

The Magazine

**AMERICAN SURVIVORS**  
HOW THOSE WHO ENDURED U.S. MASS SHOOTINGS HEAL—AND HOW SOME NEVER WILL

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In addition, the casual yet stylish Pool Grill offers a relaxed atmosphere to unwind, all while enjoying a satisfying meal. No matter where you dine, the wine list is extensive, featuring vintages from France, Italy, South Africa, and Chile, and the service is impeccable. With flexible dining times and the option to dine with whomever you please, guests can enjoy their meals stress-free, knowing that everything is taken care of.

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Moreover, Epicurean Explorer Tours provide shore excursions that go beyond sightseeing, focusing on the culinary heritage of each destination. Imagine exploring historic markets in Monte Carlo or Valencia, sampling spirits at a distillery in Ireland, or tasting wines in the vineyards of Bordeaux. These tours offer intimate encounters with local flavors and traditions, guided by culinary experts who bring each region's unique food culture to life.

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**ON THE COVER:** Michelle Yeoh photographed by Pål Hansen at the Mandarin Oriental in Milan on September 21, 2024. Producer: Patrick Sampson; wardrobe stylist: Dena Giannini at A Creative Partner; hair stylist: Robert Vistica at The Wall Group; makeup artist: Soo Park at the Wall Group

Clockwise from top: JuntayR/Headpress/Redux; Eric Schramm; Illustration by Sean McCabe; Andy Anderson; Getty Images; Illustration by Liam Eisenberg; Jeff Lipsky; Greg Dupree; Center: Getty Images

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## In Praise of Strong Women

Here's to Michelle Yeoh, Glenn Close, Naomi Watts—and to all older women who keep going, no matter what

**I** KNOW SOMETHING about strong women. My wife, Nichol, had a brilliant 24-year career at the New York City Ballet. Many nights I watched from the seats as she rocked the house, bringing 2,500 people to their feet in a shouted chorus of *Brava!* But I was also granted morning-after access to the crippling pain following each performance, and the grit it took for her to get back to the barre. I witnessed the discipline and sacrifice behind all that grace and elegance onstage.

Nichol's mom, Gloria, was also a woman of uncommon strength. She prevailed through terrible illness in the family, bouts of unemployment, years of caregiving for her husband, Nichol's father, after he was grievously injured in a car crash after working his night shift at the post office. And Gloria carried on for more than 20 years after her husband's untimely death. When faced with adversity, this strong woman always said, the trick is to “mentally adjust.”

This is a philosophy I admire. As a student of the Stoic philosophers of Greece and Rome, I learned that we humans cannot control what happens to us, only our responses to what happens. Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the most famous Stoic, put it this way: “You have power over your mind—not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength.” Or as my mother-in-law said many times,

“You’ve got to mentally adjust.”

In this issue, we are writing about three women of strength and grace who have mentally adjusted to the challenges and obstacles that Hollywood throws at older actresses—and they have prevailed. Michelle Yeoh, our cover subject, has had an amazing film career that blossomed as she has matured—from a fierce martial arts fighter going toe-to-toe with Jackie Chan into an Oscar-winning leading lady. Glenn Close, our career achievement winner in *Movies for Grownups* this year, has one of the longest and most varied careers in film. “Fierce” is a word I would associate with Glenn and her dedication. Finally, Naomi Watts, who turned in a tour de force performance in *Feud: Capote vs. The Swans* as Babe Paley, Truman Capote’s favorite Swan, is now an author as well as a Hollywood survivor. She has just written a new book on menopause: *Dare I Say It*. I say *brava* to all three.

And *brava*, as well, to all the strong women over 50 reading this, the ones who—over and over—mentally adjust to whatever life throws their way. You show the rest of us every day what it means to live with both grit and grace.

Bob



## SAMUEL L. JACKSON'S RELATABILITY

I loved your cover story on Samuel L. Jackson so much that I read it twice. I identify as a person who stutters, and was pleased the article mentioned that he overcame his stuttering as a young man. It has always made me feel good to see his name among the prominent people who stutter. Knowing that he is a fellow person of color who stutters warms my heart! About 1 percent of the U.S. population struggles with stuttering, or nearly 3 million people. And it is never too late to seek help through speech therapy. I did, and it greatly improved my fluency.

**JIM MURPHY**  
Bronx, New York

One of my favorite actors. He's so down to earth. 75 and fabulous!

**FATIMA BLOWE**  
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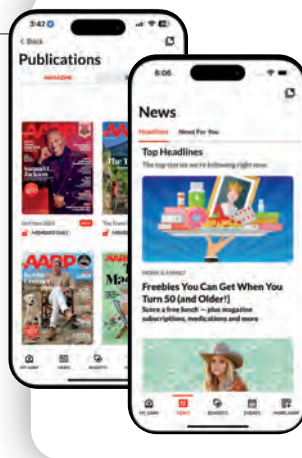


Our October/November issue featured Samuel L. Jackson.

## ENDING THE STIGMA

My dad went to Vietnam and every single day was a struggle. I thank Taraji P. Henson ["A-List\*"] so much for bringing this to light. All my life I felt I was the only one having a dad with so much trauma.

**@ANILAURIE**  
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## MUSIC TO HEAL

Thank you for highlighting how Holocaust survivor Saul Dreier ["Real People: 'Music is Hope'"] is using music to globally share messages of peace, tolerance and resiliency. I got to meet this larger-than-life soul during his recent tour. To say that he is an inspiration would be an understatement; he is living testimony to the light and power that music offers in times of darkness. Our world needs more Sauls.

**CARMEN ALIBER**  
Newton, Massachusetts

## SHE'S BACK

It is so inspiring to hear Kathy Bates embrace her real self with confidence and wisdom at 76 ["What I Know Now"]. How challenging it must be for an actor who spends her life being someone else to truly come home to herself. She continues to demonstrate we have value no matter how old we are!

**DEVRA McMILLEN**  
Silver Springs, Florida

What a beautiful soul, and her Matlock is a must-see.

**ARNELLE PIRES**  
Facebook



## REMEMBERING THOSE WHO SERVED

Thank you for "The Bravest of the Brave." I was moved to tears reading what these "brothers" endured. I'm proud to have gotten to know them. *Hooah.*

**TIMOTHY H. BEAULIEU**  
Searsport, Maine

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62	\$31.45	\$22.90	\$61.90	\$44.80	\$92.35	\$66.70	\$153.25	\$110.50
63	\$32.50	\$23.70	\$64.00	\$46.40	\$95.50	\$69.10	\$158.50	\$114.50
64	\$33.50	\$24.55	\$66.00	\$48.10	\$98.50	\$71.65	\$163.50	\$118.75
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# Upfront The **A**List

## 6 Surprising Things About Naomi Watts

### 1 Her father died of an apparent heroin overdose when she was 7.

I'm drawn to stories about grief because I experienced it very early. I had this idea that one must suffer to be interesting and dynamic and strong and prove themselves in some way—which is absurd.

### 2 Watts struggled with infertility (though she had two children with partner Liev Schreiber).

In my mid-30s, I learned I was in perimenopause. I was hanging my head in shame, and if I ever dared to speak about it or try to open the conversation with friends, I was met with nervous laughter. I went on hormone replacement therapy very early.

### 3 That experience turned her into an author—and a Hollywood agony aunt.

I imagined my new book as a long, cozy chat on the couch with my girlfriend. That's what I wanted. In my early 40s, I wished there was a funny, sexy fact-filled book that would make me feel calmer.

**“Look at how many women in their 50s are doing remarkable things, sometimes the most brilliant things of their entire life.”**

### 4 She immediately knew actor Billy Crudup was the one, and she married last year for the first time, at 54.

We met at exactly the right time. With getting older comes a certain level of calm and wisdom, and a willingness to sort of let go and throw yourself into things.

### 5 Her nip and tuck philosophy is: Whatever! ...


I have no judgment. Will I do surgery one day? Maybe. I'm not there yet, but I will never say never.

### 6 Her 50s are surprising her by being, well, great.

We're living longer and we're not invisible. As a teen, I would never have dreamed of a life of this magnitude.

—As told to Judith Newman

*The British actress Naomi Watts, 56, will publish her book on menopause, Dare I Say It, in January. She stars in the movie The Friend—with Bill Murray and a Great Dane.*

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To see our exclusive Watts video, scan code or go to [aarp.org/naomiwatts](http://aarp.org/naomiwatts)



## Noodle Delights

Asia is known for its diverse range of noodles. Chris Toy, a cooking instructor and cookbook author based in Maine, shares some popular types.

### ▼ RAMEN

A wheat noodle typically served in the popular dish of the same name, which features a rich broth with a variety of toppings. Ramen noodles can be curly or straight. They are typically made with wheat flour, water, salt and kansui, an alkaline mineral that makes them chewy.

### ▼ EGG NOODLES

These wheat- and egg-based noodles are used as the foundation of chow mein and lo mein, which typically include vegetables, meat and a savory sauce.

### ► RICE NOODLES

Made from rice flour, these are widely used in various Asian cuisines, especially in Thailand, Vietnam and China. They come in different widths, including vermicelli, pad Thai noodles and wide rice noodles.

### ◀ SOBA

Thin noodles made from buckwheat flour or a combination of buckwheat and wheat flour. Soba noodles can be served hot in broth or cold with a dipping sauce. —*Vonnie Williams*

### ► GLASS NOODLES

Also known as cellophane noodles, these noodles can be transparent. They are made from mung bean starch or other starches. They are often used in filling for summer rolls.



Food stylist: Margaret Dickey, prop stylist: Julia Bayless



## FOOTWEAR FOR FIDO

Protect your dog's paws this winter

**WHAT'S THE hottest fashion accessory for dogs this season? Boots.**

You wouldn't want to go barefoot outdoors in winter, right? So consider that when walking your dog. All that snow, ice and cold pavement can be harmful. "In freezing temperatures, wet feet on a dog can cause frostbite of the pads on the paw," says Lindsey Wolko, CEO of the Center for Pet Safety. Footwear can also protect against the dangers of sometimes-toxic deicers on walkways. Major pet supply retailers offer a variety of boot sets, usually for \$30 to \$35. (Fashionistas with cats, you're out of luck. That tabby is not going to stand for anything on those paws.)

If your dog resists boots, an alternative is to keep a bucket of warm water near the door to rinse their paws, Wolko suggests. Another good practice, says veterinarian Heather Berst, medical lead at animal health company Zoetis, is to rub paw wax or balm on their pads before a walk.

—Matt Alderton

## The Best Room for Collectibles

Consider this spot for your prized keepsakes

**T**HOSE much-loved treasures you've collected over the years can sometimes struggle to find a home in your home. Tchotchkes may not fit in with the decor of your living spaces, changing the character of a room. Here's an idea: Displaying collectibles in a bathroom can personalize and add a little whimsy to an otherwise antiseptic space.

"You don't have to be so serious in the bathroom," says interior designer Bob Richter of Lambertville, New Jersey. Richter's own World War II-themed bathroom boasts vintage items like a U.S. Navy poster and antique glass bottles. "It feels like a curious, inviting place to be."

Sharon DellaPiazza, 55, of Berkeley Heights, New Jersey, has also put this idea

into practice, displaying her mermaids and fairies, perfume bottles and some of her late mother's Hummel figurines on a wrought iron wall shelf. "It makes me happy," she says. "It's like I've stepped into a little fairy world before I need to step into the real world." —Sheryl Jean



## How Much Is Too Clean? ♦

*Stop wiping and vacuuming all the time. A little grime might be good for you*



**IT'S NATURAL** to worry about germs and bacteria, especially as we age and our immune systems can become weakened. But "your home isn't a petri dish growing scary diseases at every turn," says microbiologist Shaun Veran. And some exposure to microbes, Veran says, is like a "workout for your immune system, teaching it to recognize and fight diseases more effectively."

Gastroenterologist Robynne Chutkan, author of *The Microbiome Solution* and host of the *Gutbliss* podcast, says a good rule of thumb is to

clean your kitchen nightly and the rest of the house weekly. More frequent cleaning is needed only for visible dirt, grime or mold or when someone in your household is ill.

**What else can you do?** Introduce good microbes into your home, says microbial ecologist Jack Gilbert of the University of California San Diego.

- ♦ Open windows.
- ♦ Let pets romp indoors.
- ♦ Grow potted plants.

Studies show that these three things lead to a higher level of beneficial microbial diversity inside the home, Gilbert says. —M.A.

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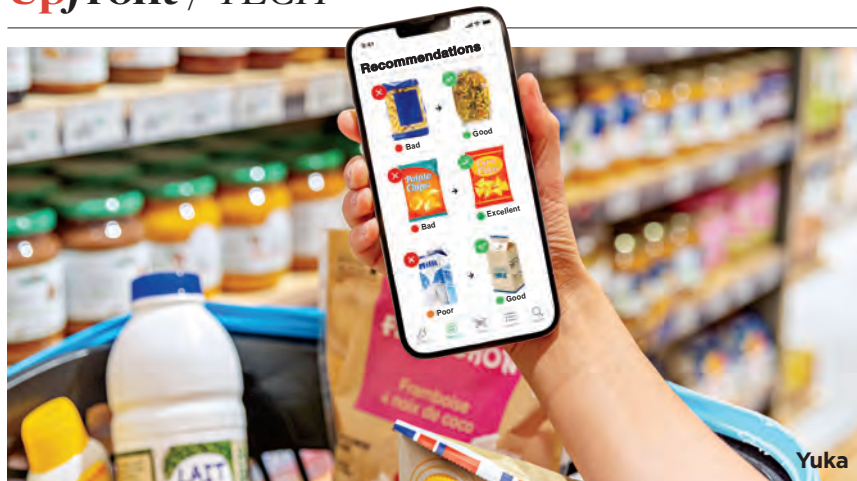
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## Upfront / TECH





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### Scan That Barcode!

*It can reveal a lot about products while shopping*

**BARCODES ON** packages aren't just for the checkout clerk. "Now we're all equipped with a barcode reader," says Bob Carpenter, CEO and president of GS1 US, which sets standards for barcoding systems. "It's called our mobile phone." Use your phone's camera to scan the lines, with the help of apps:

 **ShopSavvy**  
Scan the barcode for almost any product and this app will pull up the lowest price at top retailers as well as price comparisons for sellers across the internet, with estimated shipping costs included. You'll also get product reviews from multiple sources.

 **MyNetDiary**  
This app provides much of the same nutritional info you can find on the packaging, but here's the real benefit: It takes all that data on calories, carbs, protein, fat, added sugar and so on and assigns a "food grade"—from A to D—based on total nutritional value.

 **Yuka**  
This app analyzes ingredients in food and body-care products and flags potential allergens, endocrine disruptors, pollutants, carcinogens or skin irritants. If a product scores low for nutrition or health, you'll get other suggestions. —Lexi Pandell

### Ride-Hailing for Caregivers

*Help for getting loved ones to their destination*

**RIDE-HAILING SERVICES** like Uber and Lyft can help nondrivers get to doctors' appointments. But arranging a ride for someone else can be difficult. Good news: These services have been working to solve this problem, easing the process for caregivers.

**Uber:** The company announced an initiative called Uber Caregiver, allowing caregivers to arrange rides for another person and communicate with the driver and passenger through a three-way chat. In some cases, users also can pay with a flex

card from a Medicare Advantage plan.

**Lyft:** This service offers Lyft Concierge, through which health care providers and other businesses can request, schedule and pay for rides on behalf of patients. Lyft also provides free or discounted rides through 211, a referral and information line that connects to local health and human services resources. —Rob Pegoraro



Main Image: Courtesy Yuka; Getty Images; 6. Logos from left: Courtesy ShopSavvy; Courtesy MyNetDiary; Courtesy Yuka; Illustration by Delphine Lee

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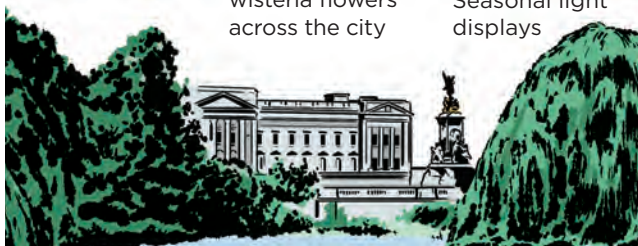
# The Best Months to Visit Europe

The month you travel overseas can make all the difference in your experience. To avoid heat and crowds in most cities, avoid the summer and look to other seasons instead

## London

**MAR-MAY** Royal parks and gardens blossom; wisteria flowers across the city

**SEP-OCT** Lovely leaves and pubs  
**NOV-DEC** Seasonal light displays



## Copenhagen

**JUN-AUG** Long, bright days and mild temperatures to enjoy

canals, sidewalk cafés and Tivoli Gardens park



## Madrid

**MAR-MAY** Hibiscus, gardenias and roses bloom

**OCT-DEC** Autumn Festival and Christmas markets



## Vienna

**APR-MAY** Pleasant weather at top attractions Schönbrunn Palace and the Hofburg

**SEP** Start of opera season, when tickets are discounted  
**NOV-DEC** Christmas markets



## Budapest

**MAR-MAY** Pleasant weather and cafés reopen their terraces; Budapest Spring Festival starts in late April

**SEP-OCT** Vibrant fall colors; cooler weather for soaking in the thermal baths



## Rome

**APR-MAY** Mild, sun-drenched days; historic gardens alive with spring blooms

**OCT** Crisp air and gentle sunshine; changing colors in Villa Borghese Gardens



## Athens

**MAR-MAY** Sunny, mild weather; more elbow room at the Acropolis and Ancient Agora

**SEP-OCT** Seasonal cultural festivals and performances



## Paris

**APR-JUN** Mild weather; beautiful spring flowers; ideal time to enjoy outdoor cafés

**SEP-DEC** Paris Autumn Festival —Veronica Stoddart





## WHAT'S THAT FLASHING YELLOW ARROW?

**YOU'RE ABOUT TO** make a left turn at an intersection when you see something new: a flashing yellow left arrow. What should you do?

