least 120, because I want to take care of my great-grandchildren like my great-grandfather took care of me. If I can do that, then I've won the game. —As told to Lisa Rosen

Actor, director and producer Edward James Olmos, 79, will play Jennifer Lopez's father in Netflix's romance *Office Romance*, due out this year.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
JESSE DITTMAR

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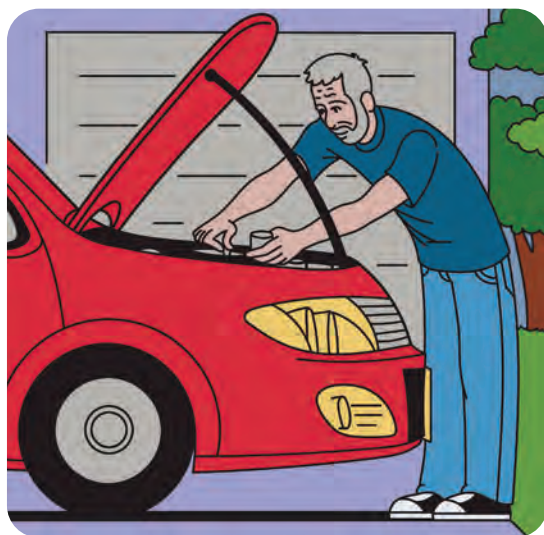
Avoid the cost of replacing your big-ticket possessions by following these simple tips for keeping them in good working order

By EMILY GUY BIRKEN

HVAC SYSTEM

To cut wear and tear, most standard 1-inch filters should be replaced every 30 to 60 days, says Mike Rackers, owner of Clarksville Heating & Air in Hanover, Maryland. "It's the single most important thing to do to maintain your HVAC system," he says.

Other systems, adds Rackers, may contain box-style filters that can last as long as nine to 12 months.



CAR

Yes, follow the manufacturer's recommendations for preventive maintenance, advises Steve Lang, car dealer and founder of Mileage Impossible, a Facebook group devoted to cars with super-high odometer readings. But also search online for your car's model name and "enthusiast forum," he adds. "You'll find thousands of people who have owned your vehicle and know its weaknesses, and what to do before little problems become big."

WATER HEATER

"Over time, sediment settles at the bottom of a traditional storage-tank-style water heater, which means the heating element has to work harder," says Tim Beachy, project manager for Nicholson Builders in Columbus, Ohio.

The easy fix is to flush the tank at least once a year. (You can find many how-to videos online.) But few people do, Beachy says. "That's partially because the drain valve can be small and tough to reach," he says. "Replace it with a brass ball valve that's easier to use and you're more likely to flush the tank on schedule."



APPLIANCES

Reading the manual always helps to keep household appliances in good shape, says Beachy. (You can usually download one from the manufacturer's website if you've lost yours.) Cleaning is another good idea. Because accumulated dust strains a refrigerator's cooling system, for example, Beachy recommends vacuuming the coils every six to 12 months—more often if you're a pet owner. "If you've ever removed an old refrigerator," he says, "you know how gross the coils can get."



MATTRESS

The standard advice is to flip and rotate your mattress, but what do you do with a modern, un-flippable pillow top? "Rotating your mattress 180 degrees every three to six months is still the best thing you can do," says Joel Breen, owner of JB's Furniture in Milwaukee. Breen also suggests vacuuming your mattress regularly. "We have dead skin and other stuff that comes off us at night," he says. "Vacuuming that away can help keep your mattress feeling newer." ■

When Romance Meets Finance

Tips for older daters to avoid money pitfalls

By JUDITH NEWMAN AND LAURA PETRECCA



WHEN WE DATED in our teens and 20s, finances were pretty low on our list of priorities; after all, we were immortal and we'd figure out a way to get by. Now, as we nervously monitor our retirement account balances, those of us on a first date are looking across the table and thinking something along the lines of *Sure, he's got all his hair, but what's his credit score?*

Yes, it's not just looks, values, charm and that elusive quality known as chemistry that matter when you're an older dater. Whether you're looking for something casual or hoping for a lasting love connection, money plays a role too. And it can be a minefield. When you're meeting for that first coffee date, there's no way to know how close that stranger is to a financial precipice and what that might mean for a future relationship.

"A lot of men have been divorced, may still be supporting adult children, and they are less financially secure than they ever imagined they would be at 50 or 60 or 70," notes Leslie Bennetts, author of *The Feminine Mistake: Are We Giving Up Too Much?* Many men are looking for a soft place to land—but then, so are women. What this has bred for both genders, says Bennetts, "is a lot of suspicion and mistrust because the old rules no longer apply and nobody knows how to act."

"So many of the problems I have in dating revolve around money," says Mark, a 74-year-old divorced physician in Florida who asked that his last name be withheld to protect his privacy. "Either women make it clear before they even meet me that they are looking for financial security, or I meet very wealthy women who intimidate me, and I worry I can't keep up."

You may not be able to avoid every pitfall of dating at this stage of life, but here are a few ideas for sidestepping money problems that might arise.

1 DISCUSS WHO'S PAYING EARLY ON.

With the question of who pays fuzzier than ever, you need to set the rules before there are any awkward silences. If you prefer to pay, etiquette expert and AARP Modern Manners columnist Lizzie Post suggests saying something like: "I'd love to meet up for a cup of coffee. Please let it be my treat." Prefer to share the cost? You can say something like: "My usual practice on first dates is to split the bill. Does that work for you?" Of course, if you still hew to the old rules of courtship, you could gently state that at the onset. "We're all still living in the patriarchy," says Lisa Zaslow, 62. "The least the guys could do is pay for the first date." But be prepared for pushback.

2 SET A BUDGET.

Costs for getting together can pile up quickly. Single Gen Xers spend an average of \$172 per date, while boomers shell out an average of \$127, according to the BMO Real Financial Progress Index. To keep your spending in check, set up a dating fund, advises Lakshmi Rengarajan, a dating coach and creator of the *Later Dater Today* podcast. For instance, if you allot \$200 a month for dates, you can have multiple low-cost coffee meetups or a couple of pricier nights out. The key is to honor your limit. "Once that money runs out, you're not going on any more dates that month," says Rengarajan.

3 FIND YOUR COMFORT LEVEL.

For many of us, a splashy first or second date creates a sense of heightened, and perhaps uncomfortable, expectation. Judith, one of the writers of this article, was in her 50s when she was taken on a first date to a Broadway show and a swanky Manhattan steak house so her date could show her the plaque the restaurant had installed in his honor. "Then he wanted to show me the pied-à-terre he had just bought for his future mistress," she says. "Unbeknownst to me, he was still married and was auditioning me for the role."

At the other end of the spectrum, when Zanne Koehne, 48, of Louisville, Kentucky, began looking for a new relationship, she bought a zoo membership so she'd have a fun, inexpensive

place to take her (hopefully animal-loving) dates. Bela Gandhi, a dating coach and founder of the Smart Dating Academy in Chicago, is a fan of such low-key outings. "I like easy dates," she says. No zoo in your area? Try coffee shops or museums.



4 FIND THE RIGHT TIME TO TALK MONEY.

As is the case with physical or emotional intimacy, it's best to do only what feels appropriate to you. If a question about your finances feels too personal, you can simply choose not to answer it, or you can politely ask why the other person wants to know. "People need to earn your story," Gandhi says. "They don't get it up front just for asking."

On the other hand, don't wait forever to question suspicious financial behavior. Recalling one relationship, actor

and author Annabelle Gurwitch says, "We generally alternated paying for things, but after about a year, I began to wonder why he paid for everything in cash." It turns out the boyfriend, who had long earned a six-figure income, was in bankruptcy. "But he did have an extensive collection of \$1,000 sneakers," Gurwitch adds. When she asked the man how he planned to live once he retired, he coolly replied, "That's what my children are for." Some financial information you simply can't unhear.

5 CARRY CASH.

Maybe you just don't want to feel any obligation to someone who's insisting on paying. Maybe things are going poorly and politely leaving cash is a better alternative than excusing yourself and trying to shimmy out the bathroom window. Whatever the case, you can just say, "I really appreciate that you want to treat me, but I'm not comfortable with that, so I'm going to leave \$40 here," says Post.

6 KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR SCAMS.

"I'm infamous among friends for a lifetime of attraction to sketchy guys," says Andi Sporkin, a communications executive in Los Angeles. "Now, as an aging boomer, I consider my ability to quickly recognize these qualities as a superpower."

Getty Images (3)

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Nearly half of online daters age 50 and older say they've encountered someone they suspected was trying to scam them, according to a 2023 study conducted by the nonprofit Pew Research Center. So make sure you verify whom you are actually talking to by searching their name online or doing a reverse online image search with their photos; you might find out that the person's picture actually belongs to somebody else, or is associated with reports of scams. Avoiding a video call if you're chatting online, continually coming up with reasons not to meet in person, and asking for money for any reason whatsoever—these are all bright red flags. Dating apps often alert users to recent scams, and aarp.org/fraud has info about romance scams and other types of fraud.

7 LOOK FOR LOW-COST WAYS TO MEET A POTENTIAL PARTNER.

You know how much birding costs? How about community organizing or other volunteer events? There are endless cheap or no-cost activities such as these that force you out of your home and into the company of like-minded people, says Ed Coombs, a financial planner and author of *The Healthy Love & Money Way*. Free and low-cost dating apps are another option, but keep in mind that, as of 2023, just 3 percent of adults 50 and older were using online dating platforms or had used them within the previous year, according to the Pew Research Center.

8 DON'T LET MONEY KEEP YOU FROM FINDING LOVE.

When Koehne started dating Tonya Calilung five years ago, Calilung asked to split their checks—a request born out of past abusive relationships in which money was intertwined with issues of power and control. Koehne, too, had previously been in an abusive relationship. The women got married two years later—those inexpensive zoo dates really worked!—and today Zanne and Tonya Koehne are as enmeshed as any couple could be. They still don't pool their money, though, and they take turns paying for nights out. "I think we both implicitly knew that in order to be comfortable, given our pasts, money had to be separate," says Tonya, 53.

So when you're first getting to know someone, don't immediately label them as cheap or extravagant or anything in between. Learn a little about what has happened in their financial past. By this stage of life, almost everyone has a diverse mix of experiences that shape their money mindset and financial situation. "If you see a potential future with this person but respond with criticism, it can potentially discourage any future openness about their situation," says Coombs. "Treat the information you receive with compassion and empathy." ■

Judith Newman writes frequently for The New York Times and other publications. Business journalist Laura Petrecca was formerly the Money section editor at USA Today.



Jean Chatzky
TO THE RESCUE

Why Was Her Claim Denied?

A college instructor could no longer teach, but her disability insurer wouldn't pay



THE PROBLEM

Amy Rangel, 54, has long lived with postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, a condition marked by a racing heartbeat, fatigue and dizzy spells. Last year, Rangel, then a math lecturer at Northern Arizona University, was suffering so much that her doctors advised her to leave her job. But her short-term disability insurer denied her claim, saying she'd failed to show she couldn't work. As Rangel's appeal dragged on, she was quickly approved for long-term disability. But Rangel needed the \$15,000 in short-term benefits to cover her bills. "We have been living on my husband's Social Security and our retirement savings," she wrote me.



THE ADVICE

The public relations department at MetLife, Rangel's group short-term disability carrier, said the company doesn't comment on specific claims. Instead, MetLife provided me with information about common filing mistakes and the appeals process. I also spoke with Emily Brown of the nonprofit Patient Advocate Foundation and Ellen Bresnahan, president of Insurance Appeal Consultants in Burke, Virginia, which handles disability cases. Here's what you need to know about filing a claim or appeal.

► **Learn the rules.** Ask your employer for a copy of your plan. Deadlines, says Brown, are the "low-hanging fruit when it comes to denials." And every policy is different. Although most give you 30 days to file a claim, some give you just five business days from the first day you can't work.

► **See an M.D. ASAP.** Go to your doctor, an ER or urgent care to document why you can't work. Some possible reasons for Rangel's denial: Her disability had no clear start; her first visit after claiming was to a physical therapist, not a cardiologist; her next was to a naturopath, not an M.D. "Any nontraditional treatment seems to be dismissed by insurance company doctors," Bresnahan says.



Rangel's claim and appeal were unsuccessful.

► **Keep a symptom journal.** A record of your condition, if shared with your doctor, can help with a claim or appeal. Focus on the intensity, frequency, duration and functional impact of your symptoms to show they interfere with a 40-hour workweek. If you have migraines, for example, you might note that a headache prevented you from sitting at your desk or

using your computer for a certain number of hours.

► **Work with your doctor.** “The number one mistake people make is trying to explain to the insurer in their own words why it’s wrong to deny their claim,” Bresnahan says. “The doctor needs to explain it.” Make sure your physician connects your symptoms to specific reasons you cannot work. Ask to see the statement before it’s filed.

► **Don’t relax after approval.** Especially in long-term

disability cases, expect your insurer to regularly review your status. See your doctors as often as your insurer recommends and make sure they record your diagnoses, treatment plan and prognosis for returning to work, says Bresnahan.

► **Consider extra help.** You might hire a lawyer to appeal a denial (though many won’t handle short-term cases on a contingency basis). Another option is the Patient Advocate Foundation (patientadvocate.org), which offers free assistance.



THE OUTCOME

Soon after I reached out to MetLife, the company apparently revisited Rangel’s case. In December, she got her money. Coincidence? She didn’t think so, given all the letters she said she received stating there was nothing more for her to do. Bresnahan’s advice for when a long-term claim is approved but a short-term one isn’t: “Send the long-term approval letter to the short-term people and threaten to sue for the benefits.”

! Go to aarp.org/foreverpaycheck for info about Jean Chatzky’s *The Forever Paycheck: The New Retirement Strategy to Spend More, Worry Less, and Never Run Out of Money*, coming this fall from AARP Books.

! Want Jean Chatzky to write about helping you sort out your financial problem? Email rescue@aarp.org.

Matt Merjian Williams

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Healthy You

Your PROTEIN Prescription

Eating 25 grams of protein at each meal can help you stay strong and healthy. But what does that look like, exactly?

By ANNIKA SCHMIDT

AS ANY retired athlete can tell you, physical strength naturally declines with age. But eating enough protein throughout the day can help you hold on to your strength and muscle mass, says Dr. Roger Fielding, a senior scientist at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University.

“Accelerated loss of muscle mass, coupled with a loss of muscle strength, increases the risk for falls, fractures, mortality and functional decline, including difficulty walking, climbing stairs, getting up out of a chair,” Fielding says. Reduced muscle mass is also linked to a weaker immune system and an increased risk of diabetes and cognitive impairment.

For older adults, 25 grams per meal, from a variety of plant and animal sources, can help meet the level needed to rebuild muscle mass and counter loss of strength as the body ages. Here’s what that can look like on your table.

Annika Schmidt is a research editor for AARP THE MAGAZINE.

1 CUP GREEK YOGURT + NUTS

Plain Greek yogurt is an excellent source of protein, with about 20 grams per cup. Top with almonds, walnuts or granola to hit 25 grams.



GRILLED SALMON

A 3-ounce piece of grilled salmon has about 25 grams of protein. Enjoy with roasted potatoes and asparagus for a balanced meal.



SPAGHETTI AND MEATBALLS

One serving of spaghetti has about 8 grams of protein. Adding about four medium-size meatballs boosts this classic to 25 grams. A little Parmesan cheese adds extra protein.



THREE EGG OMELET, STUFFED

Three eggs have about 18 grams of protein. To get an omelet up to 25 grams, add feta and spinach or other protein-packed ingredients like cottage cheese, chicken or mushrooms.

TOFU STIR-FRY

One serving of tofu (¾ cup) has about 16 grams of protein. Add a cup of veggies—like broccoli, carrots and bell peppers—and enjoy with white rice (½ cup) for about 25 grams of protein.



The Pains of Modern Life

Today's technologies may be the cause of some old-fashioned aches. Here's how to stop them

By JEANNE DORIN McDOWELL

MODERN technology is designed to keep us feeling comfortable. But even the most ingeniously designed gadgets can make our bodies cranky, especially if we spend too much time with them. If you've ever woken up with an odd pain in your back, hands or arms, there's a good chance that modern technology could be playing a role. Here's how to find the source—and some simple adjustments to keep your tech usage comfortable and pain-free.

THE SYMPTOM: Lower back pain

POTENTIAL CULPRIT: Your desk chair

Roughly half of American adults 60 and older complain of lower back pain.

Back pain that lingers for 30 days or more means you should see a doctor to rule out any serious issues. But for a lot of us, that angry lumbar is driven by something simple: the way we sit. If you spend much of your day wedged to a desk chair or driver's seat, how you sit is going to make an impact on how your back feels at the end of the day. And, if you're like most people, you're doing it all wrong, says Toronto-based chiropractor Michael Takes.

Here's the problem: A lot of us were told as kids to "sit up straight." For many of us, that means sitting in the middle of the chair or even close to the edge, with our feet firmly on the floor, back straight, head up. But that's an



unnatural position, and our muscles just aren't strong enough to hold us up in that way for very long. Inevitably we begin to slouch: Our lower back relaxes and curves back as our shoulders curve forward. Instead of pointing down, the tailbone curls under and points toward the front of our seat. That stretches the spine and stresses the lower back muscles. Meanwhile, your hamstrings—the muscles running down the back of your thighs—are shortened. “That’s why a lot of people with lower back pain also have tight hamstrings,” says Takes. And tight hamstrings can tug on the hip bones and create additional stress. The result is lower back pain that stretches across the beltline and below it, Takes explains.

How to fix it: Instead of trying to “sit up,” push your buttocks to the very back of your chair so you’re wedged right up against the chairback and your pelvis is in a neutral 90-degree position. This facilitates proper alignment of your spine and eliminates unnatural stress on your tailbone and back.

THE SYMPTOM: Upper back, neck and shoulder pain

POTENTIAL CULPRIT:

Your cellphone or computer

“Tech neck” is the term doctors have for the neck, shoulder and upper back stiffness caused by tilting your head down to look at a device for a long time.

“Leaning into screens most of the day affects the muscles that support the neck and pulls the neck forward,” says Dr. Jennifer O’Connell, a physiatrist at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City. While it’s not an official medical term, tech neck is becoming a more common ailment. Gen X Americans spend an average of four hours and 48 minutes a day on the phone; boomers spend four hours and 19 minutes per day, according to a 2025 survey from Harmony Healthcare IT.

The average adult head weighs 10 to 12 pounds. Bending it forward at a 45-degree angle to look at a device can load about 49 pounds of stress on the neck muscles, leading to fatigue,



stiffness, headaches or even numbness or tingling in the arms and shoulders from pinched nerves. The same effect can happen if you regularly work on a laptop computer, which typically sits lower than the desktop devices of old.

How to fix it: It's easy enough to say, "Look at your phone less," but it's hard to do: In the same 2025 survey, 51 percent of Gen Xers and 35 percent of boomers reported wanting to cut down their phone use.

If you just can't stay off the phone, try using it in a way that causes less pain: Lift it in front of your face rather than keeping it down below your chin. As for laptops:

- Position your screen 20 to 30 inches away from your eyes.
- Use a computer monitor or laptop stand to raise the screen to eye level (a stack of books will also work).
- Keep your wrists straight and elbows at about a 90-degree angle.
- Keep your knees in line with your hips and your feet flat on the floor.

If the issue persists, consult a physical therapist, O'Connell advises.

THE SYMPTOM: Hand or wrist pain
POTENTIAL CULPRIT: Your smartphone

If you notice soreness or stiffness in your palm or wrist, especially near your thumb, there's a good chance you've been doomscrolling too much. "I see a lot of overuse-related hand injuries from the repetitive activities that cause muscle and tendon stress and

joint strains," says Dr. Ariel Williams, assistant professor of orthopedic surgery and rehabilitation at the Yale School of Medicine. "They can cause tendinitis and aggravate conditions like arthritis from your hand being in the same position for a prolonged period of time."

Commonly known as "text claw," "smartphone thumb" or "phone hand," these aches and pains result from stretching and overtaxing the tendons. Trigger finger is also common; it's caused by inflammation or thickening of the sheath around a tendon that causes a finger or thumb to get stuck in a bent position or click and pop when moved. You can also injure your pinkie if you use it to support your phone as you scroll.

How to fix it: Switch hands regularly or, even better, use two hands—one to hold the phone and the other to scroll. Williams recommends using your index finger rather than thumb. And never use your pinkie to support your phone while scrolling.

Phone grips—accessories that adhere to the back of digital devices or cases to secure your grip for one-handed texting—can relieve pressure on your wrist and hand. Place it slightly below the center of your device for good balance and to allow your thumb to reach the screen on larger phones. This reduces the need for a tight grip on the phone and prevents wrist strain. ■



Jeanne Dorin McDowell writes about health for numerous national publications. She was a correspondent for Time magazine for 20 years.

8 Simple Ache-Easing Desk Moves

THE MORE you move, the more your body creates synovial fluid, the lubricant that helps prevent aches, pains and stiffness, says Brad Callan, an assistant professor of physical therapy at the Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences. Here are some simple exercises Callan recommends that will help get the motion your body needs.

1. Shoulder straightening:

Sit upright and squeeze your shoulder blades together to stretch your upper back. Keep your chin up and your ears and shoulders aligned.



2. Sitting hamstring stretching:

While sitting, extend one leg out straight and lean forward from the waist over the leg to feel a stretch in the back of your extended leg.

3. Seated leg extensions:

Sit on the edge of your chair, lift one leg straight out and hold for two counts to activate shin and thigh muscles. Repeat 10 times for each leg.



4. Upper back stretch:

Put your hands behind your neck and try to bring your elbows back behind you to relieve upper back stiffness.

5. Sitting torso twist:

Sit tall in your chair with your feet flat, then twist to the right while holding the chairback. Hold this position for a few seconds, then switch sides for spinal mobility.



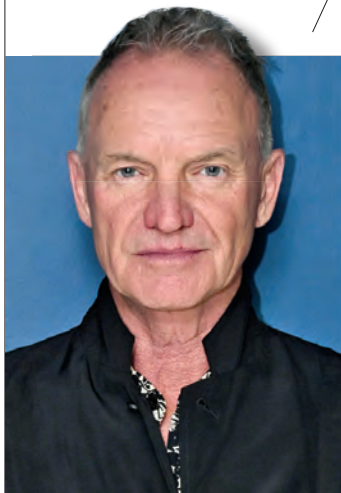
6. Glute squeezes:

Squeeze your glute muscles (your butt), hold for 10 seconds and release. Repeat 10 to 15 times.

7. Arm circles: Extend your arms to the sides and make small circles forward and backward to work your shoulders.



8. Thigh presses: Press your palms against the outside of your knees and push inward with your hands while trying to push against them with your legs.



CATCHING UP WITH STING

At 74, the rock legend embarks on the North American leg of his acclaimed *Sting 3.0* tour this fall, while releasing two new musical projects

With 17 Grammy Awards, you've stayed a long time at the top of popular music, which is often a young

person's game. How have you done it?

I'm not pretending to be a young person at all. I'm 74 years old, yet I have the energy of a teenager in many ways. I love my age. The wisdom that I've gained and the experiences that I've had have fed my creativity. I still have that curiosity, that sense of discovery that music and life give me. I'm intrigued by what happens next in every sphere.

Your two new music projects, *Desert Rose (Reimagined)* and *The Night Watch: Live at the Rijksmuseum*, reinterpret some of your classic songs. Why now?

"Desert Rose" was one of those songs that revived my career because it was so different.... And yes, I had the extraordinary privilege of singing my songs with Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* behind me and Vermeer's *Girl With a Pearl Earring* to my right. I'm always looking for some-

thing new ... because that's the rejuvenation that music gives us.

How do you keep that creativity flowing and the songwriting fresh?

The songwriting does get more difficult because you are competing with yourself. At the same time, when you do write a song, it's a very satisfying feeling. When people talk about AI taking over the creative realm of songwriters, I say, "Well, AI has never been in love. It has never had its heart broken.... So what can it possibly tell me that could be interesting?"

In your autobiography, *Broken Music: A Memoir*, you said that gratitude and forgiveness sustained you when writing about your upbringing.

I've forgiven everybody in

my life. I've forgiven myself. I've forgiven my parents. That's been the most freeing thing. I went to see my dad two days before he died. I held his hands, and I noticed for the first time that we had exactly the same hands, workman's hands, with big knuckles. I said, "Dad, we have the same hands." He said, "Yes, son, but you use your hands better than I used mine." That was the first compliment he paid me in my 33 years. It was a beautiful moment.

You are a lifelong risk-taker. What's your advice on how to overcome fear?

Fear is a natural response to danger or risk, but without risk, there is no art. Just brace yourself, gird your loins and go into battle even though you're afraid.

—Interview by Alanna Nash

! AARP members can visit aarp.org/sting to read the full interview.



TRAVEL

HOW TO BUILD YOUR TRAVEL BUDGET

Plan now to pay for adventures later

FOR MANY PEOPLE, their 70s are the decade to take on some of those long-deferred travel adventures. Suddenly, they have the time and still the energy to spend a few weeks exploring Utah's "Mighty Five" national parks or taking that photo safari in Africa. So how do you make sure the money will be there?

Brock Renner, a wealth manager at Premier Investments & Wealth Management in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, says many of his clients 70 and older prioritize travel in their financial planning. They fund their trips in one or more of four ways:

1. Set it and forget it. Snowbirds and others who do the same things year after year—like rent a lakefront cabin with family—tend to know how much



money they'll need, and they set aside a certain amount each month to fund the year's travel.

2. Reserve the RMDs. At 73, people must begin taking required minimum distributions from retirement accounts. Some earmark those funds for travel. For those already living comfortably on their savings, Social Security and investments, RMDs could be a big source of "found money," says Renner.

3. Fund the refund. "I have some clients who will withhold more in

federal or state taxes because they like their refund," says Renner. "It's kind of forced savings." Then they use their refunds to pay for vacations.

4. Run the numbers. "We'll build it into the financial plan," says Renner. They estimate how much the clients need to live on and how much they'd like to set aside for travel, then run various scenarios using computer models. "If it's at least a 75 or 80 percent chance of success, we feel pretty comfortable," says Renner. "I always tell my clients, 'You can't take this money with you.'"

Laura Dunno, 71, a retired financial assistant in Fort Wayne, Indiana, recently took a cruise from Argentina to Antarctica. She and her husband, Gary, who died in 2021, always allocated a set amount from their investments and never regretted their trips: "Either you'll have great stories because you had fun or you'll have nightmare stories about what went wrong—but either way, you'll have stories." —Jody L. Rohlena

Fit for Life

Choose joy. Here's why



BY THE TIME you're in your 70s and beyond, aging well is about much more than checkups, healthy eating and staying active. It's also about resilience—how you respond to loss, change and the surprises life can bring. We can work on finding within a place of well-being, calm and contentment when confronting illness, loss and the other vagaries of life.

Kerry Burnight, gerontologist and author of *Joyspan: The Art and Science of Thriving in Life's Second Half*, told me that her own mother, who is 97, was not always a joyful person. But she changed course in her late 70s through “daily small choices” and “putting in the work.” That is a powerful reminder: It is never too late.

Burnight's prescription to increase your “joyspan”:

Choose joy every day. Before leaving your bed, remind yourself that you have a choice in how you meet the day.

Grow. Stay curious. Keep learning. Growth is a lifelong human need.

Connect. “Connection can't be on autopilot.” Reach out. Be the initiator.

Adapt. Life changes. Reassess, adjust and keep using tools that help you cope.

Give. “You always have something to give of yourself.” Your wisdom, experience, kindness, time and presence still matter. —Barbara Hannah Grufferman, author of *Love Your Age*

Daniel Fishel

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So You Want to Be a Podcaster?

DICK GROVE, 81, the former CEO of a Kansas City public relations firm, was looking for a new challenge in retirement. He had come across people over 70 doing amazing things: an 82-year-old former rock 'n' roller who got back onstage, a 76-year-old who wrote a book about his scuba diving adventures. That gave Grove an idea: "I thought a podcast about people in their 70s and 80s doing incredibly cool

things would be fun. I had never done a podcast, but I thought, *Why not?*" Thus, *Old People Rock* was born.

A recent study by statista.com found that there are more than 3.5 million podcasts. But there is always room for one more—like yours.

Rob Walch, 59, host of a podcast called *PodCast411*, advises newcomers to listen to what already exists in your topic area and decide what could work. "It is highly recommended you check out a few other podcasts to get yourself inspired before starting your own show," he says. He offers these steps to get started:

- 1. Determine the format.** Solo shows are the most work, but you get full control. Interview formats are fun—you get to meet new people. But you have to book interviews and record them. You can use services like Riverside, StreamYard or even Zoom for that recording.
- 2. Pick a title.** Be precise about what the show will cover. Make it sound like something you'd want to listen to yourself. *Old People Rock* is a good example. Some others: *The Aging Well Podcast*; *Women Over 70: Aging Reimagined*.
- 3. Get the basic gear.** You need a microphone. Many microphones can connect directly to your computer, tablet or smartphone. They range in price from \$75 to \$150. New podcasters

often use the Samson Q2U, Blue Yeti or Rode NT-USB Mini microphone, which typically cost around \$100. You also need a program to record into and edit your files. GarageBand on Macs and Audacity on PCs or Macs are among the most common apps for this.

- 4. Create artwork for your show.** For inspiration, search in podcast apps—Apple Podcasts has the most downloads. Clear images and big print, causing the eye to linger, are key.
- 5. Create a trailer episode.** Before you submit your podcast, you must have at least one file that is live. This is required by Apple, Spotify and all services that list a podcast. Start with a simple two- or three-minute trailer of what the show is about.
- 6. Pick a podcast hosting company.** You need a place to upload your files, such as Captivate, Blubrry, Buzzsprout, Podbean or Spotify for Podcasters. Prices range from free to \$50 per month. (You likely won't get any customer support with free options.)
- 7. Distribute your RSS feed.** An RSS feed is the list of episodes. It lets all the apps know where episodes are located and is used by Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Overcast and other places people listen to podcasts. When you publish a new episode, that RSS feed updates everywhere at the same time. —*Judy Mandell*

HEALTH-CONSCIOUS HIKING

By CINDY WEBER-CLEARY

Getting outside is good for your body, mind and spirit, experts say. Here are some ways to make getting out there safer and healthier



Focus on feet first.

A good option is a hiking sandal such as Chaco's Women's Mega Z/1 Wide-Strap Classic Sandal (\$95). Or try a waterproof hiking shoe like Hoka's all-gender Elite Terrain System Kaha 3 Low GTX (\$220) or Merrell's Men's Moab Tactical Shoe (\$145).



Dress for changeable weather.

Consider a water-resistant jacket such as EMS's Women's Mountain Warehouse Genesis (\$100); the Lands' End Women's Packable Anorak Windbreaker (\$100), which provides UPF; or QuikFlip Apparel's Dryflip 2.0 (\$80).



Keep tiny pests at bay.

Find clothes infused with insect repellent, like L.L.Bean's No Fly Zone pants for men and women (\$100), Columbia Sportswear's Insect Shield Men's Shoaltech Hoodie (\$80) and Insect Shield's Men's Field Shirt Pro (\$68).



Hydrate right.

REI's Gregory Nano 18 H2O Hydration Pack (\$90) includes a 3-liter water reservoir. Backcountry's USWE MTB Hydro 9 Hydration Pack (\$176) has a hydration bladder. CamelBak's Women's M.U.L.E. 12 Hydration Pack (\$142) fits women's bodies.



Sun yourself safely.

Lessen risk of skin cancer by wearing a wide-brimmed hat such as Solbari's Outback Travel Hat UPF 50+ (\$69). Other good options include Sunday Afternoons' Charter Hat (\$75) and the North Face's Women's Class V Brimmer (\$55).

My Morning Ritual Has Become an Endurance Trial

ONE OF THE things I find most annoying about getting older is the increased amount of time it takes me to get ready in the morning. In my prime, I could be shaved, showered and on my way in about six minutes. When I grew a beard and shaving was no longer required, I was down to under five.

It was in my mid-60s when I first noticed my morning ritual taking longer. Now, in my early 70s, it has become a marathon run in bathroom slippers.

For starters, I began moving more slowly and with greater caution after I discovered this unwritten law of physics: The older you get, the slipperier your bathtub gets. My showering also takes longer because certain parts of me are much harder to reach than they used to be. Getting to all 10 toes is now a 50-50 proposition, largely dependent on how stiff my joints are on any given morning. Some days I just give up. There's always tomorrow. But it's when I'm out of the shower that the time clock really begins ticking.

After drying off, I always take a moment to look in the mirror and reflect on what I see. What was once a semi-respectable dad bod has suddenly morphed into a less



respectable granddad bod. I don't necessarily mind this. That's life. But my body could at least have had the courtesy of waiting until I actually have grandchildren before starting this transformation.

I begin my grooming with a moisturizer, slathering it on my once-smooth skin, patches of which are now as dry as 20-grit sandpaper. Next, I move on to my big toe, the one with "severe osteoarthritis," according to recent X-rays. I slowly rub in lidocaine cream, but gently, lest I hurt my head when I hit the ceiling in excruciating pain.

Lastly, there is the issue of my hair. Once thick, black and curly, it used to require only a quick brushing, and I was done for the day. Then, around age 50, gray hairs started cropping up, quickly multiplying like tribbles on the old *Star Trek* TV show. These gray replacements have the consistency of dried straw. As a result, I've resorted to using some modern-day "greasy kid stuff." But the good news is, once dry, my stiff hair is rated to stay in place during a Category 5 hurricane.

Averaged lapsed time for my morning ritual: 28 minutes, 12 seconds. I'm exhausted, and my day hasn't even begun.

But I'm not sweating it. I can take a nap whenever I like. It's good to be retired. ■

John Ficarra, 71, is a New York writer and former editor in chief of Mad Magazine.

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Hiding in Plain Sight

*Acclaimed actor Alfre Woodard is known for submerging herself in her roles to the point of disguise. Fresh off the set of *The Boroughs*, she reflects on a life and career of unusual variety, resilience—and quiet rebellion*

By **Natasha Stoyloff**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM WRIGHT

ALFRE WOODARD IS one of the most successful actors in Hollywood, but you might not recognize her if you saw her on the street.