The short answer: Proceed the same way you would when turning left with a solid green light. After yielding to oncoming traffic and pedestrians, make the turn.

So why the change if the two signals mean the same thing? Another short answer: clarity. "The concern is that drivers turning left on a permissive circular green signal might mistake that signal as implying that the left turn has the right-of-way over opposing traffic," the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) notes.

While not all signals will be converted (expect to continue to see some solid greens for left turns), communities that adopt the flashing yellow arrow can expect safer intersections. In 2020, the FHWA found that the signal can reduce crashes related to left-turn movements by 15 to 50 percent.

"It's a great addition," says Josh Dunning, vice president of AARP Driver Safety. "Left-hand turns are dangerous for everyone driving." —*Elise Ceyral*

# Great Winter Escapes

Get lost in a fantastic new book

## The Tiny Slice

"Embracing winter is about embracing our life: all of it, the dark parts and the light. Our winter story is, in part, our life story."

—From **How to Winter: Harness Your Mindset to Thrive on Cold, Dark or Difficult Days**

by **Kari Leibowitz**

## Wise Women

Many notable actresses—including **Naomi Watts** (see page 9)—have riffed on growing older. Now comes **Brooke Shields Is Not Allowed to Get Old: Thoughts on Aging as a Woman** (January 14). At 59, Shields is embracing what she has gained through the years (confidence, for one) and dispelling myths about older women.



## Reviews

### Beautiful Ugly by Alice Feeney

Author Grady Green's journalist wife mysteriously disappears. A year later, unable to write, he heads to a remote Scottish island for inspiration, but strange happenings make his stay far from idyllic. (January 14)

### Babylonia by Costanza Casati

From the author of 2023's *Clytemnestra*, this historical fantasy is based on the myth of the Assyrian orphan-turned-queen Semiramis. With treachery, power plays and a love triangle, it's a true escape. (January 14)

### The Big Empty by Robert Crais

Crais' entertaining new thriller again features detective Elvis Cole and partner Joe Pike. While investigating a murder, the two are targeted by criminals in a case that grows ever more twisted. (January 14)

## From the Ashes

**Zora Neale Hurston**, the Harlem Renaissance author, left behind an unfinished novel that nearly burned in a fire. A salvaged version, **The Life of Herod the Great**, comes out January 7.

## ALSO OF NOTE

**Presumed Guilty**  
Scott Turow  
(January 14)

**Good Dirt**  
Charmaine Wilkerson  
(January 28)

# Danny DeVito

On his iconic roles in *Taxi* and *Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, his go-for-it mantra and the joy of being a granddad

## Noisemaker

I was born in Asbury Park, New Jersey. I was the baby, my sister Theresa was 10 years older, my sister Angie was 16 years older, my mom had two sisters, and none of them shut up, ever. It's an Italian family, so the decibel level is out there.

## A little smart aleck

I went to Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, because if your mother and father didn't know what to do with you, they gave you to the nuns.

## ... and still a smart aleck

I remember when Peter, my nephew, was born. I was 7 years old, and I went over and looked into the bassinet, and the first thing he did was pee on me. It was great! I don't think there's a conversation I've had with the guy over all these years where I don't bring up the fact that he peed on me.

## Also an old softie

Do anything you can to keep on an even keel with your family and friends, no matter what happens in your life. That's all we have. Don't hide things. You've got to get up every day thinking about how you're going to make it easier for the people that you're working with or that you love or that you eat breakfast with. Because it's infectious; everybody starts feeling good.

## Falling into the business

Growing up, I'd spend the weekends at the movies, but I actually wasn't even thinking about acting. I got introduced to the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in a roundabout way, took a couple classes, and I got



the bug. And I thought, I'm not like Cary Grant, but I got a feel for this thing. So I studied, and then I went and started looking for jobs in New York, like every other actor does. I didn't care what the description was—"male, 6 foot 4, 250 pounds"—I'd go out for the audition. Once I got in the room, I'm going to do what I'm going to do.

## Becoming Louie

I wanted that part, Louie De Palma [in *Taxi*]. I walked into the room to audition in front of the four guys who created it, and I said, "One thing I want to know before we start. Who wrote



this shit?" And I threw the script on the table. And I had a nanosecond of, *did I screw everything up?* Then they fell on the floor. Louie walked into their lives.

## Sudden fame

I went to the market the day after the first episode aired, and people are stopping me on the street: "Hey, Louie!" They weren't calling me Danny. After a couple of days of this, I called my publicist, and said, "This is really crazy. People are chasing me down the street." He says, "Danny, you don't have to worry until that stops happening." The fans are all you have!

## Frankly, Frank is awesome

Now it's all, "Frank, Frank, Frank!"



because of *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*. I love Frank because Frank has no boundaries, and I think he respects a lot of people—but he's always in it for himself. He's going to try to figure out the best way to walk out of the room with more money than he walked in with.

### Still evolving

I think I'm bolder than I've ever been—I don't monitor myself as much. I do say things that are, like, pretty far out, that are really weird, and sometimes I'm inappropriate. But I am always respectful, and that's because of my two sisters, I swear to God. You have to respect other people's space.

### My happy place

Since my two grandbabies have been born, I am just incorrigible. You gotta tamp me down in the joy department, you know what I'm saying? I'm just so lucky. Blessings have been showered down on me. I wish that for everybody. And the thing



**A Sudden Case of Christmas**

is to be aware of it. Don't let it go. Rhea [Perlman, DeVito's wife, from whom he is separated but who he still spends a lot of time with] and I were always able to see those little, incremental changes when our kids were growing up. And I tell my kids that, with their babies: Don't miss a thing, don't look away.

### A sudden case of holidays

I'm in the movie *A Sudden Case of Christmas* with my daughter Lucy. It's just a real warm, wonderful mov-

ie, and I loved doing it. As far as the actual holidays go, we have family dinners. Basically we're Italian, so you know, anybody who's around, we grab. We get to celebrate all the holidays, because Rhea's parents were Jewish, so we did all the Jewish holidays, and we do all the Catholic holidays or Italian holidays.

### My mantra

It's always a good thing to be positive about life, and always get out of bed thinking today's the day you're really going to kick its ass. That's the way to do it. —As told to Lisa Rosen

Actor, director and producer Danny DeVito, 80, won an Emmy for his portrayal of the cantankerous Louie De Palma in *Taxi*, and plays the indelible Frank Reynolds in *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, now in its 17th season. He stars in the new movie *A Sudden Case of Christmas*, in theaters and streaming now.



**MEMBERS ONLY**  
For exclusive video of Danny DeVito, scan this code with your camera or go to [aarp.org/devito](http://aarp.org/devito).

Left to right: EX Networks/Courtesy Everett Collection; ABC Photo Archives/Getty Images; Courtesy Shout Studios

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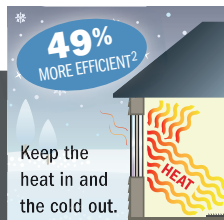
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# Healthy You

## Winterize Your Body

These 4 moves will help keep you limber and balanced when the weather turns nasty

By MYATT MURPHY

**W**E ALL HIBERNATE to some degree when winter comes, says Nicholas A. DiNubile, an orthopedic surgeon and chief medical adviser for the American Council on Exercise. “Less outdoor activity and more chronic sitting causes four areas to tighten in almost everyone during the colder months.” Specialists refer to these four body areas as BACH: the Back (lower), Anterior deltoids (front of your shoulders), Calves, and Hamstrings (back of your thighs). Incorporate these four simple exercises into your weekly routine, however, and you may improve your balance and flexibility, quiet those creaky body parts, and decrease your risk of falls this winter and injuries come spring.



### STANDING WALL STRETCH

▲ **Loosens calf muscles and the Achilles tendon.**

Stand facing a wall with your hands flat against it. Take a small step back with your left foot. Your feet should be flat on the floor and your arms fully extended. Without raising your heels, gently bend your right knee until you feel a stretch in your left calf. Hold for 8 seconds, then switch positions (left foot forward, right foot back) and repeat with your right leg. Alternate from left to right until you've stretched each leg two or three times.

**TIP:** Don't look down or arch your back.

### SINGLE-LEG HAMSTRING STRETCH

▼ **Loosens the hamstrings, lower back and calves.**

Sit on the floor (or bed) with your legs extended straight in front of you. Bend your right knee and tuck your right foot along the inside of your left thigh. Slowly bend from your waist (don't hunch forward) and reach with both hands toward your left foot as far as you can. Hold for three deep breaths, then switch sides to reach toward your right foot. Alternate from left to right to stretch each side three or four times.

**TIP:** Instead of reaching, you can slide your hands down your extended leg to help track your progress as you become more flexible.



### KNEE-TO-CHEST STRETCH

▲ **Loosens the lower back.**

Lie flat on your back on a bed or exercise mat, knees bent and feet flat. Raise your left knee toward your chest and grab your leg below the knee with both hands. Keeping your back flat, gently pull your left leg into your chest as far as you comfortably can, hold for 3 to 5 seconds, then lower it back down. Repeat the stretch with your right leg. Stretch each side four to six times.

**TIP:** As you become more flexible, try grabbing both knees at the same time.

### DOORJAMB STRETCH

▼ **Loosens the anterior deltoids.**

Stand inside an open doorway and raise your left arm out to the side with your elbow bent at a 90-degree angle, upper arm parallel to the floor, fingers pointing upward. Place your left hand and upper arm flat along the frame of the doorway. Gently lean forward until you feel a slight stretch within the front of your shoulder and chest. Hold for 8 seconds, then switch positions to stretch your right arm. Alternate from left to right to stretch each side two or three times.

**TIP:** Keep your elbow in line with your shoulder.



Journalist Myatt Murphy has written nearly two dozen books on health and fitness.

Illustrations by Liam Eisenberg; Top: Photo illustration by Doug Chayka

# Six Memory Boosters

How to start remembering the small stuff, and the big stuff, more easily By LESLIE GOLDMAN



**T**HE NEXT TIME you lose your keys or blank on the title of the movie you saw last week, resist the urge to Google “signs of early dementia,” counsels Charan Ranganath, director of the Dynamic Memory Lab at the University of California at Davis and author of *Why We Remember: Unlocking Memory’s Power to Hold On to What Matters*.

We expect our memory to function as an archive of the past, Ranganath says. In reality, your brain selectively whittles and prunes what gets stored so it can perform its main jobs, which include planning for the future, building self-awareness, decision-making, imagining and communicating.

For most adults, momentarily

blanking on a friend’s name or misplacing a credit card don’t foreshadow imminent cognitive decline, though they do become increasingly common when we get older. Our knowledge of the world and our lived experience, on the other hand, “remain relatively intact in healthy aging,” and may even increase with age, says M. Natasha Rajah, a professor of psychology at Toronto Metropolitan University. That said, “recall and memory for contextual details (for example, where you parked your car in the lot) declines significantly in midlife. Menopause negatively affects this type of memory in some females too.”

Which is why so many of us are still poking around, trying to find

our keys. So consider these proven strategies to boost your memory and make everyday life a little easier.

## TURBOCHARGE TIP #1

### Reverse the ‘doorway effect.’

►When you enter the kitchen with a sense of purpose, only to freeze—*Why did I come in here?*—you’re experiencing what Ranganath calls an “event boundary,” commonly referred to as the “doorway effect.”

Whether you’re leaving a store, boarding a plane, walking from one room to another—any time your perception of your environment changes—your brain creates mental bookmarks called event boundaries that divide your day into distinct before-and-after sections for easier recall later on. If you’re in the living room when you realize you’ve left your eyeglasses in the kitchen, an event boundary is created the moment you enter the kitchen.

The problem, Ranganath says, is the brain is easily distracted by the fresh sights, sounds, thoughts and emotions accompanying any new event boundary, causing it to temporarily abandon the thoughts that led up to it. Unless you’re actively mentally repeating *get glasses from island* as you enter the kitchen, your brain will glom on to the new colors and smells (*Are those cookies?!*) and, *poof*, there goes your memory. (The same thing happens when you’re in the middle of a task and you stop to answer a phone call; you might struggle to remember what you were doing before the call came in.)

If you’ve lost the thread, try to recall what you were thinking about back in the previous room, or physically return to the room you were in.

## TURBOCHARGE TIP #2

### Use the pink Post-it trick.

►People often lose track of their most-used items because our novelty-loving brains tend to gloss over rou-



tine activities like plunking down a wallet.

“It’s not that you don’t have any memory of where you’ve put your glasses,” Ranganath says. “It’s that you’ve put your glasses in many, many places,” so searching for them is like scanning hundreds of yellow sticky notes and expecting one to jump out.

Be more intentional when setting down frequently misplaced items; mindfully notice the smell of the lilies or the crumbs on the table where you’re leaving your glasses. These details act like neon pink sticky notes in a sea of yellow ones.

*Paying attention to details about where you place things will help you find them.*



### TURBOCHARGE TIP #3

#### Become a monotasker.

► Thanks to modern technology, you can chat on the phone as you play a word game, check the likes on your Facebook post and dismiss the weather alert of incoming rain.

“Every time you shift back and forth between two tasks, there’s a lag as your brain reorients,” says Constance Schmidt, professor emeritus of psychology at Middle Tennessee State University, who studies media multitasking.

Even micro interruptions you think you’re ignoring, like a text that has barely popped up before you swipe it away, are disruptive. “For that fraction of a second,” Schmidt says, “your attention is captured, and interruptions have cognitive costs.” As Ranganath puts it: “Even

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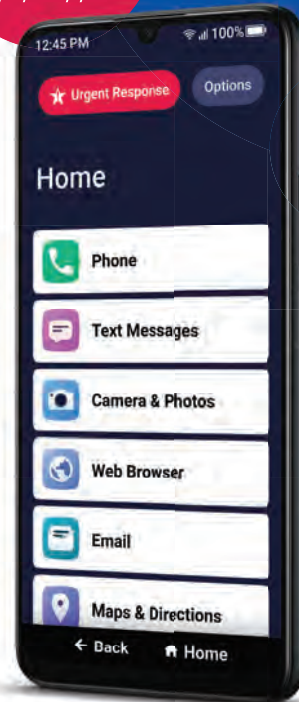
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# HOT DEALS

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## HealthyYou

if you don't check the text message, you've already lost the battle."

Turn off notifications and alerts except those deemed absolutely essential and practice focusing on one task at a time, blocking out time chunks for checking email or social media.

### TURBOCHARGE TIP #4 Read a novel.

►When evaluating new patients, one of the first questions Washington, D.C., neurologist and neuropsychiatrist Richard Restak asks is, "Are you much of a reader?" If the patient's response includes some variation of, "I used to read lots of fiction but not anymore," that's a red flag for potential cognitive decline, says Restak, a clinical professor of neurology at the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences and author of *The Complete Guide to Memory: The Science of Strengthening Your Mind*.

Fiction, he says, "is a challenge to your working memory," which has to follow a plot and keep track of characters. Your memory isn't nearly as challenged by nonfiction, which lets you skip around and skim.

Restak says you can flex your working memory by picking fiction over nonfiction (at 82, his current favorites include novels by Elizabeth Bowen and J.G. Ballard).

### TURBOCHARGE TIP #5 Create a giant strawberry and make it ride a cow.

►When five-time USA Memory Champion Nelson Dellis needs to memorize as many decks of cards as he can in an hour—his personal best is 20—he turns to mnemonics, a category of memory tools that includes creating outlandish visual images, like that cowboy berry. Dellis, whose grandmother passed away from Alzheimer's in 2009, says mnemonics work by turning mundane informa-



*Outrageous images help you remember mundane things.*

tion into dazzling visuals. A grocery list containing strawberries, milk and broccoli is boring. A giant strawberry riding a cow into a backyard planted with cartoonish broccoli trees sticks out.

### TURBOCHARGE TIP #6 Take more pictures with your mind.

►The next time you're treated to a gorgeous sunset, resist the urge to whip out your smartphone. Filtering life through a camera lens takes you out of the moment, Ranganath says, stealing "your attention away from the parts of the experience you really want to remember later on."

This isn't to say you can't film your grandchild playing soccer or your favorite band rocking out onstage. The point is to be choosy in what you document with your phone.

On family vacations, he tries to reserve the camera for capturing emotional high points or unique sights, like a particularly gaudy statue—although he usually insists on someone posing next to it. This way, instead of mindlessly documenting every meal or forced family photo, "you're documenting emotions."

Indeed, you're making a memory. ■

*Leslie Goldman writes on health for Cosmopolitan, Woman's Day and other publications.*



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# 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?

As we get older, health issues or even everyday aches, pains and stress can prevent us from enjoying life.

So what's keeping you from having a better quality of life?

Check all the conditions that apply to you.

## Personal Checklist:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arthritis       | <input type="checkbox"/> Dry Skin         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia        | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes        | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility Issues  |
| <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.