During her nearly 50-year career, encompassing well over 100 roles, she's won a Golden Globe and four Emmys, and she's been nominated for an Oscar. She's played a U.S. president, a crime boss, an anti-apartheid activist and more. Yet, "for a period of time, everyone between the ages of 30 and 50 was convinced they'd gone to high school with me," says Woodard, fresh off an Amtrak train ride marked by *Don't-I-know-you?* double takes from fellow passengers.

In an industry whose stars often cannot separate their own personalities from the roles they play, she is an actor's actor, as one critic put it—"chameleonic, idiosyncratic, true." At the same time, for a major star she has a somewhat unusual passion: teamwork. "Alfre never feels it's a solo enterprise," says filmmaker Lawrence Kasdan (*The Big Chill*), who directed her in two movies from the 1990s, *Grand Canyon* and *Mumford*.

Describing the set of her new Netflix series, *The Boroughs*, in which a group of retirement community residents battle an otherworldly threat, Woodard, a former high school athlete, likens her fellow septuagenarian castmates—including Alfred Molina, Geena Davis and Bill Pullman—to a seasoned relay team. "It was like we'd been running together since junior high and now you're at the Olympics," she says. "You put your hand out, *bam*, you know the baton is there."

Still, up close, the star power is there. Sitting in a dimly

Alfre Woodard,
photographed for
AARP in New York on
March 23, 2026



lit booth in a Manhattan eatery, Woodard, 73, somehow manages to sparkle. Sipping a cup of mint tea, she opens up about a life and career of trust, faith and storytelling.

Loving Family, No Limits

WOODARD WAS raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her parents—father Marion, or “MH,” an interior decorator and entrepreneur, and mother Constance, a homemaker—came from enslaved-people-turned-landowners on her father’s side and sharecroppers on her mother’s. From a young age, performing was not only encouraged but required. “My mom was from a family of 12,” says Woodard, the youngest of three. “Whenever we were all together with her family, all they did was laugh and talk over each other. If you were little and said, ‘I want to say something,’ they didn’t go, ‘What do you want to say, little one?’ They’d go, ‘It better be funny!’”

Even in the era of segregation—Tulsa high schools were not desegregated until 1973—she never doubted she could say and do what she wanted. “From the time I can remember, my father would say, ‘Nobody, I don’t care who it is, is better than you are,’” she says. And she had a clear sense of the tumultuous world beyond her doorstep. At age 5, “my father made us watch the news every night,” she recalls. “I was watching the Civil Rights Movement.” By age 10, she was helping her parents register voters.

One day in middle school, two teachers “pulled down the shades and passed out mimeograph sheets and said, ‘These sheets are not to leave the room,’” Woodard recalls. They told the story of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, when white mobs destroyed the prosperous Black neighborhood of Greenwood, killing dozens and leaving thousands homeless.

From the passed-along stories of those Black Tulsans who survived the violence and endured, she says, “I learned what resilience looked like.” She also learned the importance of protesting and taking action. “Whether it was African American, Indigenous, women, LGBTQ, when they called for people to come stand with them, you went,” she says.

Her life changed forever the day a teacher took the students on a field trip to a movie theater, where they saw an Oscar-winning French drama, *Sundays and Cybèle*, about a neglected girl who befriends a middle-aged war veteran. Sitting there, she had a revelation: *This is what I want to do. This is how we change the world.*

Of Faith, and a Big Break

IN 1974, Woodard graduated from Boston University with an acting degree and started working onstage in Washington, D.C., and New York. She then took off with a caravan of friends to Los Angeles to act in films.

“Oh, honey,” a Black theater actress warned her, “there’s no such thing as a Black film actress.” But Woodard wasn’t



discouraged. “I just went, *Well, that’s not my reality.*”

She joined an improv troupe and waited to get film auditions, believing that “when somebody wanted to invite me into a space with them, that was the kind of person I should be with.” She also grounded herself with prayer and a devotion to Christian Science, a faith she has followed since her college days. “She’s a very centered, spiritual, powerful, confident person,” says actor-director Jonathan Frakes, a friend of Woodard’s since those early days in Hollywood. (He directed her in *Star Trek: First Contact* two decades later.)

Continuing her theater work in Los Angeles and New York, Woodard had a breakout performance in 1977 in an L.A. production of *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf*. After seeing the play, director Robert Altman got Woodard her first film role, in *Remember My Name* (1978), and also cast her in his film *Health* (1980).

After that, Woodard wasted little time. Her next film role, in Martin Ritt’s *Cross Creek* (1983), earned her an Oscar nomination for best supporting actress. She didn’t win but maintains that the work was enough: “You don’t go up and down thinking, *We’re going to win the championship this year. Oh, we lost the championship!* No, you play ball. You be the best athlete you can. The trophy is not the thing.”

The trophies came anyway. In the 1980s she won two Emmy Awards for guest turns of remarkable intensity: first in 1983 on *Hill Street Blues*, then in the 1986 pilot episode of *L.A. Law*.

In a friend’s basement in 1983, she met writer-producer Roderrick Spencer. Both were living with significant others at the time, but the pull was strong. “It was recognition at first sight,” she says. “I knew he was my people.” They married later that year and eventually adopted two children: daughter Mavis, 35, an equestrian, and son Duncan, 32, a professional golfer.



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Creating a Career ... and a Soirée

IF THE '80S FOUND Woodard commanding the small screen, the '90s saw her claim the big one. Her first Golden Globe nomination came with 1992's indie standout *Passion Fish*. Work poured in, and she thrived in the ensemble casts of several other films throughout the decade.

Eventually, Woodard was carving out roles for herself. When roles for Black women were absent, she created them. She played the judge in the 1996 courtroom hit *Primal Fear*, for example—a part originally written for a white man in his 60s. “How do you think I have a career?” she says, laughing. “That has happened five times in my life, when I played a role meant for a curmudgeonly, older white guy.”

In 1998, Woodard won her first Golden Globe Award, for best actress in a miniseries or TV movie, for portraying a nurse in HBO's *Miss Evers' Boys*. She joined the megahit *Desperate Housewives* in 2005, if only reluctantly. (“I don't wear heels,” she warned producers.) The role of Betty Applewhite had been offered to two white actors before it came to Woodard.

By then, Woodard was growing weary of seeing Black actors pitted against one another—“like we're in some kind of individual roller derby to get a role,” she says. She flatly rejected the framing—often by her own agents—that other Black actors were rivals. So in 2009 she created the Sistahs Soirée, an annual pre-Oscar gathering for working Black female actors, to cultivate connection in place of competition.

“I love Alfre for understanding the need for an event like this,” says actor Octavia Spencer, a regular attendee of the Soirée along with Viola Davis, Rosario Dawson, Angela Bassett and Kerry Washington. Remembering her first time attending, Spencer says, “I looked around, taking note of the all-female, Black brilliance that engulfed me. While none of us left that room with a trophy, we gained so much more: sisterhood and an acknowledgment of our shared struggles.”

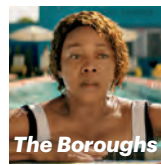
Home Is Where the Family Is

OVER THE PAST 15 years, Woodard has been busier than ever, playing a formerly enslaved woman in *12 Years a Slave* (2013), a U.S. president in *State of Affairs* (2014), a crime boss in *Luke Cage* (2016) and, most recently, a CIA official in the streaming series *The Last Frontier*.

But one of her favorite roles is the title character in *Juanita* (2019), adapted for the screen by Spencer, her husband. She portrays a woman who hops on a Greyhound bus to find a fresh start in life. On set, says director Clark Johnson of Spencer and Woodard, “they were a blast together.”

When Woodard's not working, she mostly wants to be with her children, flying to wherever they are. “They're the most hilarious, the most poignant, the most perceptive, the most alive and smart and interesting human beings I've ever met,” she says. At those family gatherings, Woodard returns to what she was raised on in Tulsa: food, conversation, connection. “All we do is talk and tell stories,” she says.

In this still-tumultuous world, she says, she and her various



Alfre Woodard's Must-See Roles

Before *The Boroughs* came many stellar performances

Cross Creek (1983)
Woodard landed a best supporting actress Oscar nomination playing Geechee, the poor housekeeper of a big-city



novelist (Mary Steenburgen) who moved to a shack deep in the Florida Everglades.

Passion Fish (1992)
In this indie about a recently paralyzed actor (Mary McDonnell) stewing in bitterness, Woodard plays a nurse whose tough-love approach is just what her patient needs.

Crooklyn (1994) Spike Lee's semi-autobiographical film is a nostalgic look at a Brooklyn family in the early '70s. Woodard and Delroy Lindo play parents whose love isn't always

spoken but is never in doubt.

Miss Evers' Boys (1997)
Woodard nabbed her third Emmy for this HBO drama about the U.S. government's unconscionable Tuskegee syphilis experiments in the 1930s. As a nurse who cares for the Black test subjects, she delivers a stunning mixture of compassion, outrage and guilt.

12 Years a Slave (2013)
Woodard is indelible as a formerly enslaved woman who rises to a position of power in plantation society. Her screen time is brief, but you'll think about her conflicted character long after the end credits. —Chris Nashawaty



tribes must keep connecting and “keep rebelling.” Her acts of rebellion include pushing for voter registration, championing LGBTQIA+ communities and continuing to demand justice for the descendants of the Tulsa Race Massacre.

Now, as our scheduled hour-long interview has stretched to nearly four, Woodard stands to go. But before she slips into the Manhattan night, she leans in to make one final point about those, like her, who have lived through the turmoil of the past 50 years.

“We are the generation of hope,” she says firmly, locking eyes with me. “But that hope must not be left to chance. We must take action.” ■

Natasha Stoyanoff is an award-winning journalist, screenwriter and New York Times best-selling author.



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AMAZING ARTIFACTS

True Tales of U.S. History

The stories behind 7 enshrined museum pieces

Museums are hallowed places where we house items so that future generations will learn about how we lived. And it's those lives, the connections to real humans, that make these pieces important. We tracked down some people to tell the stories behind some of the personal effects at prominent American museums. *As told to Michael Grant*

MEDAL OF HONOR

Staff Sgt. Walter David Ehlers, a Kansas native, served throughout World War II, including on D-Day. On June 9 and 10, 1944, he performed acts of heroism near Goville, France, that earned him a Medal of Honor. "[T]hough wounded himself," the citation reads, "he carried his wounded automatic rifleman to safety and then returned fearlessly over the shell-swept field to retrieve the automatic rifle which he was unable to carry previously." Ehlers' Medal of Honor is at the National WWII Museum in New Orleans.

Ehlers died in 2014. His daughter Cathy Ehlers Metcalf, 69, of Orange, California, regularly visits the museum.

★ Seeing the medal at the museum touches my heart. During his Medal of Honor action, he was shot in the side, and the bullet ricocheted off a rib, went out through his pack and shot a hole in the side of his mother's picture. That picture is in the museum with the Medal of Honor.

On the 50th anniversary of D-Day, he delivered the keynote address on Omaha Beach. He mentioned that they didn't just fight for the cause or for the people, they fought for the life they left behind and the life they hoped to return to. I feel that the museum gives



Lt. Gen. John C.H. Lee presents Ehlers with the Medal of Honor on December 19, 1944.

me a sense of recognition for what Dad and his family did to secure the freedom we still relish in this country.

Dad said Medal of Honor actions happen in context. Part of the reason he was so determined to keep his story in context was that it was also his older brother's story. Dad was able, with the help of a beachmaster, to get his whole platoon safely off the beach on D-Day. By contrast, Roland's landing craft was hit by a mortar, and he and other men were killed. My dad always felt that his brother was truly a hero who made the full measure of sacrifice.

SUPER BOWL XIV GAME BALL

On January 20, 1980, the Pittsburgh Steelers won their fourth Super Bowl, becoming the first NFL team to achieve that milestone, at a time when football was cementing its position as America's favorite sport. A ball from that game is now part of the collection of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, although it is not currently displayed. Hall of Fame quarterback Terry Bradshaw, 77, who played for 14 seasons with the Steelers and is now a broadcaster for Fox NFL Sunday, was unaware of the ball's enshrinement.

★ That football represents the closing of a decade when a group of men stayed together for about 10 years and won four Super Bowls. That was our last Super Bowl together. That is the culmination of all that, so it is extremely rewarding. But I say we did this, not I did this. I'm just one of 53 players who were part of the ball being in there, so that's what I'm proud of.

Winning four Super Bowls was special. Now, looking back, here comes Joe Montana, and he wins four. Then here comes Tom Brady, and he wins seven—but he lost three. Seven minus three is four. That's the way I like to look at it. I'm not going to give anybody the upper hand.



Steelers quarterback Bradshaw



ACHIEVEMENTS AFTER 50

14 Older Americans Who Made an Impact

(like AARP founder Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus)

By Katya Cengel



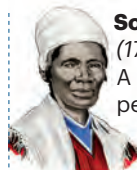
Benjamin Franklin
(1706–1790)

The oldest founding father, he was key to the United States' victory over Britain. Starting in 1776, at age 70, he used his diplomatic skills to forge a critical military alliance with France.



Noah Webster
(1758–1843)

A teacher, clerk, newspaper editor and lawyer, he wrote a comprehensive American dictionary, which he published at age 70. It promoted uniformity in how Americans spoke and spelled.



Sojourner Truth
(1797–1883)

A former enslaved person, she became a leading voice for human rights in her mid-50s after delivering an important speech at the 1851 Women's Rights Convention in Ohio.

EVEL KNEIVEL'S MOTORCYCLE

Evel Knievel was America's first superstar daredevil, known for his death-defying motorcycle stunts. His customized 1972 Harley-Davidson XR-750, in the collection of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, was used in some of his most famous jumps, including a successful flight over 14 buses that was nationally televised on ABC's Wide World of Sports on October 25, 1975.

His oldest son, Kelly, 65, witnessed many of his father's risky stunts.

★ I've always been proud of my dad. He wasn't the easiest man to grow up

with, but you don't become a world-famous daredevil by being a shrinking violet. My dad's accomplishments are a reflection of the freedom and spirit of America. If you follow his career, even after he crashes, he gets up and jumps even farther the next time. That's what made him so popular—his courage, his confidence in himself, his originality, his showmanship. No one had ever seen anyone like Evel Knievel before.

At the time, in the early '70s, I think motorcycles were more associated with outlaws and gangs like the Hells Angels. Today, motorcycle culture is more of an expression of freedom and

individualism. I think my dad was the turning point between the bad guys and the good guys, with that red, white and blue outfit he wore. The fact that he had the highest-rated *Wide World of Sports* show in history is just a testament to how he had the whole country sitting on the edge of their seats, waiting to see what he would do next.

Look at all the people he has inspired—freestyle motocross riders, racers and extreme-sports enthusiasts. He created a new industry, and it's still going today. Not a single person in these sports doesn't credit Evel Knievel for it, and he definitely deserves it.



Knievel's motorcycle on display and, above, in action on a jump over 14 buses in 1975



From left: Zuma Press Inc./Alamy Stock Photo; David Coleman/Have Camera Will Travel/Alamy Stock Photo



Clara Barton
(1821–1912)

In 1881, at age 59, she established the American Association of the Red Cross, one of the country's most prominent humanitarian organizations and a supplier of blood.



Andrew Carnegie
(1835–1919)

He used his fortune to create libraries, universities and foundations. In his 70s, he established the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which supported the discovery of insulin.



Grandma Moses
(1860–1961)

Artist Anna Mary Robertson Moses held her first solo show in 1940, at 80. She was 88 when President Harry S. Truman presented her with an award for her work.



Laura Ingalls Wilder
(1867–1957)

The author wasn't published until age 65, with her first *Little House* novel in 1932. The series went on to sell more than 73 million copies and spawn a hit TV show.



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BigKnife in her studio in Oklahoma



SHAWNEE DUSH-TOH HAIR ORNAMENT

As the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City prepared to return some items on loan from the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, it asked artist Heidi BigKnife to create a contemporary piece to replace the dush-toh, a type of hair ornament worn by the Shawnee. The original was created sometime between 1870 and 1900. BigKnife's version is made of maple wood, cotton calico, glass seed beads, silk ribbon, wool broadcloth, sterling silver, brain-tanned hide and embroidery floss.

★ The dush-toh is worn during ceremonial dancing. The hourglass shape, to me, represents the Earth and the universe. When we're dancing, we are in a relationship with those two things.

When I made this piece, I thought about different designs, but I landed on illustrating things that relate to my ceremonial ground. It's got oak leaves on it because our ceremonial ground is

called White Oak. It has a tiny pendant hanging from it, a little dogwood flower, which is significant to my grounds. I don't know the person who made the original piece, but making this made me feel more connected to my ancestors and my heritage.

The Smithsonian's object was collected about 1910, and then to see that they're still being made—that's important. People who roll in off Route 66 see that Native people are still living, the cultures are still alive and languages are still being spoken. Maybe they will be able to see that some of these objects are spiritually significant, just as one might find significance viewing objects in other religious contexts.

The dush-toh represents Shawnee culture. The Shawnee have been building community on this continent since time immemorial, and our history, culture and people embody the lived experience of what is now called America.

U.S. AIR FORCE FLIGHT HELMET

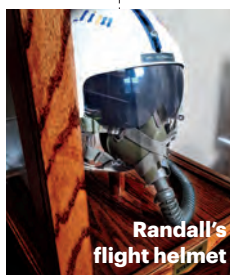
U.S. Air Force Col. James E. Randall lost his helmet on October 13, 1965, when his F-105 Thunderchief was shot down near Dien Bien Phu, Vietnam. It was later found in a Vietnamese flea market and returned to him. In recent years, Wish of a Lifetime from AARP, an organization that works to fulfill the dreams of older Americans, helped get the helmet accepted into the collection of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, along with Randall's Purple Heart and other items.

Randall, a member of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen who had a 36-year military career that included combat missions in two wars, died in 2019. His widow, Essie, passed this year. His daughter Roberta Rollins shares her father's story.

★ In August 2013, they presented my dad with his helmet at the Tuskegee

Airmen Convention in St. Louis. He brought it home and had a cabinet built. Before my father passed away, he said he wanted the helmet to go to the African American museum. It was important to him because there isn't much memorabilia left of the Tuskegee Airmen.

My dad fought for his country during a time when African Americans couldn't even vote. He faced racism, but he persevered. I have never been prouder of my dad than I am now.



AARP affiliate Wish of a Lifetime helps older people live their once-in-a-lifetime dreams. Go to wishofalifetime.org to learn more about the program and read other stories of wishes fulfilled.



Ynés Mexía
(1870–1938)

Mexía's important work as a botanist began at age 55. In her 13-year career she collected more than 150,000 plant specimens, 500 of which were newly discovered species.



Gen. George C. Marshall
(1880–1959)

At 58, he became U.S. Army chief of staff. Marshall was the Allies' "organizer of victory" in World War II, then developed the postwar European Recovery Program.



Ray Kroc
(1902–1984)

As fast food's founding father, Kroc began franchising McDonald's at age 52, launching an empire that has grown to more than 45,000 restaurants in over 100 nations.



Grace Hopper
(1906–1992)

Beginning in 1959, at age 52, she helped develop the computer programming language COBOL. The code still supports an estimated \$3 trillion in financial transactions a day.

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FONZIE'S LEATHER JACKET



Few articles of clothing embody cool quite like the Fonz's leather jacket from the ABC sitcom *Happy Days*. Portrayed by Henry Winkler, now 80, during the show's 11-season run in the 1970s and '80s, Arthur Fonzarelli was TV's most popular character on one of the era's most popular shows. One of the jackets used on the show is part of the collection at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

★ I got a call from Gary Nardino, the president of Paramount Television. He said, "The Smithsonian would like to have your jacket." When you're first asked, it is an honor, but the breadth

and the depth are not fully comprehended. As you go through life, it becomes this gigantic compliment.

The original was a beat-up bomber jacket that was stolen from the costumes department at Paramount after the show's first year. Then they made five and stored them in a vault. Two of those jackets are still in my closet.

I think the jacket represents external toughness. The jacket is instantaneously recognizable as *Oh, I would give that human being space*. I would arrive on set at 12 on Friday and have my hair combed into a ducktail. I got ready for dress rehearsal with the T-shirt and the boots. When I put on the jacket, the character was complete.

I never wore the leather jacket as myself. I couldn't live up to the character; he was bigger than life. One time, I went to see the jacket at the Smithsonian. I

didn't have a camera, so I waited by the case. A family came by. I said, "I know this is crazy, but I'm going to ask you to take a picture of me with the jacket. I'm going to give you my address, and you're going to send it to me." They knew who I was, but they looked at me like I was crazy.

I hope that when people see the jacket, they think that even though the Fonz was supposed to be tough, his humanity always shines through. As the character, I never hit anyone. I never used a weapon. It's the strength of a human being that convinces both the good and the bad to do the right thing.

Lomberg and his Viking '75 illustration at his home in Hawai'i



NASA VIKING '75 POSTER

Artist Jon Lomberg, 77, designed this poster for NASA's 1975 Viking Project, the first U.S. mission to land a spacecraft on the surface of Mars. These posters were often handed out to media, and one is now part of the collection at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum.

As a frequent collaborator with Carl Sagan, Lomberg produced images that



Julia Child (1912–2004)

In 1963, at age 50, she launched the cooking series *The French Chef* on public television, helping everyday Americans elevate their culinary skills by breaking complex methods into simple steps. Child added beef bourguignon and ratatouille to palates accustomed to meat loaf.



Larry Itliong (1913–1977)

In 1965, when Itliong was in his early 50s, he launched the Delano grape strike in California, a five-year action that resulted in increased pay and improved conditions for farmworkers. The strike also led to the formation of the United Farm Workers union.



John B. Goodenough (1922–2023)

This American inventor was the oldest person to win a Nobel Prize, at 97. The prize in chemistry came for Goodenough's breakthrough work, in his late 50s, developing lithium-ion batteries, which power laptop computers, mobile phones and electric vehicles.

From left: Jaclyn Nash, Courtesy, The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History; Silver Screen Collector/Getty Images



helped us visualize what the universe looked like. He won an Emmy Award for his artistic work on the PBS show *Cosmos*, served as a consultant on the movie *Contact*, and created the illustrations for Sagan's books.

★ Space has always been my thing. As a child, the question was always: *Why isn't everybody interested?* Some people are born to play soccer or play the cello. I think I was born with a love of space.

Sagan and I began working together when he wrote his first solo book, *The Cosmic Connection*, in 1973. He was also one of the scientists on the Viking mission. One day, he told me, "You know, Jon, the mission doesn't have a really good patch. It doesn't have an insignia. If we leave it to NASA, I don't know what they'll do, so why don't you try to do something?"

I came up with the design, which took a Viking ship and placed it in space, approaching Mars. On Mars, there's an image of the Viking lander itself. It never became the official Viking mission patch, but

this design was used for the launch of the Viking mission in 1975 from Cape Canaveral. I think NASA just wanted to have some nice hand-outs for the launch. I was just starting my career. I was still in my 20s. It made me feel, in a very small way, part of the mission.

I don't know how widely it's seen in the Air and Space Museum, but for me, it's a bit of history. Viking is one of NASA's great achievements, but it's been overshadowed now because we have rovers on Mars. But at the time, the first U.S. landing on Mars was a big deal. My tiny contribution has somehow been preserved. ■

Michael Grant is a regular contributor to AARP THE MAGAZINE who has also written for the Louisville Courier-Journal and other outlets.

The Spirit of 1976

Remembering the celebration that was the bicentennial

As told to Claire Leibowitz



Guests at Carlson's party

Growing Up With the Country

I turned 9 in 1976. I had a Betsy Ross-themed birthday party. My mom put together everything, including an adorable cake topper—a Betsy Ross pin cushion, which I have handed down to my daughter. The girls showed up in handmade dresses, my mom hand-made puzzles and we did an exercise where we sewed the flag. Being spirited in '76 meant believing in tradition while looking forward.

—Jennifer Carlson, 58, Columbus, Ohio

Tall Ships in the Big Apple

I was 11 years old, standing along the East River in New York City. On that day, I was awestruck watching so many ships in the water. The buzz was so exciting, the boats were beautiful and the fireworks were next level. New York is always busy, but I recall feeling small in the middle of something enormous.

—Ingrid Collins, 61, Winter Garden, Florida

Music and History

My mom loved the armed services bands. During the bicentennial, the Marine Band and the combined armed services band were playing around the West. We followed them around Utah, Montana and Idaho. The summer was about history, and I went on to become an American studies major. —Tim Summers, 61, Helena, Montana

Summers with his sister and mother in Montana



Real Dedication

My dad took us to Brownsville, Texas, to see the dedication of a plaque to commemorate the bicentennial. It meant a lot to my folks to bring us there because we were all first-generation U.S. citizens. My parents became naturalized citizens in 1985. —Juanita Jiménez-Soto, 59, Houston



Collecting Materials From Every State

I wrote to all 50 states and asked if they had any free bicentennial memorabilia to send me. A lot of it was events calendars or a little swag they had produced. Every state responded. I think it is reflective of the enthusiasm for that commemoration. I retired 10 years ago and gave a lot of material to the University of Idaho, and it's in its library now. —Keith Petersen, 75, Pullman, Washington

Visiting a Rolling Museum

The American Freedom Train came through the Seattle area with historical artifacts. The lunar rover, Dorothy's dress from *The Wizard of Oz*, Martin Luther King Jr.'s Bible, George Washington's copy of the Constitution. It was great to see these items. —Karen Quinn, 64, Duvall, Washington

Claire Leibowitz is an associate editor at AARP THE MAGAZINE.



Beyond the Liberty Bell

Finding American history in less-expected places *By Rachel Walker*



America's most familiar landmarks tell only part of the story. The rest unfolds in trading posts and sports stadiums, mining towns, prisons and island forts. Sure, everybody knows to visit the Liberty Bell when in Philadelphia, the Lorraine Motel in Memphis and Mount Rushmore in South Dakota. But venture a little farther and you'll find preserved places that will broaden your understanding of our nation's 250 years, tracing how local decisions, regional conflicts and workaday labor have shaped our culture.

CALIFORNIA A BOOM, THEN A BUST, PRESERVED

High in California's Sierra Nevada, a former mining town is preserved as Bodie State Historic Park. More than 100 buildings—homes, a schoolhouse, a saloon, a

Photo credits on page 77



jail and more—still line its dusty streets. A late-1870s gold and silver boom drew about 8,500 residents and yielded tens of millions of dollars before the ore dwindled and the town emptied. Inside, everyday objects remain, capturing the abrupt halt of work and life.



ALASKA TERRITORIAL DISPUTES ON DISPLAY

Established in 1910, the 113-acre Sitka National Historical Park is emblematic of Alaska's imperial struggle. Here in 1804, Tlingit warriors unsuccessfully

battled Russian forces. The mile-long Totem Trail threads through spruce and hemlock forest, where you can see Tlingit and Haida poles carved with clan histories and ancestral memory. The 1840s Russian Bishop's House preserves the domestic and religious center of Russian America. On nearby Castle Hill, the U.S. flag rose in 1867 as Alaska was transferred to the United States.



MINNESOTA NATIVE CULTURES, CAPTURED IN CLAYSTONE

The Pipestone National Monument preserves a quarry held sacred by many Native nations. For centuries, the Lakota, Dakota and others traveled great distances to extract the soft catlinite used to carve ceremonial pipe bowls for prayer, diplomacy and peacemaking. A trail circles past active pits and Winnewissa Falls, while Native American artisans give seasonal demonstrations of their cultural practice.

TENNESSEE HONORING A VOTE TO GAIN THE VOTE

On August 18, 1920, women's suffrage in the United States came down to a single vote in Nashville. That day, Tennessee just barely became the decisive 36th state to ratify the 19th Amendment. Explore this history at sites across the city, including the Tennessee Woman Suffrage Monument in Centennial Park.



MARYLAND MAINTAINING MARITIME HERITAGE

The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum spans 18 acres at Navy Point in St. Michaels, where oystering, boatbuilding and packinghouses shaped the town from the colonial era through the 20th century. Boats are still built and repaired on-site.

ARIZONA COPPER WIRED THE COUNTRY

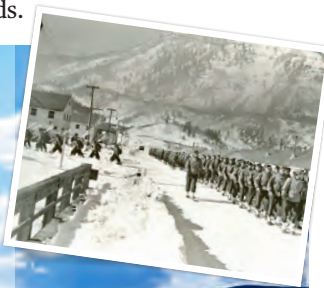
The discovery of rich copper deposits in the 1870s drew miners and investors to central Arizona, where they established the town of Jerome. By the early 20th century, that copper helped wire a rapidly modernizing nation. The mines closed in 1953, but visitors can relive the heyday at Jerome State Historic Park. The 1916 Douglas Mansion is a museum with exhibits and views of the tunnels.



COLORADO WHERE TROOPS TRAINED FOR A MOUNTAIN MISSION

In February 1945, American soldiers climbed the steep escarpments of northern Italy's Riva Ridge under cover of darkness, surprising German forces in the final months of World War II. Preparation for that assault began thousands of miles away in Colorado's Rocky Mountains at Camp Hale, located northwest of Leadville at 9,200 feet above sea level and now preserved as a national monument. Visitors can explore the site through a self-guided driving tour with stops at interpretive sites and trails that lead to the rugged training grounds.

U.S. troops trained for World War II battle at the mountainous Camp Hale.



TEXAS REMEMBERING WHEN THE STATE WAS A REPUBLIC

Along the Brazos River in Washington, Texas, delegates met in March 1836 to draft and sign the Texas Declaration of Independence, establishing a separate republic. The Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site showcases a reconstructed 19th-century town, including replicas of a hall that once housed lawmakers and the log cabin that served as the office of Sam Houston, the republic's first elected president.



MAINE NATIVE CULTURE MUSEUM

The Abbe Museum centers the history of the Wabanaki Nations, whose homelands extend across Maine and Atlantic Canada. Exhibits follow thousands of years of life on this land, from fishing technologies and ash basketry to treaty rights and contemporary art. The museum operates in two locations: in downtown Bar Harbor and at a seasonal site in Acadia National Park that connects culture to landscape.

ILLINOIS TRANSPORTATION AND A MOVEMENT

In the 19th century, Pullman sleeping cars turned trains into rolling hotels. And in 1894, a strike by porters—many formerly enslaved men or their sons—helped fuel a Black labor movement. Discover that history at the Pullman National Historical Park in Chicago.



NORTH DAKOTA WHERE NATIVE TRIBES GATHERED TO TRADE

In the 1830s, members of the Assiniboine, Lakota, Blackfeet, Crow and other nations rode to a walled trading post on the Missouri River. Fort Union served as the headquarters of the American Fur Company. Inside its white palisade walls, buffalo robes were stacked high while beads, kettles, guns and cloth filled store-rooms. Visitors to Fort Union Trading Post National Historical Site can explore reconstructed portions of the fort.





MASSACHUSETTS A PATH TO REVOLUTIONARY VICTORY

The Minute Man National Historical Park preserves the landscape of April 19, 1775, when British troops marched from Boston to seize colonial weapons in Concord but met resistance. The first exchange occurred at Lexington Green. At North Bridge in Concord, a colonial militia advanced, fired and pushed the British into retreat. Fields, village greens and river crossings still trace that historic route. The 5-mile Battle Road Trail broadly follows the line of advance and retreat, past historic homes and stone walls colonists used as cover.

FLORIDA A SECLUDED FORT IN A STRATEGIC SPOT

Seventy miles west of Key West, Fort Jefferson in Dry Tortugas National Park sits on a 14-acre island. Built in the 19th century to protect vital shipping lanes, the vast brick fortress is reachable only by ferry or seaplane. During the Civil War, it functioned as a military prison, holding Dr. Samuel Mudd after President Abraham Lincoln's assassination. Today, visitors cross the central parade grounds and move through vaulted gun rooms and ramparts overlooking uninterrupted water.



More America 250

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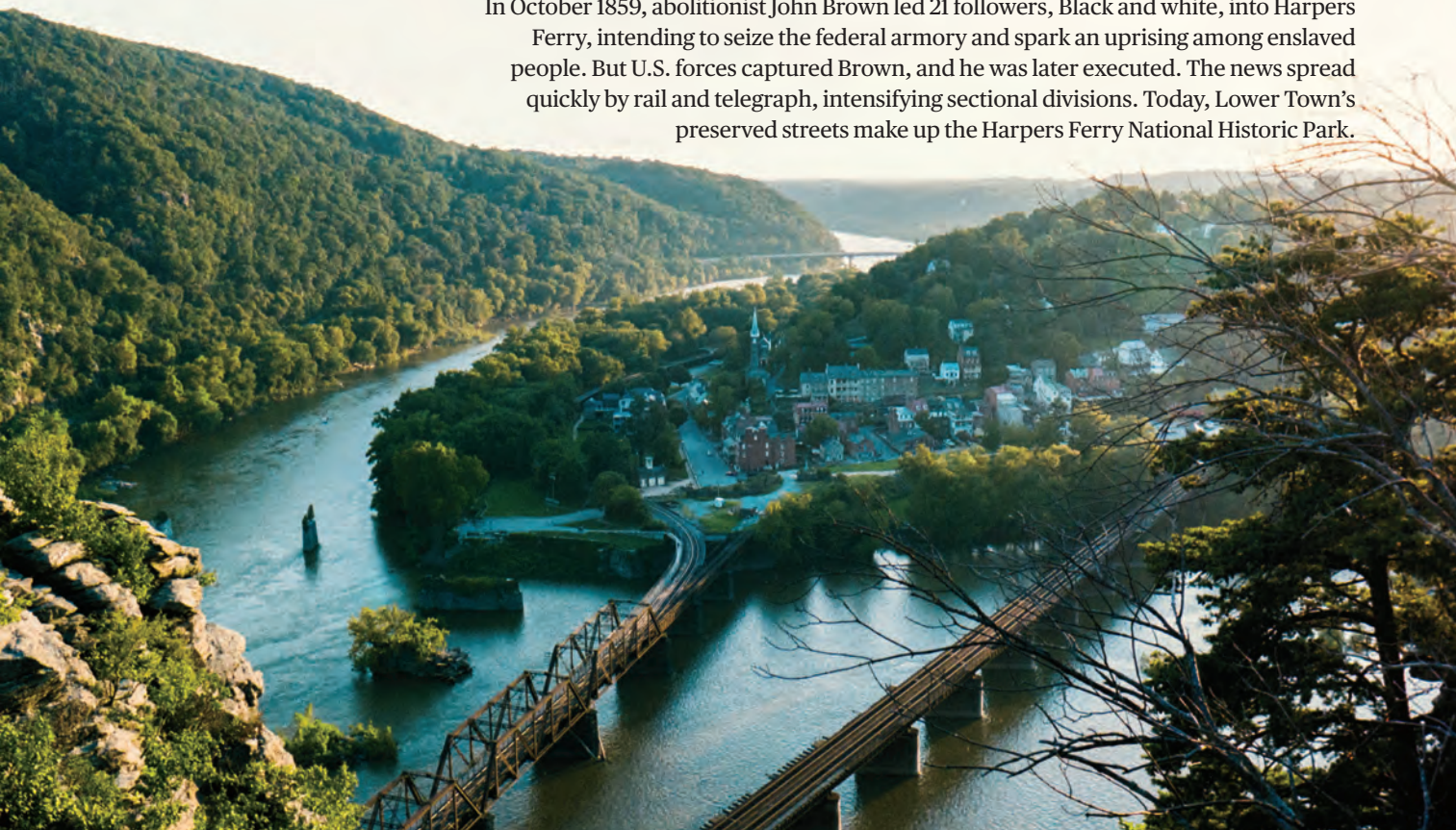
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WEST VIRGINIA A KEY SITE IN THE ABOLITION CAMPAIGN

In October 1859, abolitionist John Brown led 21 followers, Black and white, into Harpers Ferry, intending to seize the federal armory and spark an uprising among enslaved people. But U.S. forces captured Brown, and he was later executed. The news spread quickly by rail and telegraph, intensifying sectional divisions. Today, Lower Town's preserved streets make up the Harpers Ferry National Historic Park.