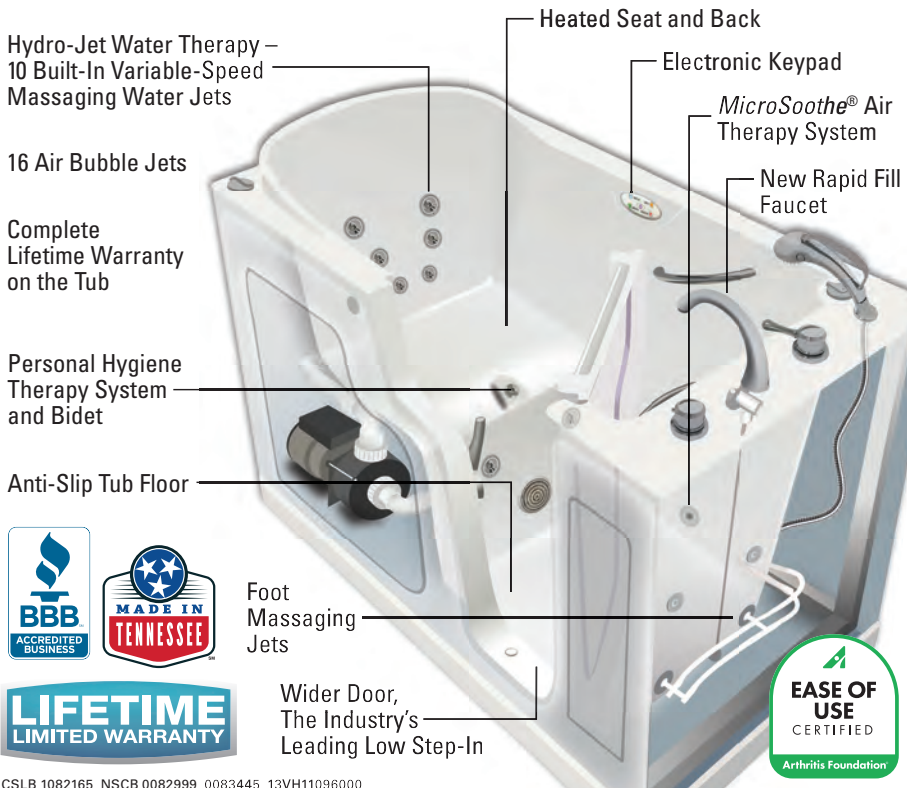
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It's got everything you should look for in a walk-in tub:

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- Pain-relieving therapy – Hydro massage jets target sore muscles and joints.
- Safety features – Low step-in, grab bars and more can help you bathe safely and maintain your independence.
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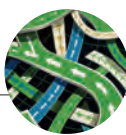
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# MoneySaver

## Canceled Checks

When Target stopped accepting paper checks at the register this past summer, it was one of many signs of this payment method's slow decline. Here are some more *By ELISE CEYRAL*

### Americans use checks less ...

Checks processed by the Federal Reserve

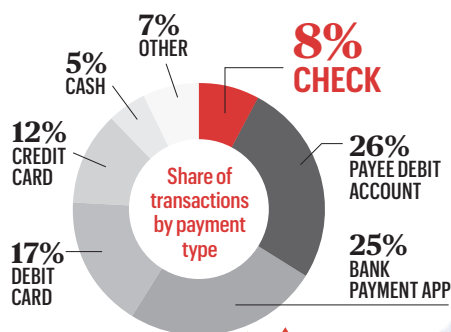


### ... and younger adults use them hardly at all.

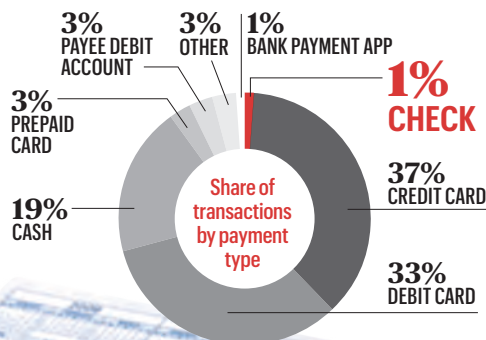
Percentage of Americans who wrote a check in one month (October 2023)



### Checks aren't popular for paying bills ...

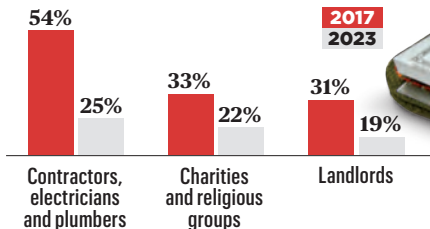


### ... and even less popular when making purchases.



### Although on the decline, checks are still key to how some organizations and people get paid.

Percentage of payments received as checks:



The largest check ever written, tied to the 1995 merger of two British drug companies, was for nearly £2.5 billion, or \$4 billion at the time.

If you're mailing a check, experts advise using the mail drop inside a post office, not a neighborhood mailbox.



### ... and check fraud went viral last summer.

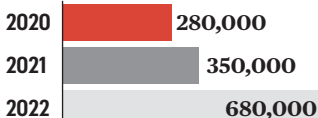
Inspired by TikTok videos, thousands of Chase Bank customers preyed on a programming glitch to deposit bad checks at ATMs, then withdrew the checks' face value in cash—up to tens of thousands of dollars.

This activity was "fraud, plain and simple," a Chase spokesperson had to explain, "regardless of what you see online."



### Mailing checks has become riskier than ever ...

Reports of check fraud potentially related to mail theft



# Tricky Truths That Can Lose You Money

*Some financial advice may be right ... but could still do you wrong*

By ALLAN ROTH

**A** **GRAIN OF TRUTH** can be as hazardous as a pack of lies. That's the problem with some financial pronouncements. Yes, they can be true at times, or even all the time. But that doesn't mean they apply to your situation. Over the years that I've worked as a financial planner, I have encountered a lot of these misleading statements—"tricky truths," I call them—you might hear from a scam artist, a financial firm making a sales pitch or even a well-meaning friend. These are some common ones that can lead you astray.

**1** **"Don't focus on investment costs; what really matters is investment performance."**

On the surface, this seems like the no-brainiest of truths: You get what you pay for, right? If you needed heart surgery, the last thing you would worry about is which surgeon was the cheapest. So if you want a high-performing investment, you should be ready to pony up high fees.

**BUT ...** A pile of research indicates that when you're investing, the



lower the expenses the better. As the investing website Morningstar put it, "The expense ratio is the most proven predictor of future fund returns—and our data agrees." Even the high fees charged by hedge funds—investment pools open only to wealthy investors—don't always pay off. Investor Warren Buffett famously won a bet in 2018 when, as he had predicted a decade earlier, a simple investment in the S&P 500—collectively, shares in 500 of the largest publicly traded U.S. companies—performed far better than a basket of hedge funds.

**2** **"If you had invested in this strategy back then, you would have doubled the return of the market."**

You'll hear this, or a variation of it, from a wide range of sources—maybe even a small voice in your head, kicking yourself for not having bought a high-flying stock before it took off. And yes, it's absolutely true that some investments, like Bitcoin and tech stocks such as Nvidia, have trounced the market at times.

**BUT ...** Looking in the rearview mirror tells you little about what's on

the road ahead. Multiple researchers have found that the continuing success of top-performing mutual funds is short-lived; for example, looking at the top 25 percent of actively managed U.S. stock funds in 2019, S&P Global found that none of them performed as well three years later. Individual stocks on a roll can persist in the short run but take on greater risk when the momentum peters out. Witness the stock of the movie chain AMC, which took less than a month in 2021 to shoot from roughly \$50 to \$275. In November it was at \$4.60.

You might also encounter this “you would have made a lot of money” assertion when a company launches a new investment fund. In the marketing materials, you may be presented with a chart or table showing how well this recently devised strategy would have performed over the past decade had it been in existence for all that time. Well, once you know how markets have behaved over the past ten years, it’s relatively easy to concoct a fund that would have been a star performer. The coming years, however, may not be as cooperative.

### **3 The problem with term life insurance is that you’re likely to pay premiums for many years and get nothing in return.**

Yes, the majority of term life policies will expire without a payout. Thus, I’ve often heard the argument that you should buy permanent insurance—whole life, universal life or variable life policies.

**BUT ...** Later in life, the costs of some of these policies can skyrocket, and in retirement you might not be able to afford the premium. Term life insurance is very cheap compared to permanent insurance, so I’d rather buy term life and invest the money I haven’t spent on premiums.

Another point: Just as I’m very happy to have no need to collect on



my home or car insurance, I’m quite OK having a term life policy expiring worthless.

### **4 “We have beaten the S&P 500 index over the past decade.”**

It’s certainly possible that the investment someone is trying to sell you has risen in value at a faster rate than the S&P 500, the most commonly used benchmark for U.S. stocks.

**BUT ...** Beating the index doesn’t mean you’re beating the market. That’s because the standard S&P value you see in the news measures only the price appreciation of the stocks in the index, not the dividends they pay. Since 1926, nearly one-third of the S&P’s total return has come from dividends; in the past 10 years, while the index has risen about 190 percent, the total return of the S&P, with dividends reinvested, was 250 percent. So comparing the total return of Brand X investment to an index’s price appreciation is like comparing apples to crab apples.

### **5 You insure your house and your car, so you should insure your nest egg.**

I agree, you should carry insurance to protect against big losses in case your house burns down or you crash your car. And, yes, you don’t want your savings to disappear.

**BUT ...** This line—often part of a sales pitch for certain financial products—fudges a big difference between traditional insurance and the “portfolio insurance” you’re being pitched: the cost. It can be very expensive to insure against a decline in the value of a portfolio. And when an insurer pays a claim on your auto or home policy, that money comes from premiums paid by other customers who haven’t suffered a loss. But with products you buy to ward off investment loss, the only one funding your protection is you, in the form of fees and limits on potential gains. A conservative portfolio will cushion you against losses for less.

### **6 Index investing is conservative and guaranteed to underperform the market.**

It’s true: Broad index investing done right will get the return of the market less fees. Let’s say you put \$10,000 in a total U.S. stock market index fund with an annual expense ratio of 0.05 percent. (That’s five-hundredths of 1 percent of your account value per year, a realistic fee for an index fund.) If the stock market goes up 7 percent in a year, you wouldn’t end up with \$10,700—your original investment plus a 7 percent return—but \$10,695. So yes, you’re \$5 short of the market performance.

**BUT ...** Compare that to putting the same \$10,000 into an actively managed mutual fund, where a more likely annual expense ratio is 0.65, or almost two-thirds of one percent. Assuming the fund’s holdings match the market return, you’d end up with about \$10,635, or around \$65 less than the market’s return. Compound that over several years and the higher cost of an actively managed fund will make a much bigger dent. ■

*Allan Roth is a longtime financial planner based in Colorado and a regular contributor to AARP.*



**Jean Chatzky**  
TO THE RESCUE

## Was This Estate Plan a Mistake?

*A trust would protect her assets, she was told. Then she began to have her doubts*



### THE PROBLEM

After her 44-year marriage ended in divorce, Carol Kuhnley attended an estate planning seminar in 2022. “I just wanted to rewrite my will,” she said. Kuhnley, 73, a retired medical technologist, got the new will plus something unexpected: an irrevocable trust. If she needed long-term care one day, she was told, Medicaid would pay, while the trust would shield her assets for her two grown daughters, one with special needs. “I had never heard of a Medicaid trust before,” she said. Instructed to move her assets into the trust, she retitled her house, then froze. “It’s intimidating,” she said. “It can’t be changed.” Her question for me: Was she doing the right thing?



Kuhnley wasn’t sure what she’d bought.



### THE ADVICE

First, some basics. If Medicaid is paying for your long-term care (Medicare doesn’t pay for nonmedical care), you’re limited to \$2,000 worth of assets in your name, not counting certain things, such as a car or a prepaid funeral. (Spouses can retain the family home and some additional assets.) To qualify for Medicaid without spending their nest egg on care, some people put assets into an irrevocable trust. Then the assets are no longer yours; they are held for the beneficiaries you designate. Importantly, there’s also a “lookback” rule: In nearly all

states, assets you put into an irrevocable trust or give away within five years of your application for Medicaid will temporarily disqualify you from the program.

To assist Kuhnley, I consulted John Midgett and Letha McDowell, experienced attorneys who practice elder law in Kuhnley’s home state of Virginia. (Regulations for implementing Medicaid are state-specific.) Some questions they addressed:

**Does a trust make financial sense for Kuhnley?** Maybe. Say she needs care five years from now. By one estimate, a semiprivate room in a Virginia nursing home will cost

\$10,700 a month. Over five years, that’s \$642,000—a calculation Midgett uses to determine the usefulness of Medicaid planning. Kuhnley’s retirement accounts and her home’s value add up to more than that, so she could benefit from a trust, Midgett thinks.

**What are the moral issues?** “You have to be able to say, ‘I’m going to give away this money so I can qualify for a poverty-level program.’ A lot of people can’t do that,” says Midgett. “But there’s also no requirement saying you can’t take advantage of the rules as they’re written.”

**What are the family dynamics?** If Kuhnley’s younger daughter had control of the trust, could Kuhnley trust her not to misuse the assets? She said yes, but also noted that the relationship between that daughter and the one with special needs is fraught. She wondered if she was setting them up for future trouble.

**Is this the only planning option?** No, McDowell said. Kuhnley can kick the can down the road. If she moved assets into a trust at the point she needed long-term care, McDowell said, she’d spend her own money for the first five years and then qualify for Medicaid. Anything left in the trust would be protected.



### THE OUTCOME

One last question turned out to be decisive: What took priority—an inheritance for her children or her own care? Kuhnley chose herself. “I should firstly be concerned about my own needs,” she said. So for now, she isn’t moving more assets to the trust. “I had these documents drawn up without asking enough questions and without understanding the answers to the questions I did ask,” Kuhnley says. You might think twice yourself before doing something similar. ■

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



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## CATCHING UP WITH CONNIE CHUNG

**AARP spoke with the 78-year-old barrier-breaking journalist about her new memoir, *Connie, on being the first woman coanchor of CBS Evening News and her blunt take on aging.***

**You write that you were shy as a child. What changed?** I grew up with four older sisters, and they all thought they were my mother. [Later] when they were off at work, or getting engaged,

getting married—I was at the core of the onion, and I could finally emerge.

**How did you deal with “the boys” in the newsroom?** When I knew something [racist or sexist] was about to be uttered, I would stage a preemptive strike.... They just didn’t know what to say if I dropped an f-bomb—this petite lotus blossom.

**How do you stay healthy?** The only way to avoid creaky bodies is to move. I walk, exercise, lift weights. —Christina Lanzito

AARP members can read the full interview at [aarp.org/quickquestions](http://aarp.org/quickquestions).



## GET THE RIGHT FIT TO STAY FIT!

WITH HUNDREDS of shoes designed for low-intensity workouts and walking, finding color and fashion is easy. Fit is the challenge.

“After fitting shoes for more than 40 years, I don’t believe one brand is better for older feet than several others, but I am firm in my belief that you should take pains to be fitted properly,” says Betsy Hughes, co-owner of Track Shack in Orlando, Florida. Here are her five tips to finding your personal best fit.

**Get expert advice.** Make sure you are evaluated and measured for the right shoe for you. The best place to get the fit you need is a specialty run/walk store in your area.



**Be prepared.** For a good fit, it’s best to shop later in the day—after your feet have swollen a bit—and bring your favorite socks.



**Find the right brand.** Popular industry brands include Brooks, New Balance and Hoka. New Balance is a great option for those with narrow feet. Brooks and Asics also have some width options. Try on at least three pairs of shoes and walk around the store for several minutes in each pair. Shoes should feel just right in the store and don’t need to be broken in.



**Consider price.** The average price for specialty athletic shoes is \$140. Ask about discounts your store may offer for gyms, medical and physical therapy patients, and military. Shoes are updated every 11 to 12 months, so you may find older options on sale.



**Know when to replace them.** Shoes worn for low-impact exercise should last six to 12 months. Avoid machine washing. Daily wear breaks shoes down within five to six months. Knee pain may be the first sign they need replacing.



## FIX YOUR BODY BREATHE BETTER

WE TAKE BREATHING for granted, but many of us are doing it abnormally as we get older, creating health issues. It is best to breathe through your nose and engage your diaphragm, not your chest. “It is slow, steady and low,” says Patrick McKeown, author of *Mouth Breather*. This helps calm the nervous system, improve oxygen exchange, filter the air and reduce the body’s stress response. Here are simple steps to improve your breathing.

**1. Breathe through your nose.** During sleep and exercise, keep your mouth closed. Need help? Try a special “mouth tape” that surrounds your mouth (but doesn’t block it) during sleep.



**2. Breathe light.** Take a light, silent breath in through your nose and exhale slowly.

**3. Breathe slow.** Reduce your respiratory rate to activate the relaxation response and bring balance to your body and mind.



**4. Breathe low.** Use your diaphragm, not your chest, to promote oxygen transfer, calm emotions and support overall health.

**PRO TIP:** A deviated septum or blockage in your nasal passages could make it harder to nose breathe. Talk with a health care provider if you suspect this. —Barbara Hannah Grufferman, host of the *Age Better* podcast



## What Writing Obits Taught Me About Living Today

By BRITANY ROBINSON

**M**Y PALMS were clammy the first time I called someone about an obituary. Her brother had died at just 56 years old, and she'd been tasked with writing about his life. She felt overwhelmed, so she hired me—a professional writer—to help. I was nervous that she would cry, and I wouldn't know how to comfort a stranger. But most of all, I worried I wouldn't be able to help her capture the life of someone who to me was a stranger. She told me she hadn't known her brother very well in the last decade or two of his life. He'd never married, didn't have kids. She wasn't sure what to say. But then she told me that in high school, he was a star football player with lots of friends. He was kind to everyone throughout life, she recalled. I asked her how he showed kindness. Whenever he got coffee on his way to work, he'd find out what everyone else wanted and often arrived with trays full of Starbucks.

In those answers, a real person began to emerge.