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The island of St. Barts, for instance, has long been one of the most desired Caribbean islands to visit and somewhere that the larger ships would not be able to call as the facilities ashore would be overwhelmed with the number of guests. With at most 822 guests on board, you can explore the island and still experience some of the remote and beautiful beaches and sites without the feeling of overcrowding.

A CROWD-FREE CARIBBEAN

Exploring the Caribbean with smaller groups opens the door to experiences that feel more authentic. Large cruise operations often rely on venues capable of accommodating hundreds of visitors at once. Regent's intimate guest count allows local operators to offer more secluded locations and personalized experiences away from crowded tourist sites.

Transportation follows the same philosophy. Instead of large catamarans carrying dozens of passengers, smaller private vessels can be arranged, creating an atmosphere of privacy and relaxed exploration that perfectly complements the region's natural beauty.

CLOSER TO HEART OF EACH DESTINATION

A smaller ship offers another meaningful advantage: access to centrally located docks that place guests closer to the heart of each destination. Rather than docking in large commercial ports far from town centers, Regent ships often arrive at piers within walking distance of the island's culture, cuisine and charm. After a day of exploration, returning to the ship is effortless.

And when larger vessels happen to be in port, the difference becomes immediately clear. While hundreds of passengers queue beneath the Caribbean sun, Regent guests step effortlessly back aboard. The same ease applies when heading ashore — smaller guest numbers mean fewer lines and quicker departures for excursions.

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Guests sailing the Caribbean enjoy a collection of included and unlimited shore excursions designed to showcase each destination. In St. Barts, the **Sailing the Leeward Coast** experience invites guests aboard intimate sailing vessels carrying just 16 travelers for sweeping coastal views. In Antigua, the **Champagne and Lobster Catamaran Cruise** pairs sparkling wine and fresh lobster with a relaxed sail along turquoise waters. For adventure seekers, the **America's Cup 12-Meter Challenge** in St. Maarten offers the thrill of racing authentic sailing yachts.

Best yet, guests may also work with Regent's Destination Services team to arrange optional private experiences for a supplemental fee — from secluded beach picnics to scenic helicopter flights — ensuring every moment ashore feels personal.



HEAT: THE SILENT DANGER

High temperatures claim more older victims each year than floods, tornadoes and hurricanes—combined. As heat waves strike in ever more surprising places, what can you do to protect yourself?

By Craig Welch

VIVEK SHANDAS stepped from his Prius. The scorching air hit his cheeks like a sandpaper slap. It sucked the moisture from his eyeballs. The streets around him seemed utterly still—no birds, no pedestrians, just eerie, apocalyptic quiet. Shandas glanced at the temperature sensor he'd been carting around his city. It read 125 degrees Fahrenheit.

The scientist had been studying heat for a dozen years but had experienced something this searing only once before, on a sizzling rooftop in Doha, Qatar. But this wasn't the Middle East or Burkina Faso or even Shandas' native India. This was Portland, Oregon, just days after the summer solstice in 2021, when high temperatures normally aver-

aged about 74 degrees.

Yet here Shandas was, a trim man with salt-and-pepper hair, taking jaw-dropping measurements in neighborhood after neighborhood. An unprecedented heat wave had abruptly descended on the Pacific Northwest, and Shandas, a geography professor at Portland State University, understood exactly what that meant: Many of his fellow citizens were about to die—and most of them would be over 50.

Shandas, 54, had been predicting such a catastrophe for years. Last summer, as he and I retraced his steps from that blistering day, he told me he took no pleasure in having been right. In Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and Alberta, some 1,400 people died from the 2021 heat wave. In Multnomah County, where Portland is located, 78 percent of the deceased were 60 or older.



Scenes from a heat wave: the Pacific Northwest in 2021



This sort of killer heat is becoming a bigger danger to older Americans—including in parts of the country long thought immune to its dangers. Since the 1960s, incidents of extreme heat across the United States have increased by every conceivable measure. Across the country's 50 largest metropolitan areas, the average number of heat waves annually has tripled—and those spells last longer and have higher temperatures. As the Earth's average temperatures inch ever higher, everything gets hotter—the land, the ocean, the air. The planet's hottest year since recordkeeping started in 1850 was 2024, and all 10 of its hottest years have come in the past decade. Although new weather patterns increasingly send Arctic blasts farther south in winter, that doesn't change the fact that across the country new heat records are being set with increasing frequency.

While many consider summer heat waves just an uncomfortable nuisance, they're actually a major threat to health and life. In most years, heat kills more Americans than floods, tornadoes and hurricanes combined. And it works stealthily. Unlike other deadly events, which arrive in a rampage and leave physical destruction in their wake, heat usually arrives quietly, kills, then dissipates as if it were never there. That can make the deaths it causes feel even more senseless and baffling.

Why are older people in greater danger? Physiological changes play a role. With age, your body becomes less able to effectively cool itself. But isolation, lack of mobility and limited income also contribute to the potential peril. In short: The older you are, the more serious you need to take a heat wave.

Watching fatal heat waves occur in normally cool regions raises a question: How does a stealth heat event play out in an area that's not used to them? And how should older people protect themselves? I went to Portland to find out.

A Sweltering Solitude

On the June day in 2021 when the killer heat wave began to blanket Portland, Beth Parmenter, then 67, started her morning the way she did whenever the



Vivek Shandas takes Portland's temperature. Bottom, from left: Residents shelter in a cooling station; tracking urban heat.



thermometer read hot: by tiptoeing precariously on the back of her couch to tack dark sheets over her living-room windows. A small woman with wavy hair and blue eyes magnified by glasses, Parmenter was fit, having stayed active for decades doing water aerobics. Still, she felt wary of her couch-back tight-rope act. As a retired oncology nurse manager, she knew that a fall at her age could mean broken bones—or worse.

Parmenter, a native of Virginia, had chosen to live in Portland precisely because she hated the heat. She'd visited for a summer in 1974, loved the cool temps and came back to stay two years later. But over time, the summers grew hotter and stickier and began stretching

into autumn. To keep her second-story condo cooler, she bought honeycomb shades to block the heat from her southwest windows. During warm spells, she rose at 2 a.m. to draw back the sheets, raise the shades and open windows to let cooler night air in. At dawn she'd button it all back up again.

Parmenter did this because, like tens of thousands in her city, she lacked air-conditioning. For decades, AC had seemed unnecessary in Portland. But the 2021 heat wave was different. A ridge of high-atmospheric pressure trapped hot air over the Northwest, blocking cooling Pacific winds and preventing clouds from forming, a phenomenon known as a heat dome. With only a

Previous page color enhanced photos; credits on page 77. This page clockwise from top right: Philip Cheung (2); Kathryn Elissen/AF/Getty Images

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Extreme heat gets more dangerous for you every year—if only because you're one year older. Professor Shandas offers this advice on how to survive a heat wave:

➤ **Create a coolable living space.** If you don't already have air-conditioning, consider getting it. Install opaque blinds or curtains to close during

the hottest part of the day. If you don't have AC, install screens so you can open windows for cross-ventilation on cool nights.

➤ **Review your meds.** Some diuretics, blood pressure medications, antidepressants, sedatives, antipsychotics and other drugs affect heat tolerance and hydration. Consult your doctor or pharmacist about precautions during heat waves.

➤ **Stay connected.** Establish a check-in system with neighbors or family to make sure anyone who is overheating gets help.

➤ **Cool early and often.** Take precautions before the heat gets too oppressive: If you have AC, turn it on early. Take cool showers; use damp cloths on your neck, wrists and forehead; keep a small fan nearby to promote evaporative cooling.

“There wasn't anyone who said, ‘I'm good.’ Everybody was like, ‘Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.’”

few days' warning, the mercury hit 108 degrees, breaking a record that had stood for 40 years. The following day, it climbed again, to 112. On the third, it jumped more, officially reaching a gobsmacking 116—hotter than record temps in “hot” cities such as Houston and Atlanta. In some neighborhoods and on the upper floors of some apartments, temps climbed higher still.

In her condo, Parmenter read, guzzled fluids, nuked frozen meals and huddled in misery before her fan; even a few feet outside its trajectory, she felt her sweat ooze. Her cats sat behind the fan, letting air skim their fur. Through her window she watched birds, beaks open, pant on the sidewalk. “It was totally miserable,” Parmenter says. “I've never been in heat like that.”

Across the region, people were suffering.

Emergency crews found people unconscious in yards and on sidewalks. Doctors cooled overheated patients by stuffing them in body bags filled with ice. Portland hospitals saw around two summers' worth of heat-related ER visits in five days. Teams knocked on doors, handed out water and offered



Beth Parmenter takes precautions to block the heat.

free bus rides to “cooling centers”—air-conditioned libraries and community centers and the convention center.

Even as she suffered, Parmenter did her part. An emergency volunteer, she placed calls to older residents on a call list, trying to convince them to find a cool refuge. White-knuckling it through this awfulness, she explained, could actually get them killed. Still, contrary to her own advice, Parmenter stayed put. “I felt like I could handle it,” she says. “Maybe I was naive.”

Why the Risk Rises With Age

No region of the country is now immune to a potential heat disaster. And the risk is accelerating. During a heat wave that struck Texas and Oklahoma in 2011, Dallas experienced 40 straight days of at least 100 degrees. The following year, a blistering spring in the upper Midwest drove the thermometer in Madison, Wisconsin, a full 40 degrees over the average—in March. Montpelier, Vermont, has broken daily June highs nine times in the past five years. Reno, Nevada, hit 106 only a single time from 1893 to 2000, but the city matched or exceeded that peak eight times in the 25 years since. And in March of this year, a massive heat dome broke records for the month in 14 states; in Arizona and California, thermometers hit 112 degrees.

Across the country, the consequences have been increasingly fatal. From 1999 to 2023, heat-related deaths in the United States jumped 117 percent, according to JAMA. While official statistics tallied about 2,300 heat deaths in 2023, that's likely an undercount. A 2020 Duke University study suggested a more accurate heat-death total hovered around 12,000 annually. That's because no national standard exists for determining what counts as a heat fatality. Many death certificates list causes of death that can be triggered by extreme temperatures, such as heart attacks, ischemic strokes, asthma attacks and renal failure—while the real culprit remains unstated.

The physiology is well understood. When temperatures skyrocket, the human body relies on an arsenal of re-

sponses to protect itself. Blood rushes to the skin to radiate the heat outward, and sweat evaporating off the skin helps cool the body. We crave water, to replenish the fluid we're losing. We yearn to slow down and find shade. And the hotter we get, the harder the cardiovascular system works to cool us down. The heart rate increases, and blood vessels open wider.

But with time, the body's cooling systems become less effective. Older people feel less thirsty, even when they're dehydrated. They don't sweat as much. As blood vessels stiffen, the heart has to work even harder to push blood to the skin's surface. Hormonal and metabolic changes can blunt biological responses, as can blood pressure pills, diuretics and some antidepressants. Conditions such as asthma, diabetes and kidney disease can also impair the body's ability to cope with high temperatures.

When an older person overheats, their blood pressure drops and core temperature rises. If they don't find a way to cool down, what starts as heat exhaustion—with symptoms such as dizziness and nausea—can progress to heatstroke, an urgent condition that can cause irreversible organ damage or death.

Another symptom of heat exhaustion is faulty decision-making, which means the person may not even realize they're in need of help. Kristie Ebi, a climate health professor at the University of Washington, told me about an older acquaintance who played tennis one hot day, came home and rehydrated while sorting his mail. After he showered, he found his bills in the trash and his trash in the freezer. His core temperature had risen to the point where

he was disoriented without realizing it.

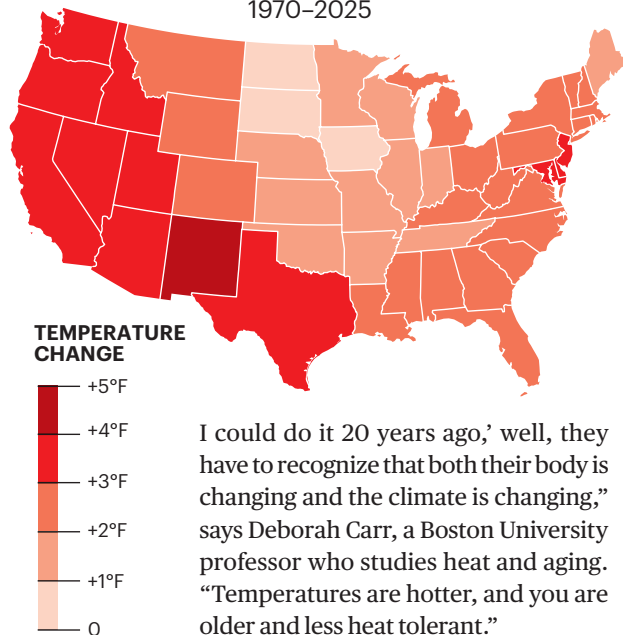
To stay safe from the heat, it's important to acknowledge the danger. "To an older adult who's like, 'Oh, I'm going to go for a walk at noon today because

of Mount Hood beckoned. On the hottest day of the heat wave, Shandas told me, he'd driven past properties where homeowners had left out icy coolers of drinks for passing strangers. Shandas, too, had pulled over several times that day so he could hand out water bottles at bus stops. Not one person turned him down. He found their apathy and exhaustion disconcerting. "There wasn't anyone who said, 'I'm good,'" he recalled. "Everybody was like, 'Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.'"

Few people truly appreciate the power of heat, its capacity to sneak up without warning. As Jeff Goodell put it in his 2023 bestseller, *The Heat Will Kill You First: Life and Death on a Scorched Planet*, "It doesn't bend tree branches or blow hair across your face to let you know it's arrived. The ground doesn't shake. It just surrounds you and works on you in ways that you can't anticipate or control."

What's more, heat doesn't blanket a city at a uniform temperature. Areas with trees and grass and shrubs stay far cooler than those with lots of asphalt, which absorbs the sun's rays and releases heat at night. The difference between the hottest and the coolest areas often correlates with money and influence. As Shandas discovered over years of re-

Change in Average Summer Temperatures for the Contiguous U.S. 1970–2025



I could do it 20 years ago,' well, they have to recognize that both their body is changing and the climate is changing," says Deborah Carr, a Boston University professor who studies heat and aging. "Temperatures are hotter, and you are older and less heat tolerant."

The Uneven Distribution of Danger

Shandas and I drove beneath a freeway and toward the Portland suburbs. Off in the distance, the glaciated flanks

AARP FIGHTS FOR YOU

"For adults 50 and older, affordable and reliable utilities are essential to health, safety and the ability to remain in their homes as they age," says Jenn Jones, AARP's vice president of financial security and livable communities. Here's how AARP state offices help fight rising utility prices.

➤ **Demanding data centers pay their own way** In Oklahoma

and other states around the country, AARP is supporting legislation to ensure data centers are billed separately from residents, so those centers don't drive up electricity costs for homeowners.

➤ **Supporting bill-pay assistance in hard times** During last year's long federal government shutdown, AARP advocates in New York helped keep energy assistance payments for needy households flowing.

➤ **Combating rate hikes on the ground** AARP California persuaded state regulators to enact measures that saved 16 million residents \$240 million a year.

➤ **Encouraging energy efficiency** In Colorado, an AARP grant helped mobile-home residents make weatherization upgrades to lower utility bills.
—Molly Snow

Visit action.aarp.org/ sign to join AARP's advocacy newsletter.