I've since written dozens of obituaries. I know the questions that can help surface those memories. But here's my secret: It doesn't really matter if you remember when she retired or how many years he was married. My real goal is to trigger memories of how that person made others feel, how they saw the world, or how they changed it—in big or small ways.

Maybe they saved lives as a surgeon. Or maybe they brought coffee.

When talking with a woman about her mother, she said her mom had lived a traumatic life. Several marriages had ended badly. Then I asked what made her mom smile. "Oh!" There it was. She had a collection of teddy bears, and she smiled brightest when her grandkids came and played with the bears. Then the daughter recalled the sweet smell of baked beans simmering on her mom's stove, just in case the kids stopped by.

The first time I cried on one of these calls was when another daughter told me her father wasn't good at showing affection, but he always carried lozenges for his wife, who had a chronic cough. After he died, the daughter pulled fistfuls of crumpled wax papers from his coat pockets.

People forget years, names and accolades. They are more likely to remember when your best side made them smile. I think often about those moments people recalled. Whenever I get overwhelmed by the bigness of life and the expectations we often place on ourselves, I try to remember that it's the little things that stick with people.

Perhaps, years from now, someone will write my obituary. I'll be content if someone recalls I tried to help people remember what matters.

*Britany Robinson writes about the environment and travel as well as eulogies and obituaries. Her work has been published by The New York Times and Outside Magazine.*

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# Money Tips for a Happy New Year

By BETH BRAVERMAN

**I**MPROVING ONE'S money situation is a perennially popular New Year's resolution. Are you 70-plus? Better your bottom line in 2025 with these expert tips.

**> Appeal your IRMAA.** The amount you pay for Medicare may include an income-related monthly adjustment amount (IRMAA), essentially a surcharge for high earners. If you (or your spouse) recently retired, you may be able to file a "work stoppage" appeal with the Social Security Administration to potentially get the surcharge reduced, says Geoffrey Owen, a CFP at Front Porch Financial Advisory.

**> Think ahead on RMDs.** Under new rules, you don't have to start taking money out of your tax-advantaged retirement accounts until age 73. But if you expect that your required minimum distributions will push you into a higher tax bracket when you reach that age, consider making an earlier withdrawal. You'll pay taxes now,

but likely reduce the hit later. **> Automatically pay some of your taxes.** Many people aren't aware that the Social Security Administration can withhold federal taxes from their monthly checks, says Rob Greenman, a CFP in Portland, Oregon. That can spread the pain.

**> Pay down the right debt.** If you have high-interest credit card debt, prioritize paying that down as quickly as possible. But having a low, fixed-rate mortgage, even in your 70s, can be smart, holistic financial planning, Greenman says.

**> Revisit your portfolio allocation.** Even at age 70 and older, you may still need growth in your portfolio. Owen suggests older investors get more conservative within their stock allocation, but stay in equity stocks past their 70s.



## Enjoy Getting Soaked

Four Hot (Springs) Getaways

THERE ARE ROUGHLY 250 commercial hot springs across the United States. The soothing waters and minerals can help with joint pain, reduce symptoms of arthritis, and aid better sleep. Here are four options.



### Castle Hot Springs

Morristown, Ariz.

Castle Hot Springs, about 52 miles outside Phoenix, has three man-made hot spring pools, ranging in temperature from 85 to 106 degrees. These pools offer "contrast therapy"—plunging into a cold pool between hot-water soaks.

### Murrieta Hot Springs Resort

Murrieta, Calif.

Located about 65 miles from San Diego, the site has more than 40 thermal water pools arranged around a lake and in a bathhouse. The waters range in temperature from about 98 to 104 degrees.



### Riverbend Hot Springs

Truth or Consequences, New Mexico

Go for an affordable soak on the banks of the Rio Grande, with choices of private or more-public pools. Their mineral-rich waters are pumped into pools from deep in the Earth.

### Hot Springs National Park

Hot Springs, Ark.

Bathhouse Row has eight historic bathhouse buildings, two of which are available for indoor soaking in their thermal waters. Buckstaff Bathhouse offers a "traditional" bathing experience in private whirlpool tubs.



Adapted from a Diana Ballon article in AARP's The Ethel e-newsletter. Subscribe for free at [aarpethel.com](http://aarpethel.com).

### WHAT A WHOPPER!

In December 1954, the first Burger King franchise opened in Miami—four months before the first McDonald's franchise in Illinois. Eating would never be the same.



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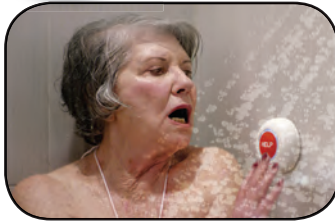
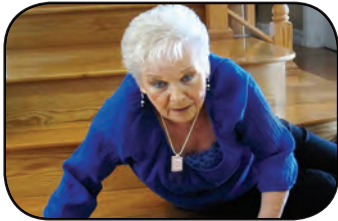


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Michelle Yeoh, photographed  
for AARP in Milan on  
September 21, 2024





# Michelle Yeoh Has Long Said Enough Is Never Enough— “I want more!”

Now the boundlessly energetic movie star is hinting she may try to slow down. But can she? Will she?

By Rebecca Sun

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PÅL HANSEN

**S**HORTLY AFTER she turned 60, Michelle Yeoh won her first Academy Award and got married. “We had the Oscars in March, then in July we married in Geneva. At the end of the year, we celebrated with family and close friends in Hong Kong and Malaysia. It was a crazy year,” the actress says of her 2023 adventures with her longtime partner and now husband, Jean Todt. “It was all the different levels of existence—getting the Oscar, that star you’ve always tried to reach for, and then being married—all aligning.”

And that multifaceted state of being—in which everything feels like it is happening, everywhere, all at once, one could say—has hardly abated. In the nearly two years since winning Best Actress for *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, the jet-setting icon, now 62, has released four films, including the *Wicked* musical adaptation (in theaters November 22) and three television series, and shot two major upcoming features: *Avatar 4* and *Star Trek: Section 31*. She also wrote a *New York Times* op-ed on behalf of the United Nations Development Program, for which she is a goodwill ambassador; received the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom; and handed out medals this summer in Paris as a recently elected member of the International Olympic Committee.

“I’m always working. I suddenly realized this year that I’ve been working too much,” Yeoh says over Zoom from her hotel suite in Prague, where she is—what else?—working, this time on the series *Blade Runner 2099*, in which she’ll star as a replicant near the end of her life.

But that plot couldn’t be farther from Yeoh’s current trajectory. “Michelle Yeoh’s been preparing for this moment her entire career,” says her *Everything Everywhere* costar and now mutually dubbed “bae” Jamie Lee Curtis, a fellow 60-something acting vet experiencing a similar bounty of roles and overdue acclaim. “Decades and decades of suiting up and showing up, and we both now have the opportunity to step into a new level of work. It’s a testament to her perseverance, her belief in herself and her understanding that these moments don’t come very often, and you must take full advantage of them.”

For 40 years, Michelle Yeoh has epitomized untouchable cool—from her early days as the first lady of 1980s and ’90s Hong Kong action cinema, to her breakout crossover roles as a Bond girl more than holding her own in 1997’s

*Tomorrow Never Dies* and a stoic martial arts master in 2000's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, to her latter-day reemergence as an ice queen of a prospective mother-in-law in 2018's *Crazy Rich Asians*. And on magazine covers and red carpets around the world—glittering in priceless jewels and haute couture (she is currently a brand ambassador for both Balenciaga and Helena Rubinstein)—she radiates unfazed glamour.

The real Yeoh is indeed graceful and poised—her regal bearing gives away her daily regimen of honing her body into the exquisite instrument that it is, and even the most subtle lift of an arm or flick of a wrist instantly conjures up a decades-long highlight reel of coolly dispatching bad guys. Yet for a film legend who is so undeniably, unrelatably fabulous (the iconic emerald engagement ring featured in *Crazy Rich Asians* was famously her own, after she deemed none of the options procured by the costume department suitable), she exudes a genuine warmth and down-to-earth approachability that feels surprisingly familial.

“Everywhere she goes, she’s very nurturing, and she feels very much like the matriarch of every situation she’s in,” *Everything Everywhere* co-director Daniel Kwan told me in 2022. And I can confirm that: Since we first met six years ago, I’ve had the fortune to spend time with Yeoh in one-on-one interviews, on set and at photo shoots, screenings and parties. Each time, I am struck by how much she sounds and looks like the various Asian women who have been a part of my upbringing; it’s like catching up with a favorite aunt who also happens to be a massive movie star.

Her Oscar season coincided with *Wicked*'s filming schedule, so she spent the winter of 2022 flying between a London soundstage and obligatory campaign stops that ranged from L.A. awards ceremonies to New York

talk shows. During that span, no matter where she was, she would have care packages sent to *Wicked* director Jon M. Chu and his family, who were on location with him in the U.K. “She would always write notes: ‘This is for your babies,’ ‘Take care of Kristin,’” says Chu of his wife, who was expecting their fourth child at the time. “That’s her in a nutshell.”

Yeoh was initially hesitant to sign on to the Broadway adaptation when Chu first asked her to read the script. “Jon, it’s a musical!” she told him. “You know I don’t sing, right?”

She received in response a video from the film’s stars, Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande: “You must come and join us!” they insisted from the rehearsal room. “It’s imperative!” So Yeoh—who once told me she has too much stage fright to do live theater—signed on for her first musical in the role of Madame Morrible, the headmistress of the magical university where the two future witches first meet.

“I’ve been around her long enough to know that she has great rhythm, great tone, and that she can sing,” says Chu. “She was scared, but she dove headfirst into vocal training. She did a great job.”



—

*“The truth is I love what I do. I thrive on working. I love being with creative people. I thrive on being challenged—because then I am learning, I am evolving.”*

Previous spread: Producer: Patrick Sampson; wardrobe stylist: Dana Gianfrin/A Creative Partner; hair stylist: Robert Vetterz/The Wall Group; makeup artist: Soo Park/The Wall Group



**C**HU FIRST DIRECTED Yeoh in *Crazy Rich Asians*, the breakout rom-com that showed Michelle Yeoh could be a badass without pulling off a single flying kick. As Eleanor Young, she is the intimidating, disapproving mother of the leading man, and in less skillful hands, the character could easily have been a caricatured antagonist. But Yeoh was adamant that her portrayal honor the dignity and selfless strength of all the Asian women in her life.

“Eleanor was very representative of some of the most beautiful women I’ve met in Asia who take a second seat, because that’s how you manage your husband’s position in the society,” she told me then.

Her own father was a respected and affluent statesman back in Malaysia, a U.K.-educated lawyer who also ran a successful motor coach company and served for a decade in the Malaysian Senate. “He was my hero, because he was the stabilizing factor in our lives,” says Yeoh. “My mom is more happy-go-lucky. I was blessed with a very balanced family.”

Yeoh says her father, who died in 2014, always encouraged his children to follow their own paths. “There will be no point where you turn around and say, ‘I wanted to do this, but you said I had to do that,’” he told his daughter. For the younger Yeoh, plan A was to eventually have her own ballet school. She had trained as a dancer since the age of 4, and physical prowess ran in the family: “My mom is the reason we are so sporty and outgoing. She played badminton until she was in her 70s, and now in her 80s she is still dancing and singing.”

But a back injury sustained while studying at the Royal Academy of Dance in London set Yeoh on a different course. She ultimately switched her major to creative arts, with a minor in drama, and at 22 was cast in a Hong Kong TV commercial opposite Jackie Chan. Shortly afterward, a film production company offered her a contract.

“In your head, all these Chinese parents go, ‘Acting? Nooo!’” Yeoh says. “But my dad’s support gave me confidence as a young adult trying to do new things, knowing that if I went to Hong Kong and failed miserably, I could go home and decide again what I wanted to do.”

She never had to. It took just a year for Yeoh to hit it big with her first starring role, in 1985’s *Yes, Madam*, which kick-started Hong Kong’s “girls with guns” action subgenre. “My Hong Kong career was really a baptism by fire,” she recalls. She made three more movies over the next two years, then married her film production company’s cofounder when she was 25. Cue Plan B: Retire from show business and dedicate herself to raising the children they would inevitably have. *Her* decision, she always emphasizes, was borne out of both what she calls an inability to multitask moviemaking and parenting as well as a lifelong dream of being a mother. But she and her husband were unable to conceive.

“I knew my ex really wanted a big family,” she told Gwyneth Paltrow on her *Goop* podcast earlier this year. “I was looking at myself going, ‘Ten years down the road, you

## 5 Faces of Michelle Yeoh

A sampling of the roles and movies that led inevitably to her Oscar moment



**AS WAI LIN**  
*Tomorrow Never Dies*  
(1997)



**AS YU SHU LIEN**  
*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000)



**AS MAMEHA**  
*Memoirs of a Geisha*  
(2005)



**AS ELEANOR YOUNG**  
*Crazy Rich Asians*  
(2018)



**AS EVELYN WANG**  
*Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022)

can’t have [a child], what are we gonna do?’ In hindsight it was the smart thing to step away and not pretend that it will work out. Yes, we did love each other, but there were expectations. So it was a tough, tough thing.”

After her divorce, Yeoh unretired and found success again almost immediately, this time with the 1992 classic *Police Story 3: Supercop*, in which she went death-defying stunt for death-defying stunt with Chan. A few years later, having established herself as one of Hong Kong’s top stars, a producer friend encouraged her to go West.

“I was like, why?” she recalls. “I was having a ball in Hong Kong. I have my extended family there, there’s the sea, the mountains, the food—why go to L.A.?” Eventually she relented: “Why not? Nothing to lose, right?”

Hollywood was a rude awakening. “People started saying, ‘You’re a minority!’ How did I suddenly become a minority? There are how many billions of us around the world?” she says. “Also I come from Malaysia, where we are multiracial, just different cultures in a beautiful country.”

The trip wasn’t a total wash—she met the Bond film executives, which eventually led to landing the female lead in *Tomorrow Never Dies*. But Yeoh had to endure her share of microaggressions, like auditions that always had to justify an Asian character’s ethnicity (“The scripts always had to explain why a Chinese person was there. Oh God, she’s

## How I Stay Fit

**Y**OUR BODY is like your mind—it needs to be worked. Once it's dormant, it will take a while to get it cranked up again, so I stay active. And that's all about practice. It's learning to use your time and space, incorporating exercise into your lifestyle.

The reason I'm still flexible is because I stretch every day. If I'm on the plane, I'm doing leg lifts. I sometimes stretch on a bed, where my body is supported. I shadow box.

I stretch in the bathroom when I brush my teeth. I stretch when I'm on the phone. When I'm not on a video call, I'll do my squats and lifts.

Because of the work I've done, I've had some injuries, so I'm more mindful. Also, with age, you have to work on your muscles and bone density, and need to eat well, get the proper rest and the right forms of exercise.

Filming *Blade Runner 2099* [Prime Video, tentatively set for a 2025 release] has been so much fun. Just two days ago we were doing an action sequence.

Sometimes there is no time for rehearsals. Fortunately, the way I was trained in Hong Kong was without rehearsals anyway. We'd get on the set, were told what we were doing, and we'd do it.

A stuntperson I was doing a scene with hadn't fought with me before and wanted to be careful because God forbid you hurt the actor. He said, "I'm going to reach for you to see how fast you react."

The stunt coordinator was someone I had worked with before and he said to him, "Try her!" He came at me, and my reaction was very fast. That comes with constant practice. Once you know the basics, you can string moves together.

just a weather reporter!") and constant amazement at her grasp of English (which is part of the mandatory curriculum in Malaysian schools). "I finally started saying, 'The flight over here was 13 hours, so I learned English,'" she laughs. "I didn't let them get me down."

**IN EARLY 2022** on the eve of *Everything Everywhere's* release, Yeoh told me that she and Todt, 78, a French auto racing executive (who now serves as the UN's special envoy for road safety), were determined to finally tie the knot in the coming year. The two had been engaged since 2004, within a month of their first meeting in Shanghai at an event for Ferrari; Todt was then the CEO. They came close to marrying in 2014, but their wedding was postponed upon the passing of Yeoh's father. "Jean said, 'You don't want to marry me,'" she recalls. "'Oh yes, I do want to marry you!' He kept saying, 'Why aren't we doing it?' So finally, I said, 'OK, OK, let's get the lawyers. Let's go and do it!'"

It wasn't intentional that the wedding would serve as the cherry on top of Yeoh's banner year. The couple spent nearly two years gathering all the required documentation for a marriage license in Geneva, Switzerland, where they have



lived since 2009. (Todt was president of international motor sports' governing body FIA, which has an office there, until 2021.) The ceremony in July 2023 took place at a civil register office, which Yeoh imagined would be a simple "sign at the counter" affair. Even after her inner circle insisted on flying out to bear witness, she told them to expect a casual dress code. That is, until her close friend Diego Della Valle, the owner of the Schiaparelli design house, balked. "No! You're not getting married in a white shirt!" he exclaimed, dispatching his label's creative director to fashion a custom ivory corseted bridal gown for the occasion.

Yeoh's marriage is different from the traditional bond she had envisioned as a younger woman. "Jean travels a lot. I'm always working," she says. "But in a relationship, most important is the respect you show each other for what you do.

That's been very good for Jean and me."

She acknowledges that this appreciation has come in part from meeting later in life and also from wisdom gained by making mistakes and learning from them. (Todt was also previously married.) "I don't think anybody has a perfect life," says Yeoh, who remains friends with her ex-husband; his eldest daughter is one of her godchildren. "What is perfection? It's learning, evolving and developing that gets you to a place where you are content and at peace."

**AS EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE** gained traction in theaters, Yeoh found herself, after nearly four decades and more than 50 movies, grappling with an unfamiliar role: awards darling. "I'm a mature woman, but I was a rookie at Oscar campaigning. Everybody else had been there for so long," she says of such veterans as her fellow nominees Cate Blanchett and Michelle Williams.

Fortunately, Yeoh says, filming *Wicked* was a perfect antidote to the awards hoopla, "and reminded me not just of the glitz, but the hard work of making a movie."

Yeoh was the front-runner going into Oscars night, but after sitting through most of the ceremony in the front row, she was suddenly plagued by nerves. "It struck me: My mom is at the viewing party in Kuala Lumpur with her friends and family. There's so many of them, they got dressed up, they arranged that whole event. What if I lose?" she says.

If you rewatch the clip, just before the winner's announcement, you can see the anxiety rippling beneath Yeoh's usually serene facade. The fear wasn't of losing the individual recognition—it was of letting down her community. Fortunately for everyone involved, we live in the version of the universe where Yeoh did win the Academy Award for best actress, the first Asian woman ever to do so. "Just think of all the shoulders I'm standing on," she says of Asian performers who preceded her in Hollywood. "It just landed on me to have the microphone and say we deserve to be here. It's not a responsibility; it's a necessity to speak out."

Director Jon Chu says Yeoh's Oscar coronation hasn't changed her at all. "Zero ego has come out of this. Her purity of focus on craft is as strong as it was before," he says. "I think it just gave her a hug from everyone, saying, 'We recognize you and we see you.'"

Toward the end of her acceptance speech she exhorted on behalf of all women—"Ladies, don't let anybody tell you you are ever past your prime"—an expression that struck many listeners as particularly pointed. "It was important for me to say that, because when you allow that to happen, they put you in a box," she explains now. "I mean, when you're in your [late] 30s, if you're pregnant, it's a geriatric pregnancy! Why is it that numbers matter so much, especially for women? It seems like the clock is ticking a lot faster for us."

**T**HE OSCAR WIN has ensured that Yeoh is busier than ever, with film and TV projects, her brand commitments, her advocacy work. "I have all my scripts around me, stacks of them, and I'm trying to memorize the lines. When I was a kid in school I would say, 'One day I won't have to study anymore.' Guess what I'm doing at 62?" she laughs. "Studying!"

She concedes she is working too much, even by her manic standards. "I need to stop and enjoy the people around me," says Yeoh of her found and chosen family, which includes six godchildren as well as a new grandchild born to Todt's son and his partner.

"I have to at some point make a conscious decision to take at least a month off to spend time with family back in Malaysia, hopefully visit family in Hong Kong," she hazards, somewhat unconvincingly.

"The truth is, I love what I do," Yeoh continues with a sigh, "Even though I say I work too much, I thrive on working. I love being with creative people. I thrive on being challenged, because then I am learning, I am evolving."

Jamie Lee Curtis, who at age 64 won her own first Oscar, also for *Everything Everywhere*, understands. "The older we get, the more sedentary and isolated we get, because often we are no longer allowed to do the work that brought us into contact with others," Curtis explains. "But people like Michelle and I, who are artists, must take advantage of this moment, and sacrifice a quieter time. She is taking full advantage of it in every aspect of her work: humanitarian, philanthropic, advertising, creative."

It's fitting that *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, the movie that changed Yeoh's life in a lifetime full of inflection points, is one that contemplates the paths not taken. What would Yeoh's younger selves—the aspiring ballerina, the anticipatory stay-at-home mom—think of the journey she ultimately embarked on?

"That is a good question. When you're younger, you're too busy living it up to think about that. I went to England in my teens, then graduated and moved to Hong Kong. It was climbing and moving forward and falling down and getting up, getting new opportunities, suddenly doing action movies," she reflects. "I'm not the kind of person who thinks, 'Oh, I should have done that.' I wouldn't be where I am today."

"My dad always said to me: 'I wish you enough,'" she continues. "When I was young, I would say, 'No, I don't want to have enough! I want more!' Now I understand. It's learning to be content. Live with an open hand, not a tight fist." ■

*Los Angeles-based writer Rebecca Sun, a former senior editor at The Hollywood Reporter, was, in 2023, the inaugural recipient of the Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment's Trailblazer Award.*



### Michelle Yeoh Keeps On Keeping On

For an exclusive video examining the actress's peripatetic career and life, scan this code with your phone or visit [aarp.org/michelleyeoh](http://aarp.org/michelleyeoh).



# *Where to Go* *in 2025*

We scoured the globe for the best travel destinations for older Americans. Whether you're into history, nature, relaxation or getting the most for your money, these are the places to be in the coming year. **By Ken Budd**

Main photo: Sasha Israel



Boston Public Garden

## WHY GO To relive the spirit of '75

**IN ANOTHER YEAR**, we'll all be celebrating the nation's semiquincentennial. What's that? The 250th anniversary of the 1776 signing of the Declaration of Independence. But lest we forget, the Revolutionary War's first shots were fired in 1775. And that 250th anniversary warrants a trip to Boston this year.

**DON'T MISS**  
The historic charm of the Charlestown neighborhood.

Start with a reenactment of Paul Revere's ride on April 18 at the Hancock-Clarke House in Lexington, about 15 miles northwest of Boston. On



Bunker Hill reenactors



Bunker Hill Monument

April 19, the towns of Lexington and Concord will host reenactments and parades. (Stop by the Concord Museum to see one of the lanterns that hung in Old North Church and indicated "two if by sea.") The spirit of '75 festivities continue in mid-June with the anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill in Boston's Charlestown neighborhood. Commemorations will include a parade and remembrance events. Leave time to wander the cobblestone streets and drink a Sam Adams at the Warren Tavern, built in 1780 after the British torched Charlestown, and visited by George Washington and Paul Revere.

Amid the revelry, it's also a good time to remember the sacrifices of our American predecessors, as thousands of troops died in the Revolution. "It's mind-boggling," says Boston historian and tour guide Charles Bahne. "This is where these people stood, they made a stand, and they gave birth to our nation."

LONDON

WHY GO

## The 80th anniversary of V-E Day

**IN LONDON'S** 2,000-year history, Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day) ranks as the city's biggest bash. On May 7, 1945, news broke of the end of World War II hostilities in Europe. The celebrations started immediately.

The 80th anniversary on May 8, 2025, won't be quite so boisterous, but still special.

**DON'T MISS**  
The French House pub, a gathering place for members of the French resistance.

"V-E Day is one of those occasions where Britain loses its reserve somewhat and parties," says Paul Gass, 52, who served in the Royal Air Force and now works for

the American Red Cross in New Jersey. "Patriotic bunting, union flags, parades, singing wartime songs and dancing to American big band music—the whole day stirs deep-seated pride."

Start with a visit to Churchill War Rooms, then head to locations where crowds partied in 1945, from Piccadilly Circus to Trafalgar Square. Next, pay your respects at St. Paul's Cathedral—the Anglican church held 10 straight services attended by thousands on V-E Day—and stroll to Buckingham Palace, where Winston Churchill and the royal family admired the celebrating throngs from the balcony.



Big Ben



A view of the northern lights

## WHY GO Aurora borealis activity may reach its highest levels of visibility in a decade

MANY A WEARY traveler has been disappointed on a trek to view the northern lights. Celestial phenomena can be unpredictable. So you might see dazzling colors in the night sky, or you might just see night sky.

But in 2025, your odds of a sighting are greater than normal. Aurora borealis activity may reach its highest levels since 2014, and Fairbanks is a prime spot for the atmospheric show. The city sits under the “auroral oval,” a zone with concentrated activity. And Fairbanks’ low precipitation and distance from coastal areas make for consistently clear nights.

How good are the odds? Data suggests about a 90 percent chance of seeing the northern lights over a

three-night stay, according to the University of Alaska Fairbanks’ Geophysical Institute. Any park or open area works to see the lights, but many visitors mix the frigid nights with a warm environment. At the Chena Hot Springs Resort, about 60 miles northeast of Fairbanks, you can watch the skies while relaxing in hot springs.

Amateur astronomer Todd Thalimer, 53, of Parker, Colorado, made the trek in 2023 and saw the lights

### DON'T MISS

**Borealis Basecamp's igloos let you gaze at the sky from bed.**

four times. “The aurora was dancing like waves, bright green and pink and red. I’ve seen a lot of stuff in the universe, but that one was really like ... wow.”



### WHY GO

## To celebrate a king of the blues

IN 2025, THIS American music mecca is staging a celebration for a musical king. September 16 will mark the 100th anniversary of B.B. King’s birth. Head to the famous Beale Street, where B.B. King’s Blues Club will celebrate on September 18 with a musical tribute featuring members of King’s band.

When King arrived from Mississippi in 1946, Beale Street was the vibrant hub of Memphis’s Black cultural scene. He quickly landed a radio DJ gig as “The Beale Street Blues Boy” (later shortened to B.B.) and built a fan base playing the guitar in local clubs. These

Clockwise from left: Phil Kingsley/Courtesy Borealis Basecamp; Craig Thompson/Courtesy Overton Park Shell; Giovanni Simeoni/Stock



Sun Studio Cafe

days, tourists swarm Beale Street, including the Rum Boogie Cafe and King's namesake blues club.

Memphis also boasts a number of music sites to visit in homage to King. You can see Sun Studio, where he recorded (as did Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis), and check out the Memphis Rock 'n' Soul Museum and the Stax Museum of American Soul Music. But perhaps the best way to celebrate is by diving into the city's still-thriving music scene. One must-visit spot is the outdoor Overton Park Shell. Built as a Works Progress Administration project in 1936, the amphitheater hosted

**DON'T MISS**

**The Green Room, an under-the-radar intimate venue.**

Elvis' historic debut performance in 1954 (he opened for Slim Whitman) and offers free concerts each year from May through October and a

backstage museum experience year-round.

To escape the tourists, head to Bar DKDC (the locals say it stands for "don't know, don't care"). "It's my favorite spot for cool, live music. It gets not just local artists but touring artists that don't mind playing tiny spaces," says Cole Early, Overton Park Shell's content and archives manager and a

Memphis music enthusiast and self-described "music fanatic." "It's a well-kept secret. Many Memphians have no clue about it."

Early raves, too, about Crosstown's little-known Memphis Listening Lab, a music library with a collection of 35,000 45-rpm singles, 15,000 LPs and 25,000 CDs. Guests can visit the lab's Sound-Room, make a selection and relax in a comfy chair. "It's the ultimate place for vinyl and music nerds," Early says.



From top: Getty Images; Yedid Levy



Ushuaia, Argentina



**WHY GO** **A favorable exchange rate**

**WHEN DIPPING INTO** your savings account to take an international vacation, one key consideration is affordability. So when weighing where to travel, research the strength of the dollar compared to local currency for more purchasing power.

Argentina is a popular destination that is easy to reach, and it typically has the best exchange rate to the dollar in the Americas, a recent report from NetVoucherCodes found.

But Argentina offers more than inexpensive empanadas. You'll find glaciers, massive mountains and miles of Atlantic coastline.

**DON'T MISS**

**Buenos Aires, known as "the Paris of South America."**

Hikers will love Ushuaia, the world's southernmost city, and El Chaltén, a Patagonian town near the Parque Nacional Los Glaciares. Iguazú Falls is part of a World Heritage Site that straddles the border with Brazil. Birders flock to Parque Nacional Iberá to spot more than 300 species, from cuckoos to kingfishers.

Among South America's most-visited cities, Buenos Aires boasts in-



Buenos Aires street musician

teresting colonial-style architecture and a culture that "combines European heritage with Latin passion," says Camila Otaño, a city tour guide. She recommends a walk in the Palermo Soho and Villa Crespo neighborhoods to see the city's dynamic street art.

Another benefit to Argentina: No "overtourism," says tour guide and travel consultant Verónica Ducrey. Less congestion can make a trip more pleasant for older travelers—and allows more chances to get to know the locals. "We are passionate and outspoken, and we are friendly, welcoming, warm," Ducrey says of porteños, as Buenos Aires residents are called. "You'll make friends on day one in this city and in the whole country."



**WHY GO** **A big new U.S. theme park with multigenerational appeal**

**LOOKING FOR A TRIP** to impress the grandkids? In 2025, Universal opens its new Epic Universe theme park, with Mario and Harry Potter at the center of this magic, well, not kingdom. Super Nintendo World and the WIZARDING World of Harry Potter—Ministry of Magic are two of five sec-

tions of the theme park.

The WIZARDING World recreates 1920s Paris from the *Fantastic Beasts* films and whooshes visitors to the 1990s British Ministry via a Métro-Floo (Potter geeks will understand) for an adventure. You'll see the trial of villain Dolores Umbridge, and when she



tries to escape, you'll chase her while riding in omnidirectional lifts and dodging attacks from Death Eaters.

Then step into video game environments at Super Nintendo World, with rides and attractions focused around

**DON'T MISS**

**Mario Kart: Bowser's Challenge**, a race like the video game.

Mario Kart and Donkey Kong.

Epic Universe's other worlds include Celestial Park (the park's central hub), and How to Train Your Dragon—

Isle of Berk, based on the family-friendly film series. Many fans, however, are most intrigued by Dark Universe world, which focuses on the studio's classic creatures, from Frankenstein's monster to the Wolf Man.

"Monsters are to Universal what princesses are to Disney," says Robert Niles, founder and editor of ThemeParkInsider.com. "A lot of people are circling that new land as the one they're most excited about."

**GET IN GEAR** *These travel products can help ease your trip*



**Lightweight backpacks**

Some airlines now charge to use the overhead bin.

For shorter trips, consider taking a lightweight travel backpack. Many now offer ample space but still fit under the seat.



**Underseat personal items**

Many luggage companies have developed rolling bags that are small enough to fit under plane seats. Some have removable wheels to ensure they meet airline dimension rules.



**Neck pillows**

Some newer variations include straps that you can tie to your headrest to prevent your head from bobbing, or a flat back that makes it easier to rest the pillow against the seat.



**Collapsible water bottles**

It's important to stay hydrated when traveling, especially with dry airplane cabin air. Try a collapsible water bottle. Some even include filters for better-quality sips.

—Elise Ceyral





Aix-en-Provence,  
Bouches-du-Rhône,  
France

## WHY GO An emerging hot spot for women seeking out rich experiences

ON A RECENT trip through France, Sacha Cohen saw Loire Valley châteaux. And Parisian art. And something else intriguing: Lots of women like her.

“Midlife women are flocking to the region,” says Cohen, a 55-year-old writer from Arlington, Virginia, who blogs about France on her site, *A Good Vintage*. The appeal isn’t just

**DON'T MISS**  
Discovering a relaxing spot. This isn't a place for hurried sightseeing.

about strolling quaint boulevards and nibbling Brie at cafes. It’s about experiencing a society that values women over 50. “The overall appreciation of older women is more

apparent to me there than at home.” Older women stride confidently in public spaces, Cohen says, whether

they’re power walking in parks, biking down cobblestone streets or enjoying “long unapologetic lunches.” As one 67-year-old expat told her, sexism and ageism are not as prevalent in France, and older women are considered interesting because they have life experiences. Cohen also appreciates the slower pace of life in France. “There’s less focus on work and more on pleasure.”

Ready to enjoy some indulgent, French-style slowness? Head to Provence and wander the outdoor markets in towns such as Aix-en-Provence and Cassis. Pack a lunch and visit one of the plentiful gardens



Port of Cassis

or parks. “There’s nothing better than a picnic al fresco with wine and cheese and watching the world go by,” Cohen says. “I think women, as we get older, we’re looking for more relaxing, peaceful places to travel that have culture and good food and good wine and art. All of those things come together in a place like Provence.” ■

*Ken Budd has written for National Geographic Traveler, Travel + Leisure, The Washington Post Magazine and many other outlets.*



# TOP 7 MEMBER BENEFITS FOR — WINTER —

Your AARP membership has exciting benefits to help you enjoy your winter fun—making life even more fun and affordable.

1

## TRAVEL

Find discounts on flights and vacation packages through the AARP Travel Center Powered by Expedia, plus save on expedited passport services with RushMyPassport.



2

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

Stay active and healthy this winter with on-demand classes from *Pilates Anytime* and free resources through AARP Personalized Nutrition.



## 3 TECH TIPS & TRICKS

Free tips, events and how-to guides through the AARP Technology Resource Center. Plus, save on cell phone plans from Consumer Cellular and AT&T.



## 4 GAS & AUTO SERVICES

Navigate safely through wintery conditions with tips from the AARP Smart Guide to Car Maintenance, recall and safety ratings tools and safe driving courses through AARP Driver Safety.

## 5 RESTAURANTS

'Tis the season for great food. Enjoy local coupons at your favorite spots like Moe's Southwest Grill, McAlister's Deli and Auntie Anne's.

## 6 FAMILY CAREGIVING

Get the resources you need to help care for loved ones and yourself with AARP Family Caregiving Guides and checklists.

## 7 MY SAVED BENEFITS

Save your favorite benefits for easy, on-the-go access. Plus, get alerts on nearby discounts with the AARP Now app.



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

[aarp.org/benefitsme](https://aarp.org/benefitsme)

# Movies for

And the 2025 nominees are ...