Joanne Reed lost her 63-year-old son, Kent, to the extreme heat.



“I said, ‘Are you using the AC?’ He said, ‘No, I’m managing OK.’ ... I was panicking.”

search, temperatures within a relatively small area can vary by as much as 25 degrees—enough to mean the difference between life and death. You can be at greater risk than someone across town, across the street or even in a different unit within the same building.

This was evident as 2021’s tragedy unfolded. On the hottest day, Shandas took measurements in Portland’s Ladd’s Addition, a strip of big homes surrounded by green lawns shaded by century-old elms. The air was hot but survivable. But in the lower-income neighborhood of Lents, near several highways, a chain-link fence and an abandoned lot, Shandas touched his hand to the pavement and had to snatch

it quickly away. “You couldn’t even keep it on there for a second,” he says. It was “like putting it on a flame.” That’s where his air temperature gauge showed 125; the surface temperature was 185.

One day, during my visit to Portland, I motored down to a neatly tailored community for older people, south of the city. Spiffed-up mobile homes trimmed in yellows, blues and browns baked in the midday sun. Inside one of them, I met Joanne Reed, 86, a tiny, friendly woman with a pouf of white hair. She sat on her couch and told me what heat had stolen from her.

“If you want to turn around, there’s a picture right there, in the middle,” she said and gestured toward a photo on the



thin wall behind me. It was a picture of Reed dancing with a younger, mustachioed man. When I turned back, she looked down. She had just bathed her dog, Mitzi, and now stroked her pet’s wet ears. After a beat she looked up. “That’s Kent.”

In 2021, Reed lived in Tucson, Arizona, while her son Kent Christman, 63, lived here alone. When she heard Portland was about to get hot, she checked in. “I said, ‘Are you using the AC?’ And he said, ‘No,’” Reed recalled. She was immediately concerned. He told her he preferred fans and open windows to driving up his electric bill. “He said, ‘I’m managing OK,’” Reed said.

Reed feared he was not; he was always careful with his money. So each day, as the thermometer climbed, she got nervous and called again. She got no answer. “The first day, I thought, *Well, he’s got a new phone, and it’s probably hard for him to use it*, so I left a message.” Later, she thought he might have stepped out with friends.

By the third day, “I was panicking,” Reed said. When he didn’t respond again, she called the sheriff. They found Kent dead on the couch in front of a fan. The coroner’s report listed the cause of death as hyperthermia. Kent simply hadn’t been able to lower his body temperature fast enough.

“People aren’t really good at preparing for things they haven’t seen before,” says Karen McKinnon, a climate scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles. “Behavioral adaptation takes time—and when you’ve never lived through something this hot, you’re often caught off guard.” (CONTINUED ON PAGE 76)





TOP 6 MEMBER BENEFITS FOR — SUMMER —

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

1 HIT THE ROAD

Summer brings savings at Exxon™, Mobil™ and Shell stations. Plus, discounts on hotels like La Quinta® by Wyndham, Comfort® Hotels and Best Western®.



2 LIVING WELL

Build healthier habits with the Recipe Analyzer from AARP® Personalized Nutrition, plus a free annual hearing test.



3

ENTERTAINMENT

Enjoy summer with discounts on tickets at *DISNEYLAND*® Resort and *WALT DISNEY WORLD*® Resort and at theaters like AMC and Regal. Plus, free Movies for Grownups screenings and online games.



4

GAS & AUTO

Get road-trip ready with helpful tips from the AARP Smart Guide to Car Maintenance, plus courses and free events from AARP Driver Safety.

5

PROTECT WHAT MATTERS

Access to AARP® Auto & Home Insurance from The Hartford, as well as life, dental and vision coverage from other top companies.

6

TECH TIPS & TRICKS

Stay cool all summer long with free tech classes through Senior Planet from AARP and discounts on tech how-to guides from AARP's online bookstore.

INVEST IN YOUR NEST \$10K SWEEPSTAKES

Everyone deserves a home that works for them. Learn how AARP supports livable inclusive communities – and enter for a chance to win \$10K* to make changes that help you feel at home. aarp.org/yournest



*Ends 8/21/26. NoPurchNec. 50US/DC, 18+. Void where prohibited.

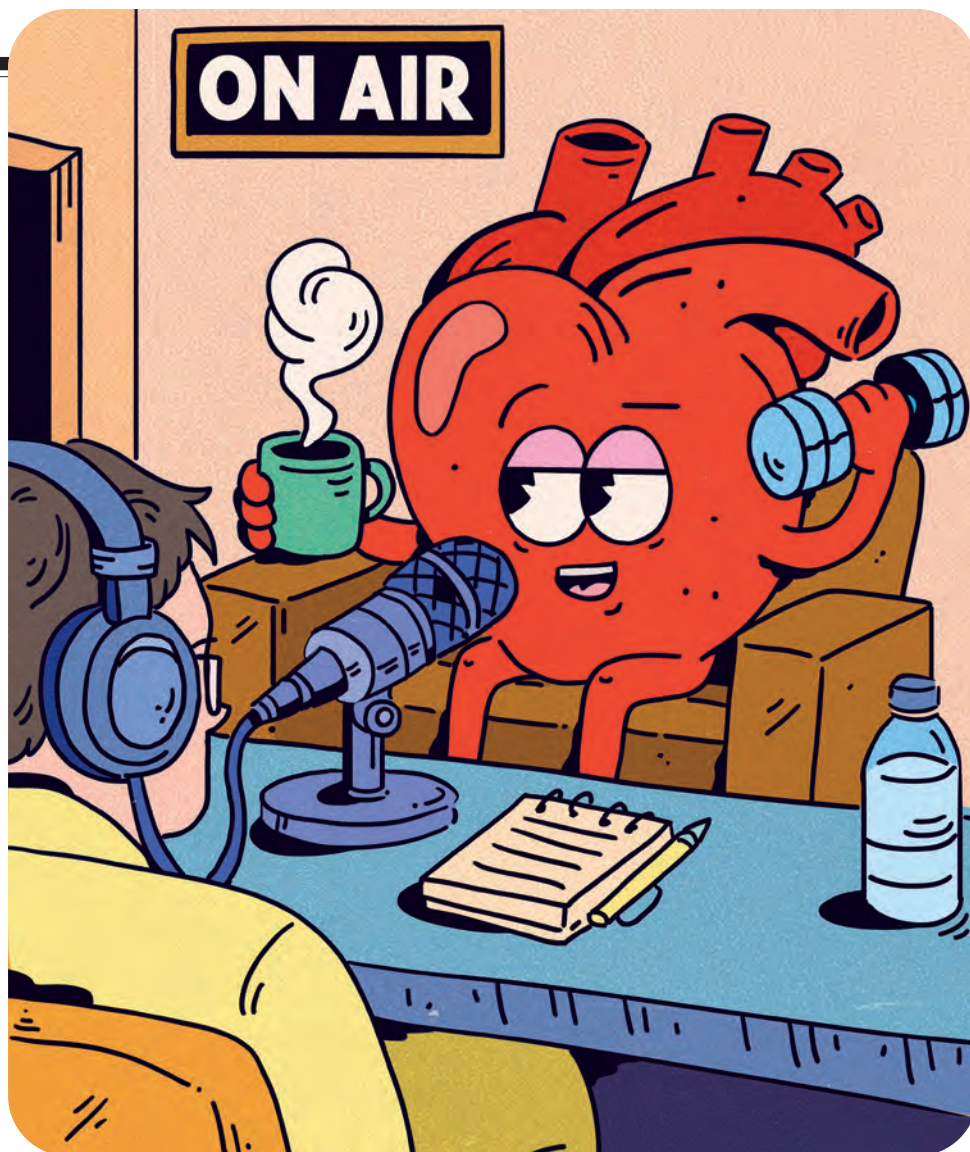


Explore even more online and download the AARP Now app for benefits near you.

aarp.org/benefitsme



AARP membership is not required for all benefits. AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that makes available a wide variety of benefits to its members. Some benefits listed are provided by third parties, not by AARP or its affiliates. Some providers pay a royalty fee to AARP for the use of AARP intellectual property. Amounts paid are used for the general purpose of AARP. Some offers are subject to change and may have restrictions or may expire. The offers are current as of 4/6/2026. For the most up-to-date information, visit aarp.org/benefitsme. Please contact the provider directly for details.



MY GRANDPA JOE died the same way his sister and three brothers died: heart attacks, all around. And they all struck early. Joe was just 58 when his heart stopped. I never had the chance to meet the guy, but I inherited some of his genes. So as I cruise into my 50s, I can't help wondering: How many ticks does my own ticker have left? You might wonder the same about yours. Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 cause of death in America, taking out more of us each year than all forms of cancer combined. Yet the truth is, I actually know very little about my heart. How does it work? What does it need? And is it planning to attack me? To find out, I'm going straight to the source and sitting down with my own beating heart to pump it for answers.

Put on your hard hat. It might be dangerous where we're going.

WHY THE HEART BEATS

The chest cavity is booming like an engine room as we enter and summon the heart's attention....

AARP: [Shouting.] Hey! I didn't realize it would be so loud in here!

Heart: You want quiet? Take the elevator up to the brain cavity. Down here, it's hard labor. You have about 10,000 miles of vessels in your body, and I have to keep the blood flowing through every inch.

Wow, I had no idea.

Impressed? You should be. You can live with just one kidney or half a liver, but if I shut down even for a few minutes, you're in big trouble.

Understood. But what's all the noise down here?

Beautiful, ain't it? [Pauses to

A HEART-TO-HEART TALK WITH YOUR TICKER

It's been pumping, racing and skipping your whole life. Here's how your heart keeps the beat and what you can do to help it stay strong

By **Clint Carter** ILLUSTRATIONS BY AMBER DAY

listen to the sound: lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub.] That's the sound of my valves snapping shut.

Why do you snap them so hard?

I have performance goals, pal. Each time I contract, I have to push out 50 to 70 percent of my blood volume. If my valves were as lazy as you are most days of the week, blood would start flowing backward. Then I wouldn't hit my numbers.

I see. And what's all this equipment around us?

Well, you can't miss the big ol' airbags. Lungs, they call them. They're not much to look at, but they do keep me in good supply of oxygen. The rest of this is mostly plumbing. You have pipes sending blood out and more pipes bringing it back. This big one above us is the aorta. I pump about 2,000 gallons a day through that pipe.

Why so much blood?

Your body runs on oxygen, and I'm the DHL of O₂. I take oxygenated blood from the lungs and pump it to the rest of the body. When it comes back to me depleted, I pump it back over to the lungs for a refill. And on and on it goes for something like 100 years.

Do you ever get time off?

Oh, yeah. Between each pump I get nearly half a second off. That's what I like to call "me time." It's just long enough to fill my chambers with blood for the next pump.

That's not much of a break.

You said it, pal. I'm a muscle, but I don't get PTO like your other muscles. I get to watch your pectorals relax all day long while I pump 100,000 times every 24 hours.

Well, that gives new meaning to the Celine Dion song "My Heart Will Go On."

Oh, boy. Don't even get me started on love songs.

But you're the international symbol of passion. There are about a million songs with your name in them: "Unchain My Heart," "Achy Breaky Heart" ...

Love is a feeling, and I don't do feelings. I do pumping. Love is a brain problem. Those songs should be called "Unchain My Amygdala" and "Achy Breaky Cranium." Look, I might get involved if the brain conjures up serious romantic feelings. If your genitals need some extra blood flow, for instance, I'm happy to pump a little harder to provide it. Is that something you want to get into?

Actually, maybe we'll save that for another interview.

That's what I thought.

MEET THE PUMP SUPERVISOR

So who's the boss around here?

You probably think the brain tells me when to pump,

right? Everyone thinks that, but I'm my own boss, thank you very much. Think of me as the owner-operator of the blood department. I'm wired with my own electrical grid, and that lets me pump without assistance.

Whoa. How does that work?

Look here on my right side, near my top. If you dug into my flesh here, you'd find my sinus node, which is basically a living pacemaker. It generates electrical impulses that shoot through conduction fibers to keep me pumping around 60 to 100 times a minute while you're at rest.

That sounds complex.

Sure, but it's necessary. I need to be able to pump blood even when your brain shifts into overnight maintenance mode. The guy upstairs sleeps eight hours a night. I can't afford to.

Does that mean you can keep pumping even if the brain dies?

I could keep pumping for a

while if I got supplemental oxygen. Hours? Maybe a couple weeks? There are a lot of variables, but my ability to keep pumping is the reason doctors can harvest donor organs

after someone dies. The brain clocks out, but the ticker keeps on ticking.

But, surely, you work with the brain sometimes. Like, if someone cuts

me off while I'm driving, I can feel my heart rate go up. Explain that one.

Well, let's say you finally make it to the ol' treadmill. As I start pumping harder, I send the brain a signal to dilate your arteries to accommodate the stronger flow. Later, let's say the brain picks up a danger signal coming in from your eyeballs: You see an alligator, or a charging rhino, or a briskly walking salesperson holding a clipboard. Your brain shoots me a message via your spinal cord, and I can increase blood flow to prepare you for battle.

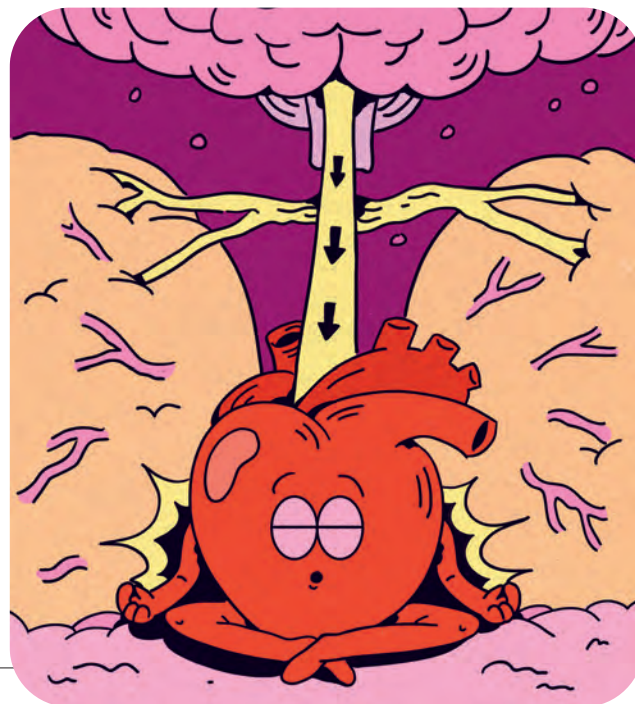
So your communication is usually about increasing blood flow?

Not always. Your brain also sends me soothing messages as a reminder to chill out and slow down. These come through a different channel, called the vagus nerve. Actually, could you do me a favor? All these questions have me feeling a little stressed. Would you mind activating your vagus nerve for me right now? Do this: Take a slow, deep breath. Fill your lungs all the way, and then exhale long and slow. Feel that? That calming sensation is your vagus nerve at work, and it's helping me relax. Mmmm, nice.

2,510

Number of people who die daily from cardiovascular disease in the United States

SOURCE: AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION





PLUMBING AND WIRING PROBLEMS

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death worldwide. Why?

Often, the pipes are the real problem, specifically the arteries, which carry blood away from the heart. That's where the pressure is highest. And the biggest issue is the coronary arteries. They carry blood from my lower left chamber to my muscle cells so I can pump oxygen to myself. If they get clogged, I start gasping for breath.

That's a heart attack, right?

I don't care much for that term. I'm not attacking you; I'm dying. A clogged coronary artery is my No. 1 fear.

What about stroke?

That'd be my second-biggest fear. With a stroke, there's usually a clog in a pipe that's bringing blood to the brain cells, like a blood clot or a hunk of plaque.

That sounds bad.

To say the least. The brain drinks blood like a 3-pound tick. It guzzles 20 percent of the oxygen I pump. And for every minute it goes thirsty, you lose about 1.9 million neurons.

Do heart problems ever start with you, the heart?

Sure they do. I'm a mechanical pump, so I'm prone to mechanical problems. My valves can malfunction, for instance. Or I can become too weak to pump well. That's called heart failure.

Or I could have an electrical problem that causes me to beat too fast or too slow. That's called an arrhythmia.

Is that dangerous?

Sometimes. An occasional skipped beat may not be a problem, but if there's a short circuit, my four chambers can't communicate properly. That's when I might need a pacemaker to keep me on track. But if you want to talk about extreme electrical malfunction, I'll tell you about cardiac arrest. That happens when my signal's so broken, I can't pump blood at all.

And that's ... fatal?

Without help, yes. But if someone gives you chest compressions, I can keep pushing out blood. That buys you some time until someone zaps you with a defibrillator to reboot my electrical system.

Is that the worst-case scenario?

Yeah, but cardiac arrest is extreme. The most common electrical problem is actually something called atrial fibrillation, or A-fib. It's when my upper chambers contract hundreds of times a minute, which you might feel as a fluttering in your chest.

That doesn't sound so bad.

It's not immediately dangerous, but the risk with A-fib is that my chambers aren't

filling or emptying properly, which means they can't pump effectively. So blood is more likely to pool and form a clot. A-fib increases your risk of stroke by about 500 percent.

WHAT THE HEART REALLY WANTS

Now that I'm properly scared, tell me: What can I do to make your life easier?