**T**HIS WAS A GOOD YEAR for film and TV by and for people over age 50, those we call “grownups.” Nearly half the most recent acting Emmys went to grownups, and there were four times as many grownup Oscar acting nominees this year as there were 30 years ago. It’s apt that the 2025 Movies for Grownups Career Achievement Award goes to the still-in-demand Glenn Close, 77, who will accept the honor at this year’s Movies for Grownups Awards at the Beverly Wilshire, a Four Seasons Hotel, on January 11 (to be televised by *Great Performances* on February 23, 2025, on PBS). For more on Close, see page 53. Here are this year’s nominees in the top categories. —Tim Appelo, chief AARP film and television critic

## Film Nominations

### Best Picture

- *Conclave* Thrillers don’t come any smarter than *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* screenwriter Peter Straughan’s adaptation of Thomas Harris’ book about a ruthless game of thrones when the Pope dies and the Vatican authorities choose a successor.
- *Emilia Pérez* A lawyer (Zoe Saldaña) helps a cartel kingpin find a new life, a new name—and a new gender. Critic Bilge Ebiri called it “a cross between *Mrs. Doubtfire* and *Sicario*.”
- *Gladiator II* The sequel to the 2001 best picture Oscar winner features Denzel Washington, 69, as a rich man who supplies gory Roman games with gladiators.
- *September 5* Steven Spielberg’s 2005 *Munich* dramatized the hunt for the

# Grownups



Thelma



A Complete Unknown

terrorists who struck the 1972 Munich Olympics, but this pulse-pounder directed by Tim Fehlbaum puts you in the minds of the ABC Sports crew that had to show it to the world.

- **A Complete Unknown** Timothée Chalamet plays the young Bob Dylan going electric, in a film that will electrify some fans and outrage others—but once upon a time, he looked so fine, didn't he?

## Best Director

- **Jacques Audiard, 72, *Emilia Pérez*** Who else had the audacity to make

a musical that's also a soap opera that's also a tense crime drama?

- **Edward Berger, 54, *Conclave*** The director of the World War I epic *All Quiet on the Western Front* depicts a more secret battlefield: the inner sanctum of the Vatican.
- **Ridley Scott, 87, *Gladiator II*** The four-



time Oscar-nominated director of *Blade Runner* is still slaying the competition in the Colosseum that is Hollywood.



## AWARDS SHOW HOST ALAN CUMMING

**A**T 59, CUMMING IS an ever-rising star who's won Emmys, plus Olivier, BAFTA, Independent Spirit and British Comedy awards; received four honorary doctorates; and wrote a *New York Times* No. 1 bestseller. He's been dazzling on stage and screen; you won't want to miss his witty show-tune spoofs at the *Movies for Grownups Awards*.

- **Pedro Almodóvar, 75, *The Room Next Door*** In the Spanish master's first feature film in English, old friends (Julianne Moore and Tilda Swinton, both 64) reunite after one is diagnosed with terminal cancer.

- **James Mangold, 60, *A Complete Unknown*** He immortalized Johnny Cash in *Walk the Line*, and now he has brought back the young Bob Dylan, along with the 1960s folk scene.

## Best Actor

- **Colman Domingo, 55, *Sing Sing*** Acting opposite actual ex-convicts, Domingo plays a prisoner who joins a theater group that turns troubled lives around through drama.

- **Ralph Fiennes, 61, *Conclave*** Fiennes takes us into the soul of a man painfully interrogating his flawed fellow clergymen, and his own faith.

- **Daniel Craig, 56, *Queer*** In a psychedelic adaptation of William Burroughs'



Conclave



Palm Royale

autobiographical novel, the James Bond star plays a war vet who whisks his lover from Mexico to South America in search of a magic tea to enable him to read the guy's mind and see if he cares about him.

- **Jude Law, 51, *The Order*** Law plays an FBI agent hunting a terrifying neo-Nazi gang in the remote Pacific Northwest. The story is ripped from real 1980s headlines.
- **Adrien Brody, 51, *The Brutalist*** His visionary architect character, a Holocaust survivor who makes his masterpiece in Pennsylvania, is haunted by the American Dream.

### Best Actress

- **Demi Moore, 62, *The Substance*** She daringly plays an actress who takes a youth potion with horrific consequences (and biting commentary about ageism).
- **Marianne Jean-Baptiste, 57, *Hard Truths*** An Oscar nominee (*Secrets & Lies*, 1996), she plays a human tornado who vents her rage on everyone in her path, and her performance makes us feel where all that anger's coming from.
- **June Squibb, 95, *Thelma*** At 84, she got an Oscar nomination for *Nebraska*. Now she aces her first



- lead role, as a phone-scam victim who—inspired by Tom Cruise in *Mission: Impossible*—pursues the criminal. And she did her own stunts!
- **Nicole Kidman, 57, *Babygirl*** Kidman nails the role of a CEO who risks all for a sizzling fling with a 20-something intern (Harris Dickinson).
- **Pamela Anderson, 57, *The Last Showgirl*** The *Baywatch* veteran is seriously good as a Las Vegas dancer in hard times, defiantly shouting, "I'm 57, and I'm beautiful, you son of a bitch!" The Toronto International Film Festival audience went wild.

### Best TV Series or Limited Series

- ***Shōgun*** The Emmy-hogging show about the 16th-century ruler who united Japan is a win for Hiroyuki Sanada, 64, its coproducer and titular star. He used to be known as the Tom Cruise of Japan. Now he's the hottest new talent in Hollywood.
- ***Hacks*** Jean Smart, 73, kept her hit show fresh by reaching deeper into her stand-up comic character's intergenerational love-hate relationship with her protégée (Hannah Einbinder).
- ***The Crown*** In the royal drama's finale, Diana (Elizabeth Debicki) and Princess



Margaret (Leslie Manville, 68) die, a melancholy, moving conclusion.



- ***Slow Horses*** Oscar winner Gary Oldman, 66, and Oscar nominees Kristin Scott Thomas, 64, and Jonathan Pryce, 77, are superb. Nobody on TV has more fun than Oldman as the slovenly, exuberantly insulting boss of an underdog British spy team.
- ***Palm Royale*** Kristen Wiig, 51, is funny as a 1960s Florida social climber blocked by locals, but Carol Burnett is even better as a grande dame who speaks gibberish, yet makes her feelings known. Her performance made her, at 91, the oldest Emmy comedy actress nominee in history.

### MOVIES FOR GROWNUPS CAREER ACHIEVEMENT WINNER GLENN CLOSE →

**CLOSE PROVES THAT** a Career Achievement winner need not be one gazing back on past glory (which in her case includes scads of major award nominations and wins). She starred in the 2024 Netflix horror hit *The Deliverance* and will be featured in both the upcoming *Knives Out* mystery *Wake Up Dead Man* and Ryan Murphy's Hulu legal drama *All's Fair*.

# Glenn Close

The actress, 77, riffs on growing up in a cult, her path to Hollywood stardom, and finding solace in nature and family • *By Natasha Stoyloff*



Glenn Close in Belgrade, Montana, September 19, 2024

**G**LENN CLOSE peers through the windshield of her pickup and surveys a smoky Montana sky. “We’ve got fires all around,” she says as she navigates the road through the haze—past bucolic fields of wheat and quaint schoolhouses—her faithful Havanese dog, Sir Pippin, perched by her side. Even though she is used to a dramatic scene, the actress is stirred by the visuals en route to her plot of land in tiny Belgrade, Montana, nestled between the Bridger Mountains and the winding East Gallatin River. “It reminds me of a poem,” she continues, reciting lines from Yeats—something about gardens, chaos and survival.

Arriving at an isolated homestead with old barns, a weathered granary and a creek running through it, Close, 77, hops out, Pip closely following. Close is petite, but somehow rugged as a farmhand in her faded jeans, plain shirt and vintage-inspired sunglasses. Her cropped silver hair is brushed away from her patrician cheekbones and placid face—a canvas for a multitude of characters audiences have loved and loved to hate over the years.

The actress has been living in nearby Bozeman since 2019 and is now building a second house on this bit of rural paradise. Here, she’s surrounded by family (three of her four siblings and her daughter, Annie, live a stone’s throw away) and far from the madding crowds of Hollywood and

Manhattan. “I need nature to survive,” she sighs, giving Pip a pet. “This is our sanctuary.”

It’s understandable that she’d gravitate to such a serene haven.

The actress’ 50 years in film, television and stage are populated by chilling characters that have kept generations of audiences at the edge of their seats: jilted, rabbit-killing Alex Forrest in *Fatal Attraction* (“I’m not gonna be ignored, Dan!”); villainous 18th-century French noblewoman Marquise Isabelle de Merteuil in *Dangerous Liaisons*; and, recently, the demon-possessed grandma in *The Deliverance*, to name a few.

But she’s also known for her sturdy, salt-of-the-earth women—perhaps more like Close herself—who struggle against adversity or oppression, personified by the likes of Midwestern mail-order bride Sarah Wheaton in *Sarah, Plain and Tall*.

They were the kinds of performances that inspired *Vanity Fair* to dub Close “one of the great actresses of our time” and enabled her to accumulate, so far, eight Oscar nominations and a slew of Emmy, Golden Globe and SAG Awards. “I honestly don’t think about awards that much,” she says, as she hauls a cooler from the back of her truck and swings it onto a wooden picnic table by the creek. She’s packed lunch for us—tuna and apple salad with cinnamon donuts. “I feel I’ve done a good job if my work is resonating with people.”

Having said that, she’s delighted about her Career Achievement Award, which she’ll accept at AARP’s upcoming Movies for Grownups Awards, because she, too, gets frustrated when she turns on the TV and can’t find something good to watch, something for grownups.

“It’s great to accept this award. My sister Jessie and I watched an old movie last night, and God, it was so wonderful. What was it called? Afterwards, we said, ‘Boy, they used to make really good movies.’” (She texted the next day with the title: “*My Cousin Vinny*. We laughed a lot.”)

Hollywood—and for that matter Montana—is a million miles away from Close’s origin story. She was born and raised in Greenwich, Connecticut, the daughter of well-known surgeon William T. Close and socialite/philanthropist Bettine Moore Close. Close spent her first seven years roaming the New England countryside, playing pretend with her sister Tina. “We put on puppet shows and



“It’s ironic that now, at 77, I’m getting the best roles of my life.”

made things up. We acted all day long. It just came naturally.”

Growing up, she had no problem finding good stuff to watch on TV—like various fairy tales and *The Mickey Mouse Club*. “I felt that I could do whatever any of those kids were doing on film,” she says.”

At 7, Close’s idyllic childhood was upended when her parents joined MRA (Moral Re-Armament)—a movement she now calls a religious cult—and she moved to Switzerland and Africa, before returning to America as a teen to study at Choate Rosemary Hall, an elite Connecticut boarding school. Still, until her early 20s, Close was immersed in the movement—a controlling experience she describes as emotionally harmful. “It made me feel, and I think still feel, like I’m on the outside looking in,” she says reflectively.

Her passion for acting helped Close escape MRA’s hold. In 1970, she enrolled at the College of William & Mary in Virginia to study acting and anthropology.

“I never thought about acting in movies back then,” she says. Broadway beckoned first, but in 1980, when she was starring in the Broadway musical *Barnum* (nabbing her first Tony nomination), she was spotted by the film director



George Roy Hill. He cast Close in *The World According to Garp* (1982) in the role of Jenny Fields (mother of Robin Williams' Garp) for her film debut. "The hardest thing for me was where to put all my energy," she says of the transition from theater. "I was used to creating spinning molecules from the stage to the back seats. And you have this bank of energy in your body which would blow out the camera if you had that on film."

She figured it out. Her performance in *Garp* earned Close her first best supporting actress Oscar nod, and her career surged upward. Two of her next three films—*The Big Chill* (1983) and *The Natural*, a 1984 baseball drama costarring Robert Redford—brought two more Oscar nominations for best supporting actress.

Three years later, Close's terrifying turn in *Fatal Attraction* (1987) not only "scared the shit out of men" everywhere, as she puts it, but also brought her first best actress Oscar nomination. Over the next three decades she would go on to deliver startlingly good performances in film and on television in *Damages*, *Albert Nobbs* and *Hillbilly Elegy*. Three Emmys and four more Oscar nominations followed.

She has still not won an Oscar. She says it's no big deal. "I'd much rather be in the room again and again rather than win it once and never show up again," she says. "The honor is to be with the people who are making the work that our audiences feel is worthy."

**M**EANWHILE HER personal life has ebbed and flowed. She has been married three times and became a mother, at 41, to her daughter, Annie, in 1988. (Dad is film producer John Starke.) "I weaned Annie at 7 weeks old when I went to film *Dangerous Liaisons*," Close recalls. "She grew up on movie sets and onstage, in dressing rooms and theaters. She was always near people who loved her." Now 36, Annie hosts her own cooking show, *The Mountain Kitchen*, and costarred with Close in *The Wife* in 2017.

Close has revealed that she suffers from depression occasionally, and in 2010—after her sister Jessie was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and her nephew with schizoaffective disorder—she cofounded a nonprofit, Bring Change to Mind,



**Close-Up**  
For exclusive video of career achievement winner Glenn Close, see [aarp.org/glennclose](http://aarp.org/glennclose).

to help destigmatize mental illness. "People are more aware of the importance of mental health," she says, "but we still don't have the institutions to help people get better and then stay well."

While Close has gathered her family in Montana, she also believes in giving people, including herself, space. After her marriages and several long-term partners, she's currently single, and that's just fine. "Katharine Hepburn said something like, 'Men and women should live next to each other and visit every now and then,'" she says with a laugh.

**THROUGHOUT HER CAREER**, Close has wanted to please audiences ... and sometimes startle them. The buzz in the news the day we chat is her latest role as a Satan-fighting grandma in the horror flick *The Deliverance*, and a nasty line she spits out while thrashing about, demonically possessed.

"It shocked everyone?" she asks of her character's reference to a female body part. "I'm glad!"

But Close's gaze is already on the horizon, specifically on her upcoming film role as Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*. She first played the tragic, once famous, now-fading actress on Broadway 30 years ago, and won a Tony. "Norma Desmond is like Hamlet," says Close, "one of the greatest roles ever written for a woman."

Unlike Desmond, though, Close has no intention of fading away. "It's ironic that now, at 77, I'm getting the best roles of my life," she says. "I'm having the time of my life."

Our picnic at an end, Close scans the clearing sky and the land and mountains before her. She points to three twisted apple trees dotted with red. "I call them the Sisters," she says. "They were planted by the first homesteaders here in the late 1800s. They still bear fruit, which is a miracle, because they've been ravaged by bears over the years and are practically hollow."

Gardens, chaos and survival.

The actress tosses Pip half of her uneaten donut, excuses herself and disappears into a weather-beaten barn.

She's got chores to do before sundown. ■

*Natasha Stoyloff is an award-winning journalist and New York Times best-selling coauthor of 15 books who frequently writes about celebrities and culture for AARP THE MAGAZINE. On staff at People magazine for a dozen years, she has freelanced for The Washington Post, USA Today and Time.*

## ICONIC CLOSE FILMS

### THE BIG CHILL

(1983) Close nabbed her second Oscar nod for anchoring a murderers' row ensemble cast in this bittersweet boomer classic.

### FATAL ATTRACTION

(1987) The bunny-boiling other woman, Close's Alex Forrest seduces a married man (Michael Douglas) and



becomes the subject of 1,001 op-ed pieces about '80s feminism.

### 101 DALMATIANS

(1996) As the cackling Cruella de Vil, Close tap-dances the fine line between comedy and camp—breeding spotted puppies for their fur.

### THE WIFE

(2017) Close earned the seventh of her eight unrequited Oscar noms for this slow-simmering drama about the overlooked

spouse of a Nobel Prize-winning novelist (Jonathan Pryce) whose work she deserves more than a little credit for.

—Chris Nashawaty



“My family  
doesn't say  
we moved on.  
We say we  
moved forward.  
Because none  
of us wants  
to forget what  
we all went  
through.”

—SHEILA GUTMAN  
Shot on July 4, 2022



# THE SURVIVORS

America has become so accustomed to mass shootings that we've developed a routine. There's the shock, the horror, the memorials, the grief. But for those who survive such horrific attacks, little about life is routine anymore **By Rachael Bale**

**I**T HAS BEEN five years since the El Paso Walmart shooting. Fifteen years since the Fort Hood shooting. And 25 years since what we now simply call "Columbine." By one conservative estimate, nearly 1,000 people were killed in mass shootings in the U.S. between 1997 and 2022—and those shootings have become more frequent and deadly every year. Some locations are chosen seemingly at random, while others are the twisted fruit of age-old prejudices.

Shooters often use semiautomatic rifles that fire large, high-velocity bullets, which can cause a shock wave with explosive-like effects. Though not fully automatic like their military-grade counterparts, such guns chamber a new cartridge after each pull of the trigger, allowing them to shoot with fatal efficiency.

For those who lose family members in a shooting, the shock and sorrow are unending. Often overlooked in the conversation about these horrific events are the people who were present at a shooting but didn't die. Who are

these "lucky" ones? Those who were shot in the foot, the belly, the back—or were not shot at all but are still haunted? The ones who made it through because the paramedics reached them in time, or because they happened to be near a hiding place, or because the shooter simply turned their gun toward someone else?

People who survive mass shootings often face lifelong medical and psychological challenges—and, many of them say, experience

unexpected personal growth. AARP spoke to 10 older survivors of some of the most notorious shootings of the past 15 years to learn what happens after the cameras turn away.



**The aftermath of the attack on a parade in Highland Park, Illinois, where Gutman was injured**

## Mary Reed, 66

Retiree in Tucson, Arizona

### Date of shooting:

January 8, 2011

Outside a Safeway, Reed, her husband and their two teenagers were attending a meet-and-greet with

then-Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords when a gunman opened fire. Reed threw her daughter against a concrete wall and shielded the teen with her own body. Reed was shot in both arms and her back. Her daughter was uninjured. By the time bystanders tackled the shooter, six people had been killed and another 13 were wounded.