I'm glad you asked, because I have a couple requests. For starters, could you watch your blood pressure? When it gets too high, it damages not only me but the plumbing around me too.

How do I lower my blood pressure?

I don't want to be rude, but you've added some new fat tissue over the past few years, and that tissue comes with new blood vessels. As your plumbing system grows, I have to pump harder, and that drives the pressure up. And while you're at it, stop it with the salty foods—fast food and ultra-processed stuff. All that sodium draws water

into your vessels, and more blood volume means higher pressure. Try to keep it to 1,500 milligrams of salt a day—or 2,300 milligrams at most.

Also, exercise more and stress less; a nice peaceful jog a few times a week can do wonders.



WHAT EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS WISH YOU KNEW ABOUT HEART ATTACKS

Doctors can save your life, but they'll have a better shot if you remember these basic facts.

▶ Your symptoms may be very subtle.

One in five heart attacks are considered "silent," meaning the person doesn't even know it happened. When in doubt about symptoms, seek help.

▶ Not all hospitals are created equal.

If you live near a hospital that's a "comprehensive cardiac care center," go there. It means they have a full cardiac team available 24/7.

▶ An ambulance ride can be lifesaving.

Paramedics can run tests, choose the best hospital and, if necessary, radio ahead to have your medical team prep for surgery. Always

call 911 and have an ambulance take you to the hospital. And whatever you do, don't drive yourself. Patients have been known to lose consciousness and crash trying to do this.

▶ Nobody will judge you for a false alarm.

Take your symptoms seriously. An EKG and a blood draw can help rule out a heart attack. If it's a false alarm, that's great news.

What else?

Make my life easier: Give me blood that's easy to pump. I don't like when it gets too thick and sticky.

Thick and sticky blood?

Yeah. Don't you pay attention to your doctor? Every time you visit, she talks about things like LDL cholesterol, glucose and triglycerides. All this crud makes your blood thicker, which makes my job harder. LDL is probably the worst of them all. It's like waxy balls of fat, and when your pipes have tears in them from high pressure, the wax balls can burrow into the walls and become inflamed like little pimples. When one pops, it spills sewage into your bloodstream. That can cause a clot.

Artery pimples? Gross. How do I avoid that?

Don't smoke, keep your weight down and—please—exercise! When you exercise, every part of your cardiovascular system gets a tune-up. The damaged spots heal and become less likely to rupture. A flood of nitric oxide dilates your arteries and makes them more flexible. Your immune system hauls away damaged proteins that could otherwise restrict the flow.

And exercise makes me work harder to keep up. I'm a muscle: If I work hard, I get strong.

Why does your strength matter to me?

Strength is efficiency. If I can do my job in 60 beats per minute instead of 100, I have more time to properly fill my chambers between contractions. That means your blood flows better. I also need less oxygen to do my job, so your coronary arteries don't have to strain to keep up.

OK, so what kind of exercise should I do?

Alternate daily workouts between moderate- and high-intensity cardio. Aim for no less than 20 minutes every day. More is better. And then add two or three strength-training sessions per week.

Why is strength training important to you?

Muscles pull sugar out of your blood before it can accumulate and damage your arteries. And muscle can actually act as a return pump. Strong legs—and strong calves, especially—can push blood back up, so I don't have to strain to overcome gravity.

Does it help you if I eat healthier?

Absolutely. When you eat more vegetables, the fiber pulls cholesterol-rich bile out of your gut as it passes through, so basically you end up pooping out cholesterol that would otherwise gunk up your arteries. Fruit, whole grains, beans and nuts have the same effect. Think you can eat more of those?

That doesn't seem too ha—

Also: Don't smoke, drink too much, stay up too late, eat too many processed foods,



ARE YOU LIVING A HEART-HEALTHY LIFESTYLE?

A 10-point checklist to help ensure you're keeping your pump primed

1. You log a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise (or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise) every week.

Hitting these goals could reduce your risk of death from cardiovascular disease (CVD) by roughly 25 percent.

2. You eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables a day.

*This number is associated with a 12 percent lower risk of death from CVD, according to research in the journal *Circulation*.*

3. You avoid binge drinking alcohol.

In a recent study, subjects who overserved themselves weekly during the past three months had an overall 26 percent higher risk of coronary heart disease.

4. You eat at least four to six servings of seafood each week.

People who hit this goal were 23 percent less likely to die from CVD, according to a study of more than 18,000 people.

5. You don't smoke.

Smoking destabilizes arterial plaque, making it more likely to break off. And that can double your risk of heart failure.

6. You eat plenty of fiber.

In a review of 18 studies, researchers found that people who ate the most fiber were 17 percent less likely to die of CVD.

7. You take at least 7,000 steps a day.

Compared with those who take 2,000 daily steps, those who take 7,000 are 47 percent less likely to die from CVD, according to a large review.

8. You sleep seven to nine hours a night.

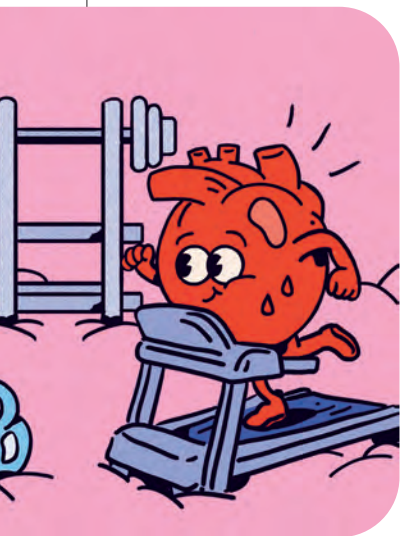
According to the National Sleep Foundation, prioritizing both sleep quality and quantity helps reduce the risk of heart disease and improves overall well-being.

9. You move around throughout the day.

A study of 90,000 people found that those who sit over 10.6 hours a day are 62 percent more likely to die from CVD causes. (But standing for five minutes every half hour can help.)

10. You avoid added salt and don't eat too many packaged foods or restaurant meals.

*Every 1 gram increase in daily sodium intake increases your risk of CVD mortality by 6 percent, according to a study in the journal *Nutrients*.*



(CONTINUED ON PAGE 77)

Volunteer with your heart. Gain a lifelong community.

AARP Foundation volunteers help us fulfill our vision in the most meaningful way possible: by sharing their knowledge, skills and wisdom with their communities, so that everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Each year, more than 29,000 volunteers help older adults file their taxes and tutor young students to become stronger readers. They make a lasting difference — and find joy, purpose, and connection along the way.

Ready to make a difference?

aarpfoundation.org/volunteer





REAL/PEOPLE



Coburn trims the undulating "hedge waves" bordering her home's driveway.

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

INSIDE After spending 42 years in prison, Gary Tyler turned despair into hope, kindness and quilts **P. 70**

At 77, Neal Kennedy runs the sidelines as a soccer and lacrosse referee **P. 71**

Clip Job

The Visionary Gardener

Jennifer Coburn invented a new kind of topiary. It got Disney's attention

BASKETBALL PLAYERS say they visualize their motion in advance—they see the ball going through the hoop. It's like that for me with topiary. My brain sees the finished piece and then manifests it.

I've been self-employed since I was 17. One of my first businesses was pinstriping cars. On a lunch break, I visited my mother in Pasadena and noticed a pile of aviary wire in her garden. In a flash, I saw a dolphin in that pile and had to create it. My sister, who was studying horticulture at Cal Poly, said, "You plant ficus in it and you'll have topiary."

After I'd made a pair of dolphins, I thought, *I've got to sell these*. I took them to a seafood market, which bought the pair. That changed the course of my life. I found a passion that has propelled me for the past 45 years.

When people think of topiary, they imagine shrubs or trees clipped into ornamental shapes. My approach is different. I create a metal framework that the plant grows up into. Starting out, I used bolt cutters to snip my designs out of steel, and I hand-bent my frames. My arms got incredibly strong.

The horticulturist from Disney Anaheim saw my topiary at the San Diego Zoo in 1991. When Disney needed to replace its Dumbo topiary, the staff called me. Now Disney is a main client. I've made Dumbo for Hong Kong, Mickey for Shanghai and *Fantasia* characters for Orlando.

When I got a plasma cutter, my husband said, "You bought *what* for 40K?" But adapting to new technologies has allowed me to grow my business and stay relevant. Today I'm using CAD software with the idea of 3D printing a line of smaller sculptural frames. There's always more to learn.

I still feel inspired to create, though injuries have slowed me some. Before I retire, I'd like to pass my craft on to like-minded individuals—people who'll love this work as much as I have. We all need to have something we care deeply about, whether it's a home or a cause or a craft. It's where our soul will live once we're gone. —As told to Gregg Segal

Topiary artist Jennifer Coburn, 71, is based in San Diego.



Just Sew Stories

Freed after decades on death row, Gary Tyler testifies by quilting

QUILTING IS HOW I tell stories, many of which are drawn from my time on death row. *Convict Poker* depicts a popular event at the Angola Prison Rodeo in Louisiana—a group of inmates play poker at a red plastic table while being charged by an angry 3,000-pound bull. The last man at the table when the bull crashes into it wins \$500. I saw guys get mauled, paralyzed and mortally wounded at those rodeos.

My self-portrait *Captivity* is inspired by a photo of me standing against a brick wall in jail a few months after I'd been arrested. I stitched it in black and white. I wanted to show that I'd become immersed in the wall, overwhelmed by the forces controlling my life.

I was 16 when I was arrested for a crime I didn't commit. A protest against school integration had turned violent, and a 13-year-old white boy was shot to death. I was convicted of murder and sentenced to death based on coerced witness testimony that was later recanted. Though my case was the subject of international outcry, I spent 42 years in prison in Louisiana. In the end, my sentence was deemed to be unjust by the U.S. Supreme Court, and I was released in 2016.

Early on, I was bitter and angry. But seeing how this had destroyed other guys in prison, I vowed to channel that negativity into something positive. I gained strength from others who'd endured horrendous conditions but never lost hope, like Nelson Mandela.

So I was one of the first hospice volunteers at Angola. When I went to prison as a teenager, many older guys became like family to me. When they fell



ill and faced the end of life, they chose me to care for them. It was a gift and an honor—and it made me whole again.

To raise money for the hospice program, we made quilts. I was reluctant at first; quilting wasn't manly. But I recalled my grandmother making blankets and my mother sewing dresses, creating something new in the world.

As long as I was in prison, I had to rely on lawyers, journalists and activists to speak for me. Now that I'm free, I'm

able to speak for myself and stitch stories that otherwise wouldn't be told.

We all have a story to tell. You just have to figure out how to tell yours, so it won't be forgotten. —As told to Gregg Segal

*Gary Tyler, 67, is a fiber artist living and working in Los Angeles. His memoir, *Stitching Freedom*, was published in 2025.*



MEMBERS ONLY
Visit aarp.org/garytyler to learn more about his work in our video interview.

Making the Hard Calls

How retired executive Neal Kennedy stays fit as a school sports referee

IT HAPPENED when I was 65 and refereeing a big prep-school lacrosse match: One of the goalies attacked me. The match had been tied, with seconds left, when his opponents took one last shot and scored. I saw the ball cross the line, blew the whistle and gave the goal sign.

That's when the losing goalie slashed me in the midriff with his stick. I never saw it coming, but I managed to blow my whistle again, throw the flag and get him ejected. I was black-and-blue for days. But driving home from that match, I never once thought, *That's it or I'm getting too old for this.* I wasn't going to let one incident discourage me.

That was more than 10 years ago, and nothing like that has happened to me since, so I think I made the right call.

I've been officiating soccer since 1994, when I filled in at my son's game after the ref didn't show. I added lacrosse in 1999 and upped my participation once I retired from work. I've refed over a thousand high school and college games across the mid-Atlantic.

I'm 77 now, and the U.S. Soccer Federation says I'm among the oldest active refs in the country. During a 90-minute soccer game, I'll run 4 to 7 miles. For lacrosse, 4 to 5. It keeps the weight off and my cholesterol low. I'm slow getting out of the car when I get home, but I'm fine the next morning.

I don't dwell on age. Refeing is fun, and I'll continue as long as I can. Most



kids are great, and I enjoy giving them the opportunity to play.

But that opportunity is endangered. There's a shortage of refs in all sports at every level. So if you're interested in youth sports, I'd encourage you to ask your local youth association if they need help. Sure, there will be hotheaded players—and parents—but you'll

be fine if you follow three rules: 1) be where you're supposed to be; 2) make the difficult call; and 3) blow a strong whistle.

Come to think of it, those aren't bad rules for life. —As told to Joe Kita

Neal Kennedy, 77, is a retired sales executive and a certified referee with the U.S. Soccer Federation, USA Lacrosse, NISOA and NILOA. He lives in Schnecksville, Pennsylvania.

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

Neal's Idiosyncratic Quiz for Would-Be Referees

Score one point for every "yes" answer:

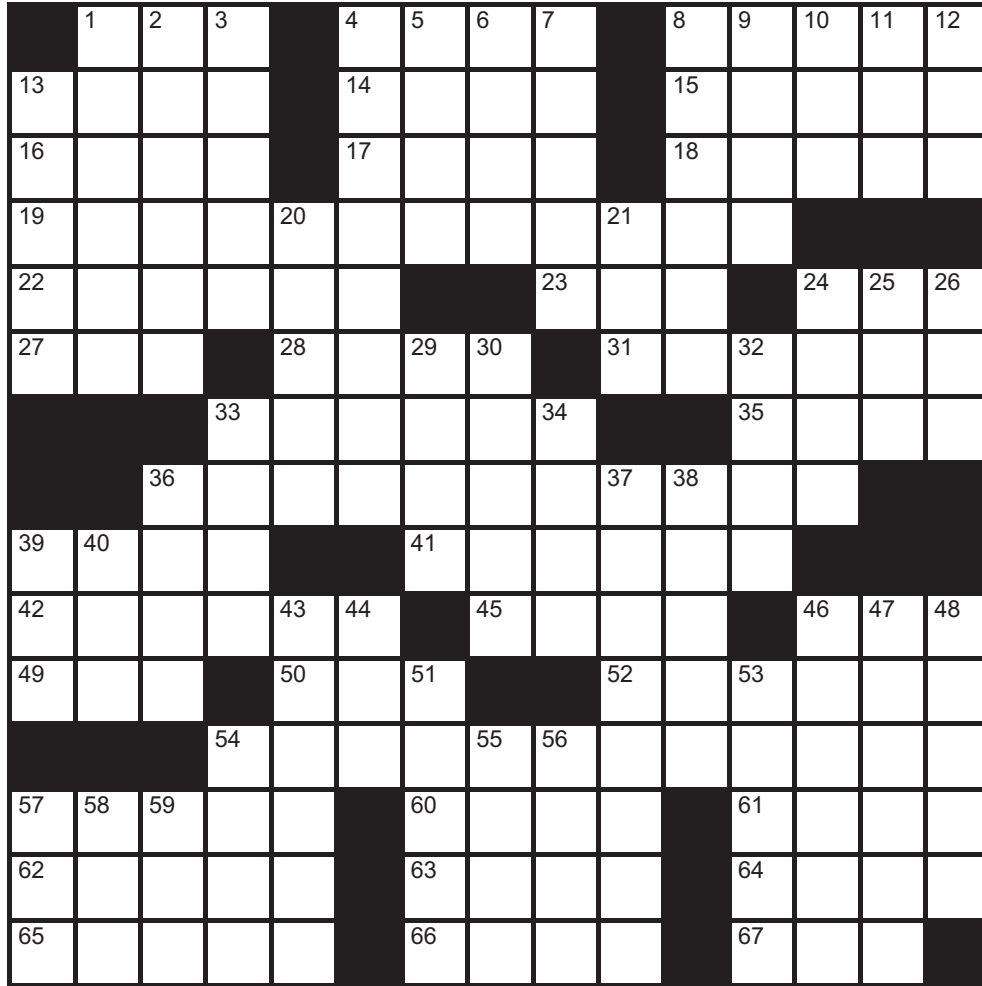
1. Did you play a sport in school or later in life? (Y) (N)
2. Are you a fan of a particular sport? (Y) (N)
3. Are you a stickler for the rules? (Y) (N)

4. Do you handle criticism well? (Y) (N)
5. Are you relatively mobile and fit? (Y) (N)
6. Can you make quick decisions? (Y) (N)
7. Are your evenings

- and weekends generally free? (Y) (N)
8. Are you punctual and dependable? (Y) (N)
9. Do you enjoy being in control? (Y) (N)
10. Can you blow a whistle? (Y) (N)

11. Do you look good in a uniform? (Y) (N)
- If you answered yes to six or more questions, you have referee potential. Contact the local youth association for the sport you know best.*

PUZZLES BY STANLEY NEWMAN



- 3 Tactics
- 4 Fairway club
- 5 With, in France
- 6 Virginia ____ (type of folk dance)
- 7 Paine's "Common Sense," e.g.
- 8 Rider in a Longfellow poem
- 9 Commentary page
- 10 Seagoing force established in 1775: Abbr.
- 11 Jefferson nickname
- 12 Moody music genre
- 13 Legendary flag maker name
- 20 Poolside number
- 21 One of 435 in D.C.: Abbr.
- 24 Pout
- 25 1776 newcomer, for short
- 26 Slippery fish
- 29 Sounds from someone impressed
- 30 Student of Socrates
- 32 Suggestions, for short
- 33 Drench
- 34 Unexpected obstacle
- 36 Month when what 36 Across signed was drafted
- 37 Herb in salsa
- 38 For hours ____ (nonstop)
- 39 Belly muscles
- 40 "¿ ____ pasa?"
- 43 Hemingway or Borgnine
- 44 Divested (of)
- 46 Em in a classic movie
- 47 False front
- 48 Give one's OK
- 51 High-IQ group
- 53 Himalayan land
- 54 Part of a foot
- 55 Fruit skin
- 56 Former partners
- 57 Ex-service member
- 58 Prefix for center
- 59 Oil field apparatus

CROSSWORD

AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION

ACROSS

- 1 Cleaning tool
- 4 Fee to ride
- 8 Postal worker's beat
- 13 Calf's dad
- 14 Currier's partner
- 15 English Derby locale
- 16 Exxon's U.S. predecessor
- 17 Geese formations
- 18 Mobile payment app
- 19 With 54 Across, what 36 Across (and 55 other signers) did in 1776
- 22 Martial arts instructor
- 23 Informal possessive

- 24 Take legal action
- 27 They have 12 mos.
- 28 Onstage object
- 31 Read carefully
- 33 Tavern seats
- 35 Mideast airline
- 36 Most memorable autograph of 1776
- 39 Hue close to turquoise
- 41 Dry cleaning challenges
- 42 Battle of ____ Hill
- 45 Leer at
- 46 Fighter jets' HQ
- 49 Meet with
- 50 Goblet edge
- 52 Like July Fourth celebrations
- 54 See 19 Across
- 57 Author of *Around the World in Eighty Days*
- 60 First in line

- 61 School support orgs.
- 62 Grand-scale stories
- 63 Prophet or mystic
- 64 Helps
- 65 Too snug
- 66 In addition
- 67 Surname of two Virginia signers

DOWN

- 1 Dogsled driver
- 2 Onetime TV twins Mary-Kate and Ashley

WORDPLAY

ROYAL PAIN

What word, formed from eight of the 12 letters in **PHILADELPHIA**, describes how King George III must have felt about the Declaration of Independence?



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

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	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
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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
73	\$50.90	\$38.95	\$100.80	\$76.90	\$150.70	\$114.85	\$250.50	\$190.75

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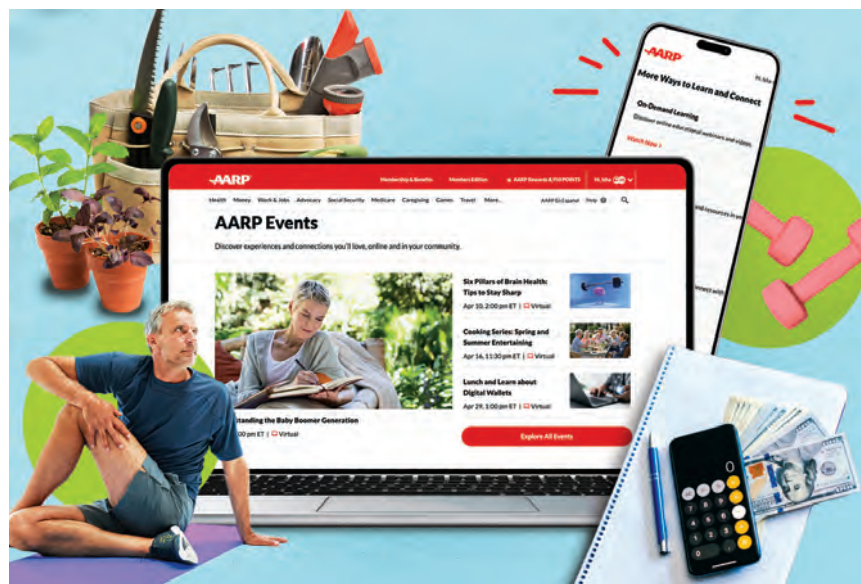
¹Guaranteed acceptance is for ages 45 to 85 only. Ages 50 to 75 in NY. ²Once your application has been received with your first month's premium, we will review and accept it.

Your **AARP**[®]

A One-Stop Shop for AARP Activities

The new events page makes finding all AARP has to offer easier than ever

By CLAIRE LEIBOWITZ



AARP OFFERS over 14,000 events and experiences every year, and now you can find all of them in one place.

Our newly launched webpage, aarp.org/findevents, connects you to experiences that help you learn, have fun and feel your best.

Among the subject areas are caregiving, entertainment, exercise and wellness, Medicare, scam prevention and Social Security. The site offers in-person and virtual options.

These resources were already available, but finding them had been a challenge. There was never one central door to enter on aarp.org, our website. The new portal is a faster and simpler way to find upcoming AARP programming—the vast majority of which is free—and you don't have to be a member to at-

tend virtually or in person.

"You can find an event that's right for you because we have such a variety," says Heather Nawrocki, vice president of fun and fulfillment at AARP. Visitors can filter by topic, location or format to find exactly what they want, she adds.

Here's what you can discover:

► **Learn:** AARP's sessions can educate you about your financial readiness, retirement planning and Social Security benefits. They can also clarify complicated information about Medicaid and Medicare. Or you can opt to learn something new across a range of categories, including fraud prevention, safe driving and caregiving. There are also workshops on searching for jobs.

► **Have fun:** Take up new hobbies and build new skills with AARP. Explore our resources for gardening and other

outdoor activities, like bird-watching. Watch films—including Movies for Grownups screenings—or take music and art classes, either in person or virtually. Check out the sports category to see what's happening online or in your area. There are also events that offer travel tips to help you save on your next vacation.

► **Feel good:** Access exercise and wellness content that boosts your energy, improves your balance and enhances your strength. There is a mix of online yoga, meditation, dance and strength training classes every day. Combine your workout with lessons in cooking and nutrition that celebrate different seasons, holidays and cultures.

In addition to these opportunities, you can use the events page to discover news and resources in your state, volunteer with AARP, or join community groups to connect with others, both online and in person.

"There's always a chat during the virtual events, so people are interacting. You're being entertained and sharing this experience with so many people. It adds a special element you might not get if you're just watching something on demand," Nawrocki says.

AARP is always adding new classes to its calendar, so check back often to explore the latest offerings. ■

Claire Leibowitz is an associate editor of AARP THE MAGAZINE.




For more information on AARP events, go to aarp.org/findevents or scan this code.


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HOW WE'RE FIGHTING FOR YOU

AARP TAKES ON VOTER EDUCATION

A LOT IS on the line for older Americans in this year's midterm elections.

Lawmakers elected this year will help shape the debate and ultimately make decisions on whether Social Security remains strong for today's retirees and future generations, whether family caregivers get more help, and other issues that affect the pocketbooks of older Americans.

AARP never has and never will endorse candidates for public office, nor do we ever make contributions to individual campaigns or political parties. But as the nation's leading advocate for older Americans, we play a vital role in educating people on how, where and why to vote. AARP also plays a critical role in ensuring that candidates understand your priorities—especially when it comes to Social Security, family caregiving and the economy.

Here's some of what AARP has planned for this election cycle:

- **Empowering voters 50 and over.**

AARP's voter engagement work is about equipping people with information on when, where and how to cast their ballots. We are committed to making sure all voters can make their voices heard. At aarp.org/vote you can find dates of primaries, voter registration deadlines, whether ballots must be received or postmarked by Election Day, and much more information.

- **Pressing candidates on issues that matter.**

AARP is engaging candidates early, starting in primary elections, to ensure they understand the concerns of older voters. That includes organizing candidate briefings and meeting with campaigns; sponsoring candidate forums or debates; and creating opportunities for candidates to speak directly



to voters through AARP tele-town halls and videos. These efforts build strong relationships with winning candidates.

- **Meeting with lawmakers.** AARP will talk directly to elected officials about what matters to you. In April, AARP state and national staff participated in our annual "Lobby Day" in Washington, D.C., meeting with about 200 members of Congress. Our efforts also reach state lawmakers. For example, AARP staff and volunteers in Ohio will visit all 88 counties this year on a "Let's Talk, Ohio" tour, asking people about the issues that matter to them and meeting with elected officials and candidates.

- **Showing the power of older voters.**

AARP will conduct public opinion polls in key races for the U.S. House and Senate and governorships in competitive states like Maine, Georgia, Michigan and North Carolina to show the power of older voters. And AARP will organize volunteers to help out during elections. You can join a tele-town hall, attend a local community conversation or volunteer with your AARP state office. Go to aarp.org/states to find out how.

AARP is committed to ensuring that voters 50-plus remain a key force in the 2026 elections. Go to aarp.org/government-elections to stay informed about those elections and the policy debates that follow. —*John Hishta, AARP senior vice president of campaigns*

HEAT: THE SILENT DANGER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 59

A Hot and Hazy Future

It's not just individuals who need to adapt, though. It's governments, aid organizations, housing providers and more. And vulnerable populations, including older people, must be at the center of their attention.

The number of people over 60 worldwide is expected to double to 2.1 billion in the next quarter century. Meanwhile, retirees in the U.S. are still moving south. That combination increased the number of people over 65 living in some of our hottest places—Arizona, Georgia, South Carolina—by more than 50 percent between 2010 and 2020.

At the same time, colder areas, especially in New England and the upper Midwest, are heating up faster and more dramatically than the already hot Sun Belt. These places, too, have significant populations of older residents but frequently lack the infrastructure to tackle high temperatures. The number of air-conditioned homes in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont is far below the national average. And Maine has proportionally more residents over 65 than any other state.

But even access to air-conditioning is no guarantee of safety. During Hurricane Irma in 2017, a dozen people, ages 57 to 99, died from exposure to excessive heat when the transformer powering the air-conditioning at their Florida nursing home blew. An older woman died in 2024 from heat-related causes in Arizona when the power company shut off her electricity for unpaid bills. At least seven of those who died in Portland in 2021 had air-conditioning units that either were unplugged or didn't work. In some states, AARP offices have advocated for summer disconnection moratoriums to prevent utility shutoffs during dangerously hot weather; several states have since enacted related laws, but more than half still allow such shutoffs. Most states also lack requirements for backup generators at long-

term care facilities, which would ensure that nursing homes or assisted living facilities wouldn't lose air-conditioning if power went out during a heat wave.

Experts confess to an even bigger fear. During peak demand, utilities in hot cities often beg residents to dial back electricity use to avoid blackouts. But energy demand—and costs—are climbing quickly, and the power grid is aging. “Air-conditioning is only as good as the electricity behind it, and in a heat wave, that's the very thing most at risk,” Shandas told me. “If the power goes out during a heat wave, we are cooked—literally cooked. And it's the older adults who will face the disproportionate burden of that outage.”

In fact, research in 2023 determined that such a tragic scenario over a period of five days in Phoenix could send half of the city's 1.6 million residents to the ER. The projected number of deaths: about 13,000.

'Truly a Wake-Up Call'

When the heat receded from her apartment in 2021, Beth Parmenter, the nurse and volunteer, was still very much alive. Her dark sheets and honeycomb shades, fans and the other precautions she took may well have saved her life. But Parmenter knows she took a risk by staying put. What Portland went through “was truly a wake-up call,” she told me. “It scared me.” In 2024, she and others in her building got together and had air-conditioning installed.

And Parmenter remains haunted by the voices of some of those she called as a heat-wave volunteer. She still recalls the helplessness she felt not knowing how—or whether—people would act on her call. She thinks often of one particular man, a lonely, frail-sounding gentleman. He hadn't yet turned on his air conditioner because, he told her, “I can't afford to. I won't be able to eat.”

Due to the confidentiality of her volunteer role, she never found out how he fared, but to this day she feels the weight of what he said. The Pacific Northwest,

with its abundant hydropower, has some of the cheapest electricity in the country, and he still had to worry about utility rates forcing him to skip meals. (AARP is working to bring utility bills down for older Americans. See “AARP Fights for You,” page 58.)

Portland and other places in the Northwest have begun enacting heat-mitigation policies, planting trees and breaking up parking lots with shrubs. Construction design rules now mandate that apartments keep indoor temperatures at or below 78 degrees. Some local governments now even provide air-conditioning to low-income homes and have installed thermometers in some subsidized housing to better understand indoor temperature risks.

These adjustments make a lot of sense: Research suggests that by 2040, with continued warming, heat events could strike the Northwest roughly every five to 10 years.

To help other localities take action, Shandas has put together neighborhood temperature maps for more than 130 cities worldwide, many of which have now put in place heat-mitigation practices. Shandas encourages older people to reach out to local leaders to make sure they have a plan for extreme heat.

There is plenty that individuals can do to prepare themselves, Shandas adds. If you don't have air-conditioning, consider getting it, and look into the possibility of local subsidies. And don't be a hero—if you don't have a way to keep your home cool, make plans to stay somewhere else when excessive heat is in the forecast. (For more on how to reduce your risk, see “What You Can Do,” page 57.)

Surviving a heat wave involves more than air-conditioning, though. “Heat resilience is not just about cooling,” says Shandas. “It's about hydration, preparation, social support and awareness.” ■

Craig Welch reports on the environment and climate change, including for eight years with National Geographic. A former fellow with the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University, he lives with his family in Seattle.

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YOUR TICKER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 65

neglect your oral health or skip doctor appointments. And whatever you do, don't stress. I can't stand stress!

DEALING WITH HEARTBREAK—THE DANGEROUS KIND

How likely is it that you're going to kill me like my grandpa's heart killed him?

Look, we're not living in the 1970s anymore. Today, I'm 66 percent less likely to fail from a blocked artery. If you have a blocked coronary artery, a heart doc can snake a little catheter in and pop it open within 90 minutes of your reaching the hospital.

OK, but how will I know if I'm having a heart attack?

You'll probably feel a tight pressure or a squeezing sensation in your chest. You might also feel pain somewhere between your jawline and upper belly. Arms, neck and shoulders are common. You might feel sweaty, short of breath, lightheaded or nauseated. Women are more likely than men to feel nausea, anxiety, shortness of breath, fatigue and shoulder pain.

And this heart attack pain—does it just come on suddenly?

Sometimes, but not always. I might start sending signals weeks before the actual attack. You might first feel some discomfort while climbing a flight of stairs. Then you'll feel it while walking, going to the bathroom, cooking or just getting out of bed. The discomfort will get easier and easier to re-create—and that means you need to get to the hospital. Now get lost. I have blood to pump. ■

Clint Carter has written for Men's Health, Rolling Stone, The Wall Street Journal and other publications.

CONSULTING EXPERTS: Lawrence Phillips, M.D., associate professor and director of nuclear cardiology at NYU Langone Medical Center
Miguel Leal, M.D., associate professor of cardiology at the Emory University School of Medicine
Monika Sanghavi, M.D., associate professor of clinical medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and the director of women's cardiovascular health at Pennsylvania Hospital

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We greatly value your feedback about AARP THE MAGAZINE—including what you'd like us to cover next. Here are several ways to send us your comments on stories, and to offer your suggestions for topics, people, trends and issues to report on in future issues of the magazine. While we read (and listen) carefully to all submissions, due to the high volume we cannot respond to every question or return submitted materials.

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SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES ON PAGE 72

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Blake Shelton

(JUNE 18): The country singer has an unmistakable “Voice.”

EARLY DAYS: Shelton was born in Ada, Oklahoma. After high school, he moved to Nashville to pursue a music career.

CHART SUCCESS: The singer has released 13 albums and sold millions of records. Among his hit singles are “Honey Bee” and “God’s Country.”

VOICE LESSONS: Shelton joined NBC’s singing competition series *The Voice* in 2011 and spent 23 seasons as a coach.

HOME: He married singer Gwen Stefani in 2021.

WITH HONORS: Shelton’s accolades include 11 Country Music Association

awards, six Academy of Country Music awards, CMT artist of the year and eight People’s Choice awards.

GOOD WORK: He set up the Blake Shelton Cancer Research Program at a children’s hospital in Oklahoma in 2018.

WISE WORDS: “I used to be almost afraid of my success because I was afraid of losing it,” he told *People*. “Maybe the worry kept me working hard.”

—Whitney Matheson

★ 30 ★

Shelton’s No. 1 country singles



MORE MILESTONE BIRTHDAYS

Randy Jackson
JUNE 23
Former *American Idol* judge serves as bandleader on the revival of the game show *Name That Tune*.



Tom Hanks
JULY 9
Will play lead role in the film adaptation of George Saunders’ novel *Lincoln in the Bardo*.



Dorothy Hamill
JULY 26
Figure skater attended this year’s Winter Olympics in Milan 50 years after winning gold.



Cheech Marin
JULY 13
Comedian and art collector opened the Center for Chicano Art and Culture in Southern California.



Linda Ronstadt
JULY 15
Acclaimed singer’s music was celebrated at an all-star event in Nashville last year.



Mel Brooks
JUNE 28
The comedy legend will appear next year in a sequel to his 1987 satirical film, *Spaceballs*.





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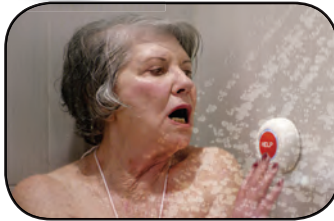
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