**M**ARY REED'S family has always owned guns. "I was raised in Texas, where they don't let you graduate high school if you can't walk in 3-inch heels and field strip a sidearm," she jokes. But in her household, guns were for shooting targets. Gun violence wasn't something she thought about much.

Now that she has a bullet embedded next to her spine, she thinks about it all the time. Three surgeons have recommended against removing the bullet, because it's located within a bundle of nerves that, if disturbed, could affect bowel and bladder control and diminish the feeling in her right leg.

The bullet makes its presence known. About twice a month, it causes a searing pain that wraps around Reed's torso like a rope; she likens the sensation to a combination of fire ants and sciatica. The pain can be brought on by the smallest things. "Once, I was walking with hot coffee, and I sneezed," she recalls. In trying not to spill the coffee, she tweaked her back. Out and around wrapped the rope of fire ants. The only thing to do was take a muscle relaxer and go to bed.

While that bullet isn't going anywhere, a surgeon did remove the bullet in her left arm. It was promptly signed over to a sheriff's officer. (As a gunshot victim, "you're like an evi-



dence locker," she says.)

Reed now advocates for gun safety legislation and volunteers to help other survivors. She believes that many Americans don't know what to say to gun violence survivors.

"We need updated manners for mass shootings," Reed says. People are often at a loss. At school pickup not long after she was injured, another parent asked Reed, "Why did you take your kids to a shooting?"

But while some of the comments "would leave your jaw on the ground," she says, "I know the words are coming from a place of love."

So if someone you know has been affected by a mass shooting, what should you say to them?

She pauses. "Just say, 'I'm so sorry.'"

## Polly Sheppard, 80

Retired nurse in Florence, South Carolina

### Date of shooting:

June 17, 2015

Wednesday evening Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston was just ending, and the dozen parishioners in the basement of the 200-year-old church had closed their eyes for the final prayer. The 13th person in the room, a newcomer who had participated in the group's discussion, then pulled out a gun and started shooting. Nine people were killed, and two others, who were uninjured, feigned death. When the gunman approached

Sheppard, sheltering beneath a table, she met his eye. "Did I shoot you yet?" he asked her. "No," she replied. "I'm not going to," he said. "I'm going to leave you here to tell the story." The self-declared white supremacist fled and was later arrested during a traffic stop.

**F**OR SEVERAL months after the shooting, Polly Sheppard was angry. It was a feeling she didn't understand. "Why are you so angry?" she asked herself. Then she realized: "Because God left you here. You didn't have a scratch on you. But you can't be the one to hold all this madness." She knew she had to forgive the shooter; otherwise, she says, "it's like you're drinking poison."

She also knew forgiveness wouldn't be easy. But her 14 years as a nurse at the Charleston County jail had helped her learn to withhold judgment. "You



From top: StoryCorps/NPR; Will Cooks

meet people who you think are guilty, but they're not guilty, and you can meet guilty people who are so sweet," she says. "If the person is a murderer, you treat them the same as anybody else."

Sheppard says she has forgiven the shooter, but there is no forgetting. The skittering light of the handgun's laser, the sound of the shooter's boots, the feeling of checking for a friend's pulse and finding none—those memories will be with her for life.

And Sheppard is indeed here to tell the story. She regularly tells it to state senators—one of whose colleagues, the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, died in the shooting—to advocate for a hate crime law in South Carolina, which is one of only two states without one.

Sheppard admits to getting discouraged sometimes. Being the memory keeper of such a horrific event "is not an easy thing," she says. "You feel like you're out here by yourself."

But those feelings are part of what keeps her going. There are many survivors like her, and Sheppard wants them to know that they are not alone.

## Abbey Clements, 56

Teacher and gun safety advocate, Western Connecticut

**Date of shooting:**  
December 14, 2012



*With gunfire echoing in the halls and boots pounding on the roof of Sandy Hook Elementary School, second grade teacher Clements huddled with her class underneath the coats and backpacks that hung on a classroom wall. The gunman didn't make it into her classroom that day but, by the end, 20 children and six adults at the school had been killed before the shooter turned the gun on himself.*

**T**HE WORDS flow easily when Abbey Clements talks about working to include teachers' voices in the public conversation about gun

violence. But telling her own story? "That's the part that's hard," she says.

Twelve years have passed since the shooting. "The depth of survivor grief is immense," Clements says. Layered on top of that is guilt. "You survived something because a shooter turned left instead of right. What do you do with that?"

Clements experiences some of the effects of trauma: the hypervigilance, the flood of panic and flush of heat in a crowd, the racing heart when she feels trapped, like in the dentist's chair. "It just sneaks up on me," she says.

She says she has been sustained by friendships with other survivors, including teachers who survived the 1999 Columbine High School shooting. Therapy also helped. Especially effective, she says, was eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy (EMDR), which uses bilateral brain stimulation—usually side-to-side eye movements and taps on the arms and legs—to change the way a traumatic memory is stored in the brain.

About six months after the shooting, Clements' teenage daughter invited her to a meeting of gun violence prevention activists. As soon as she got to the meeting, she knew "that these were my people," she says. "My place was around other survivors and activists who wanted to make change."

Almost three years ago, Clements and two fellow educators founded the nonprofit Teachers Unify to End Gun Violence, to give a voice to educators and school staff within the discussion about curbing school shootings.

She still feels flashes of guilt for surviving, and even for having resources that she knows other survivors don't. These flashes are a reminder of the indelible mark a mass shooting leaves on the brain, bullet wound or not.



## Jennifer Bennett, 68

Retired civilian worker for the U.S. Navy, Springfield, Virginia

**Date of shooting:**  
September 16, 2013

*When the fire alarm went off, Bennett—who was at work at the headquarters of the Naval Sea Systems Command in Washington, D.C.—headed down a stairwell to evacuate. Then, just 10 steps below her, she saw a man with a sawed-off shotgun. They locked eyes. Bennett stood still. Next came a blast, and shotgun pellets tore through her shoulder, arm and hand. Bennett walked back up the stairs, but every door was locked until she emerged on the roof, where she was picked up by a helicopter that flew her to a hospital. The gunman killed 12 people at the Washington Navy Yard and injured four before a police officer returned fire and killed him.*

**J**ENNIFER BENNETT talks about the aftermath of the Navy Yard shooting in two distinct components, the practical and the intangible.

The practical is this: It has been more than 11 years since the shooting, and she's nowhere near done with medical treatment. Her arm is attached to her shoulder with a titanium plate and 12 screws. Missing muscle means her spine is subtly but constantly pulling to the left. She schedules regular chiropractor and medical massage treatments so that she's "not just completely racked with pain," Bennett says.

She will eventually need another surgery to replace all her hardware, which is wearing out. Despite two bone marrow transplants to regrow the bone that was destroyed where her arm meets her shoulder, there's a small gap that never filled in. That has put extra pressure on the plate and screws. →

Like a paper clip that has been bent too many times, the plate will eventually snap. Already some of the screws have come loose. Bennett has become adept at painful maneuvers that slot the screws back into place.

Still, she's dreading another surgery, which will take her out of commission for up to two years. By now, Bennett has recovered enough to do most of the things she used to, though at a modified pace. She can do her hair, though not really the back of it. She can lug bags of mulch across her garden, but she tires more easily.

Bennett says she's not anxious about medical bills. "I don't worry about anything," she says. "You can't change it. You have to just deal with it." That attitude is informed by her Christian faith. No matter how difficult something is, she says, "I know there's a purpose."

Case in point: Bennett hadn't spoken to her sister in more than a year before the shooting. But when she woke up in the hospital, her sister was there. Whatever had separated the two from each other didn't matter anymore.

"I can be a hard, hard person," Bennett admits. "But it's no longer important to me whether I'm right or not."

Bennett says she has come to understand her purpose in life: "to be what God asked me to be, and that is the light. You either present light, so others are uplifted and see their value, or you become darkness."

## Stephen Willeford, 62

Active-shooter preparedness trainer and gun rights advocate, Sutherland Springs, Texas



**Date of shooting:** November 5, 2017

When a masked man opened fire at First Baptist Church on a Sunday morning, Willeford was at home, a block away. Upon hearing what was unfolding, he raced to his gun safe for his AR-15 and ran to the church. Willeford arrived,

yelling, and the masked man came out of the building. The two exchanged fire. A former competitive shooter and gun instructor, Willeford had excellent aim: Six of his shots hit the attacker, including one between the plates of the man's body armor. But the masked man still made it to his car and drove off. Willeford jumped into a truck whose driver had stopped to call 911, and they gave chase for nearly 12 miles before the attacker's car drove into a field. After killing 26 people and wounding 20 more, the attacker killed himself, too.

**S**TEPHEN WILLEFORD grew up on the dairy farm he still calls home. He's the fourth generation of his family to live on the property, where as a boy he carried a gun to chase coyotes away from the livestock and to hunt rabbits and quail. He remembers bouncing on the limb of an old oak tree as his great-grandfather told him stories.

Before the shooting, Willeford had been a plumber, working a maintenance job at a hospital. After the shooting, he remained a plumber—for about eight months. As his crisis counselor told him, his life changed the moment he decided to confront the shooter. He had to get used to a new normal. "But I loved my old normal," he told the counselor. "What's my new normal supposed to be?"

The counselor also prepared Willeford for some unexpected physical effects of trauma. Early on, he recalls, "every time I got really emotional, I lost all control over all my facial muscles on the right side of my face. Had she not told me about this, I would have been panicking." Once, when meeting with people who'd lost loved ones in the shooting, he says, his knee buckled, and the right side of his face got tremors. "I told the lady I was talking to, 'I'm really sorry this is happening. They said it might,' he recalls. "She hugged me and said, 'That's what's happening to me, and that explains a lot.'"

Over time, those symptoms resolved, and Willeford's life has become one he never imagined. As a spokesman for Gun Owners of America, he talks to lawmakers and large crowds about gun rights. He also trains churches on how to respond if a gunman ever enters.

At home, he tells his grandchildren stories as they bounce on the limbs of the old oak tree. They're what motivates Willeford's activism. "I would like to leave my grandchildren the same nation that I grew up in," he says.

Despite the trauma, "I would do it all again," Willeford says, "because I believe I saved lives." He also changed his own. "It has enriched my life. I see God more in everything I do now."

## Lloyd Gock, 71

Small business owner, Los Angeles County

**Date of shooting:** January 21, 2023

People were line dancing and celebrating the Lunar New Year, less than two hours away, at Star Ballroom Dance Studio in Los Angeles County, when a gunman opened fire. Gock and his dance partner took cover beneath a table, unharmed, as they were forced to watch their friends and fellow dancers fall around them. Eleven people died and nine were injured in the attack. The shooter fled the scene and later took his own life.

**A**FTER THE shooting, Lloyd Gock knew he had to get back on the dance floor. Going out dancing felt risky, but not going felt riskier. A few years earlier, Gock had endured a deep depression, and a new passion for social dancing had helped rescue him. "Dancing saved my life," he says. It was the best way he knew to handle the shock and grief of the shooting.

"If I were to isolate myself inside the house, I could easily go back into the depression," he says. "I was more worried about that than about being where the shooting happened."

Still, when he and a handful of other dancers ventured out to a different venue two weeks after the shooting, he kept away from the door, just in case.

Returning to work was much harder. Too traumatized to deal with production delays in his clothing manufacturing and importing business, he lost a \$200,000 order. He also felt that the challenges that he and other uninjured survivors were facing were going unnoticed in the understandable outpouring of grief over those who had been injured or killed. That's why he started a campaign to get compensation for almost 40 uninjured survivors of the shooting. It's not uncommon for survivors to lose business, like Gock, or to have to take unpaid leave while they process the trauma. But in addition, feeling seen is an important part of psychological healing. Eventually, Gock did win some modest compensation

from a charitable fund for survivors—enough to feel acknowledged.

Like Gock, who emigrated from Hong Kong as a teenager, the majority of Star Ballroom survivors are older Asian immigrants. Many were reluctant to seek psychological help due to stigma or a sense that talking about a traumatic experience creates a burden for others. Language also posed a barrier: Many didn't know of Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking trauma therapists, and the daunting U.S. health insurance system further discouraged some non-native English speakers from getting help.

But when Gock found himself sleeping with the lights on because he was afraid of the dark, he knew he needed to talk about it. A piece of wisdom he had learned four decades earlier at a 12-step program for alcoholics came back to him: "To help yourself, you must help others."

So he helped organize a monthly support group for survivors who, like him, weren't physically injured but were suffering mental trauma. "Being able to help other people helped my own recovery," he says.

On the one-year anniversary of the shooting, Gock and other survivors gathered to celebrate what he calls their new "birthday," the day they got a second chance at life.

"I told my group that we are going to have a party," he recalls. "We're going to dance. We're going to eat. We're going to enjoy."

On January 21, 2024, 150 people gathered at a restaurant. Someone queued up "A Light Rain in March," the song that was playing the moment the shooter burst in.

The survivors stood up and danced.



## Dan Leger, 76

*Retired hospital chaplain and nurse, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

### **Date of shooting:**

October 27, 2018

*Leger had been setting out books for his congregation's Torah study when he heard the first shots. It was a Saturday morning—Shabbat—so he wasn't carrying a phone. Leger and his friend Jerry Rabinowitz, a doctor, rushed toward the sound of gunfire to try to help. Both were shot. Leger, wounded in the hip and abdomen, lay bleeding in a stairwell for 45 minutes before he heard footsteps approaching again. This is one of two people, he remembers thinking. It's either someone to help me or it's the person who shot me. Realizing he had nothing to lose, Leger reached out and grabbed the pants leg of the person passing by. It was a paramedic. Five others were injured in the attack, and 11, including Rabinowitz, were killed.*

**A** HOSPICE nurse for many years, Dan Leger is not unfamiliar with death. That's why, as he lay bleeding on the stairs, he made his vidui, his deathbed confession.

"I didn't feel panicked," he says. "I was really reviewing my life and just appreciating the wonderful life I've had, the wonderful friends I've had."

In the hospital, Leger hovered at



the edge of death for several days. He doesn't know how many surgeries he had to repair his bladder, remove a section of his intestines and stabilize his hip—likely five or six operations, he thinks, plus several painful debridements of his wounds to help them heal.

After two months in the hospital, Leger faced a long convalescence. It would be nearly half a year before he started feeling comfortable walking again, even with a cane. Six years after the shooting, he says, “my balance isn't as good.”

Leger worked for more than 40 years in nursing, including 10 years in pediatric hospice and four years as a chaplain in palliative care, a job he had to retire from after the shooting. That work, and his Jewish faith, he says, is what motivated him during his recovery.

One of Leger's mantras is something his friend Rabinowitz would say: “It's better to be kind than to be right.” Leger says he believes that now more than ever. “I know that there's plenty wrong in the world, but I think I'm hopeful,” he says. “I think that people are inherently good.”

## Norma Valenzuela, 61

Housekeeping worker,  
El Paso, Texas

**Date of shooting:**  
August 3, 2019

Valenzuela and her adult daughter had been in Walmart for no more than 10 minutes when the commotion began. Valenzuela was knocked to the ground as screaming people ran past her, away from a gunman. Her daughter pulled Valenzuela to her feet, and the two of them began running too. Just behind them, a young woman was shot in the leg. Outside, it was 90 degrees, and Valenzuela and her daughter hid inside a shipping container that neared a deadly level of heat. Police apprehended the gunman, who had killed 23 people and injured 22.



**N**ORMA VALENZUELA has never been back to that Walmart. It was two years before she would go back to any Walmart. Even when she does go, she feels jumpy, she says.

Since trips to big-box stores are inevitable, Valenzuela now has a routine to help her stay calm when she shops. “I look for where I'll hide,” she says. “Once I have a place to hide, I relax.”

Years ago, Valenzuela had moved her family to El Paso from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, then considered the most violent city in the world due to drug cartels. “I came here for shelter, and then this happened,” she says.

Although she was physically uninjured, moving forward with her life has taken work. The early days were “terrible,” she says, “a lot of anguish, a lot of crying, fear, staying inside.” Valenzuela couldn't stop ruminating, analyzing, realizing how close she and her daughter had come to disaster, how many others were not as lucky.

Antianxiety medication and talk therapy have helped, she says. But the most valuable tool she has found is meditation—guided more by YouTube than by books, because she's found it hard to concentrate on reading.

Three or four times a week, when Valenzuela finds herself stuck in a cycle of negative thoughts, she turns to Andrea at Escuela de Amor y Superación Personal, the School of Love and Self Improvement, a YouTube channel that has nearly 1.8 million subscribers. Meditation is “just so beautiful that I don't know how to explain it,” she says.

Valenzuela loves music, but an invitation to a concert can send her into a spiral of self-doubt. She'll agree to go, then rethink as soon as she hangs up the phone. “I'll think, *I just don't want to go. But how do I tell them?*”

This back-and-forth is part of being a survivor, she says. Since the shooting, Valenzuela finds more fear in everyday situations, but also more beauty in everyday objects. She worries more, yet says she's also more attuned to the needs of others. Both scared and grateful, she says she will not give up.



## Sheila Gutman, 65

Retired attorney,  
Highland Park, Illinois

**Date of shooting:** July 4, 2022

At their town's annual Independence Day parade, Gutman, her husband, their three sons and their families were celebrating the day and admiring the patriotic floats. Then a gunman on the rooftop across the street fired into the crowd, killing seven people and injuring 48. Gutman's left foot was pulverized by a bullet. The shooter fled the scene and was later apprehended by police.

**J**UST OVER A year after the shooting, Sheila Gutman celebrated her birthday by buying gifts for her four adult children and their partners: sneakers. “I said to all of them, ‘I want you all to put on new shoes as we walk forward into a new place and put the shooting behind us,’” she says.

Gutman herself couldn't wear the shoes—her foot was still too disfigured—but she wanted her family to know





that she was doing OK. The bullet had shredded her Achilles tendon, shattered her heel bone and destroyed most of the tissue in the back of her left foot and part of her calf. Early on, amputation looked likely, especially once her foot began turning black after the first reconstructive surgery. The kind of operation that could potentially save her foot required perfect compliance with a complex and lengthy aftercare regimen, which many gunshot survivors are not in a position to complete. If the regimen is not followed, the surgery can cause life-threatening complications.

Because of Gutman's resolve and her strong support network, doctors decided to give the risky surgery a try. Using a cadaver bone and a flap of skin, fat, muscle and blood vessels from Gutman's good leg, they again rebuilt the back of her left foot. She then spent three weeks flat on her back, leg in the

air, with pins protruding from the bone and attached to the external fixator engaging her foot to make sure nothing moved even a little. Another eight surgeries followed.

Today Gutman can walk, albeit with a slight limp that pulls her hip forward and causes back pain. She could probably even run if she really needed to, she says. That's why Gutman recently started going to the movies again: She knows she could get away if someone started shooting.

What she dwells on the most, though, isn't her own injury or trauma. It's that the world seems to have moved on. Gutman admits she used to do that, too, when she'd read about mass shootings in the past. "I might've sent a check but never thought about what happens after," she says.

Now she understands that, as a survivor, "you don't want to be forgotten." She's talking not so much about herself, though, as about people like Cooper Roberts, paralyzed from the waist down at the parade when a bullet

severed his spinal cord. Cooper was 8 years old at the time. His mother was also shot, and his twin brother was hit by shrapnel. The family's expenses are astronomical, and insurance covers only a small portion. Along with buying new wheelchairs for Cooper as he grows, the family must move from their two-story home, because Cooper will soon be too big to carry up and down stairs, and the cost to retrofit their house to meet his needs would be nearly \$1 million.

Gutman didn't know the Robertses before the shooting, but a friendship began when she learned how the family was struggling and threw herself into fundraising for them. Working with the community, family and friends, she has raised several hundred thousand dollars and is still at it. (Funds can be donated to the family via the Help Hope Live Foundation.)

This work, in turn, has helped Gutman heal, she says. "I feel like maybe this is why this happened to me. It's my job to help them get through this hard time in their life."

## Ed Sanders, 65

Retired health claims specialist, Colorado Springs, Colorado

### Date of shooting:

November 19–20, 2022

*It was four minutes to midnight, and Sanders had just handed his credit card to the bartender at Club Q, a local gay bar, when the first bullet hit his back. Turning, he saw a gunman firing into the crowd. For a moment, muzzle flashes were all that distinguished the blasts from the pounding music. Then a bullet hit Sanders' right thigh, and he fell to the floor next to a stranger who had also been shot. Sanders pressed a napkin to the stranger's wound, trying to stanch the bleeding, and listened as her breathing turned ragged, then stopped. Three patrons rushed the shooter and restrained him until the police arrived. Five people died in the attack and 19 were injured.*



**A**FTER THE shooting, after the tourniquet and ambulance ride, after the skin graft, the 18-day hospital stay and the four months of daily home nurse visits for wound dressing changes, Ed Sanders bought a new wardrobe. He got an ombré suit jacket of blue-to-silver sequins, a purple crushed-velvet jacket embroidered with a floral-and-paisley motif and a black jacket covered in silver scrollwork—to defy the bigots, he explains.

"I'm going to be more visible than ever. I'm going to speak out more," Sanders says. Representing the United Court of the Pikes Peak Empire, the local chapter of one of largest and oldest LGBTQ+ organizations in the world, he has traveled to Omaha, San Antonio, St. Louis and elsewhere, talking about that night at the club.

One thing he does less of: wearing a bathing suit in public. It's uncomfortable to have to explain the chunk of missing tissue on his thigh to strangers at the pool. It looks "kind of like an ice cream scoop has been taken

out of my leg," he says. Surgeons tried to repair the damage, but less than 40 percent of the skin graft took. The pain of that procedure was almost as bad as getting shot, Sanders says, so he's

not eager to try again.

He gets around fine, though his pre-existing limp has become more pronounced. The night of the shooting, he was carrying a cane topped with a raven, and it blocked one of the bullets intended for him. Sanders keeps the cane on a hook behind his front door, the raw wood visible where the bullet splintered it. The cane serves as a reminder that, as bad as his injuries were, they could have been worse.

Sanders knows a long life is not guaranteed, he says. "But I'm going to make the most of the time I have." ■

*Rachael Bale, a freelance journalist in Denver, is a former executive editor at National Geographic.*

# REAL/PEOPLE



Inspiring stories  
of friends and  
neighbors, in  
their own words

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RETIRES, SHE KEEPS ON KICKING P. 66

SOME BUY SURPLUS JEEPS. HIM? A  
SURPLUS OFFSHORE LIGHTHOUSE P. 67

## Mountain Pioneer

# The Dean of the Freestyle Skiers

Wayne Wong helped create a new Olympic sport—and more than 50 years later, he’s still refining it

**P**ART OF BEING an innovator is showing up at the right time. When I first started skiing, downhill racers were the stars of the ski industry. Then suddenly, in the late 1960s, all these radical, rebellious, unorthodox guys started doing what came to be called “freestyle”: catching air by skiing the moguls or doing big aerial jumps. You didn’t have to be an elite Alpine skier to do some of these tricks. It was a new way to express yourself on the snow. And I was all in.

At the first national championships of exhibition skiing in 1971, I took third place. The following year, I took first and was named “Freestyle Skier of the Year” by *Skiing* magazine. It’s a legacy I’m still working to live up to. Maybe I can’t do it like I did when I was 20, but I feel like I’m still skiing like I did at 40. I work on my fitness—that’s a big part of it.

Being inducted into the U.S. and Canadian ski halls of fame was an amazing honor. But to me, the coolest thing is that I got hired by Deer Valley in Park City, Utah, to become their newest sponsored athlete, at 74. Who gets a gig like that?

I act as a goodwill ambassador on the slopes. I help people have fun. But it’s not all social. Every time I get out on the hill, I challenge myself. I try to do things a little better than I did the day before. Even as you get older, you can always improve. That’s the mystique of skiing. I would encourage people, when they’re on the hill, to look for that little spark of inspiration, that impetus to try something new. Experience the mountain, experience the snow, experience the terrain, because skiing is all about feelings.

Salt Lake City was chosen as the site of the 2034 Winter Olympics, and Deer Valley will be the venue for the freestyle events. My goal is to stay active and be part of this whole movement at least through then. —As told to Brion O’Connor

*Wayne Wong, 75, one of Ski magazine’s “Top 100 Skiers of All Time,” lives near Reno, Nevada.*





Colón in a Manhattan dance studio and, *inset*, as a Rockette in the mid-1990s

## Once a Rockette ...

Dancer Lillian Colón gained wisdom from time on the kick line

**B** **EING AN OLDER** dancer can be challenging. A lot of people age out by the time they're 30. When I walked into the audition for *In the Heights* in 2018, I made a beeline for the choreographer, convinced I was in the wrong room. The studio was filled with young dancers. I had thought the choreographer was going to give the more seasoned dancer a break, but that was not the case. I had to do the same dance that all of the 20-year-olds did. But I went through with the audition and became the

oldest dancer in the movie.

I've always done things on my own schedule. I started working in show business straight out of high school, as a singer, dancer and choreographer. Then at 29, I beat out hundreds of other people for a spot in the Radio City Music Hall Rockettes. I danced with that group, with all its synchronized choreography, until my mid-40s. At 46, I had my daughter and started doing wardrobe. These days, I mainly teach dancing, but I'll always be proud to have been

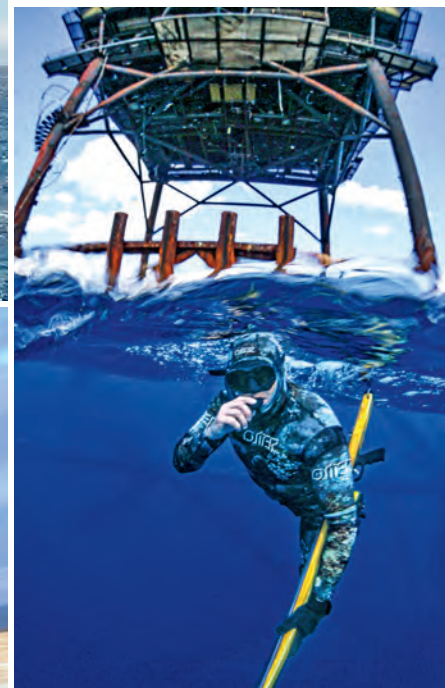
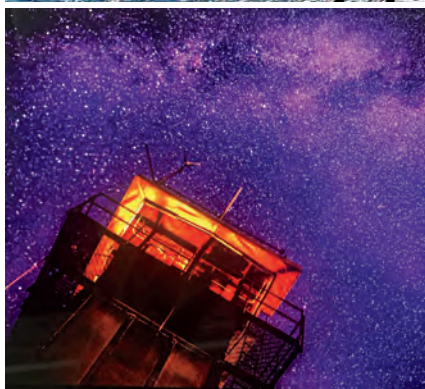
the very first Latina Rockette.

The Rockettes are unique in their need for precision. If one person messes up, it messes up the whole line. The experience taught me a lot about working together. It's a lesson I try to impart to my students: On and off the stage, our lives are deeply intertwined, and we all fare better when we support and care for one another. —As told to Julie Goldenberg

*Lillian Colón, 70, is a New York City dance teacher and the author of the memoir Lilly: The First Latina Rockette.*



Neal, *below center*, photographs Frying Pan Tower by day, by night and during diving excursions with volunteers.



## Life Just Above Sea Level

Richard Neal snagged a real estate bargain and turned it into a calling

**A** S A BOY, I'd see these ads in the back of magazines saying you could buy a government surplus jeep for a tiny fraction of its original price. That fascinated me. Well, in 2010, I noticed a decommissioned Coast Guard light station 32 miles off the coast of North Carolina being auctioned off. I put in a bid and won the facility, called Frying Pan Tower, for \$85,000. My wife and I keep a home onshore, but I come out to the lighthouse often, either by boat or by helicopter. People say, "You know this isn't normal, right?" I say, "It is just my particular version of normal."

I bought the place a month after I turned 50. I was a computer salesman, but I'd done it all by then: banking, insurance. I'd been a chemist, mechanic, plumber, electrician.

There was something different about having my own 135-foot tower. Growing up in Oklahoma, everything had been flat, so Mom built me a treehouse to stare at the stars. When I finally got out to the Frying Pan, I realized I had bought a grownup version of my childhood fort. The main level is a furnished 5,000-square-foot living space with a fully equipped kitchen and eight bedrooms. We get power from solar panels, though there are also backup generators.

It's certainly never boring out here. In 2014, I rode out Hurricane Arthur with three of our four children here. At times, I've stayed for six months straight. In 2018, I created a foundation and divested all ownership in the property. Now we operate as a nonprofit where ecotourists come out to enjoy the scenery and isolation, and

skilled volunteers contribute labor to the ongoing process of restoring the lighthouse. The goal is to protect mariners and sea life and preserve the tower for the next generation. We weld and paint and scrape, but it's not all work. Sometimes we'll scuba dive with tiger sharks, or tee off into the water with "golf balls" made of fish food. We can shoot off fireworks that no American city would allow, since we're beyond U.S. jurisdiction.

When you work a regular job, you think about the hours and the days. But out on the tower, you think in seasons—not just seasons of the year but of your life. Gazing up at the Milky Way or down at the bioluminescent shrimp, it gives you perspective on everything. If there's something you haven't done in life, why wait? You're not going to do it afterward. There is no retirement to life. —As told to David Hochman

*Richard Neal, 64, a former salesman and appliance installer, is the executive director of the Frying Pan Tower Foundation. He splits his time between Wilmington, North Carolina, and a lighthouse offshore.*



# Your **AARP**®

## Battling for Justice on Your Behalf

*AARP Foundation litigation team defends the rights of older Americans*

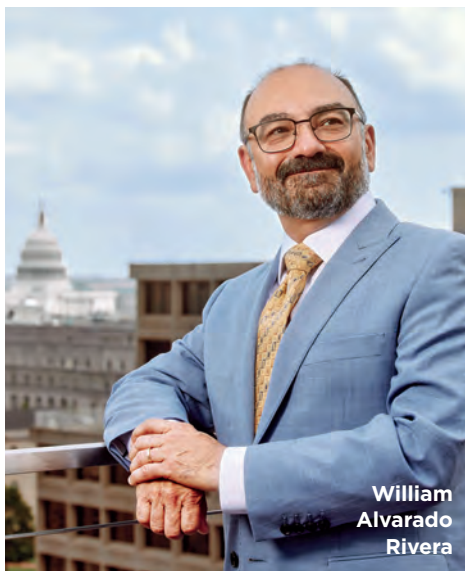
**I**N 2017, Gloria Single, 82, who had dementia, was sent to the hospital by her nursing home staff after she threw utensils at residents in the dining room. Later, the California facility where she'd lived with her husband for five years refused to allow her back—an action called “patient dumping.”

That triggered a yearslong legal battle, in which AARP Foundation lawyers fought to uphold state and federal laws that prohibit what happened to Single. In 2021, a California court ruled her rights were violated, confirming a legal precedent that protects more than a million nursing home residents.

For more than two decades, the AARP Foundation litigation team has taken up legal struggles like Single's in courts around the country. Among the issues tackled in these battles have been age discrimination, workplace bias, nursing home abuses and pension fraud. Through these cases the team has not only helped many individuals, it has shaped aging policy in America.

“We always want our cases to have as broad a reach as possible, both directly and then through deterrence,” says William Alvarado Rivera, AARP Foundation senior vice president for litigation.

Foundation lawyers also file briefs as



William Alvarado Rivera

“friends of the court” in cases involving important legal issues affecting people 50 and older. Recent examples include those filed in support of Medicare's ability to negotiate prescription drug prices and in cases aimed at protecting older homeowners from getting their home equity confiscated when they are unable to pay their property taxes.

Over the past five years, the team has taken on a lead role in over 20 cases and filed over 50 amicus briefs.

New challenges lie ahead, like the role AI can play in workplace bias, Rivera says: Some companies are using new AI recruitment tools targeting specific demographics to make it harder for older Americans to find jobs.

But the lawyers at AARP Foundation see their work as both a challenge and a privilege. “It is a unique opportunity to be able to have a law firm within a non-profit that has a mission as big and bold as ending senior poverty,” Rivera says.

For more information, visit [aarpfoundation.org/litigation](http://aarpfoundation.org/litigation).

**Recently, the AARP Foundation litigation team has been fighting against:**



**Age discrimination:**

Foundation lawyers filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of older workers claiming to have been discriminated against when they applied for a job at RTX Corporation (formerly known as Raytheon), one of the world's largest aerospace and defense companies.



**Mismanaged retirement pensions:**

In August, the litigation team helped reach a partial settlement in a class action suit filed to help employees and retirees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) who lost nearly \$90 million after their fiduciaries mishandled their retirement funds.



**Understaffed nursing homes:**

Foundation attorneys filed a class action lawsuit against Alden Group, one of Illinois' biggest nursing home operators, alleging that the company intentionally understaffed its facilities, therefore neglecting residents' health and putting them in danger.



**Wage theft:**

In 2023, Foundation lawyers filed a class action lawsuit alleging that a Maryland home care agency was underpaying its workers, many of whom were older adults living on low incomes.

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Getty Images (2)

# KNEE PAIN AND DISCOMFORT?

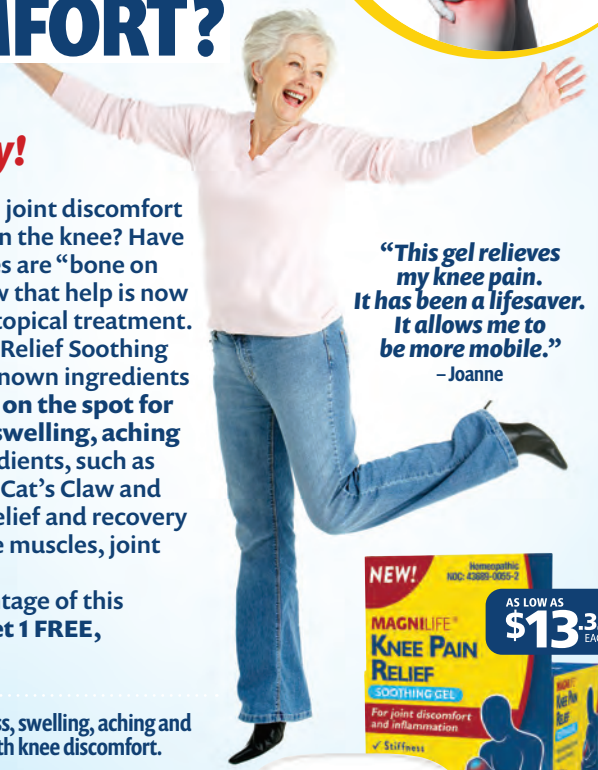
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Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Located in the Pain Relief section  
(OFFER NOT GOOD IN STORES)



WE'RE MAKING YOUR SIDE HEARD

## AARP ADVOCATES FOR YOU

WITH the election behind us, political leaders are turning their attention to policies that will affect the well-being of older Americans for years to come. AARP will make sure the voice of older adults is heard loud and clear. We have powerful tools to win the hearts and minds of officials in the White House, Congress, governor's offices and state legislatures.

The tools that allow us to shape and influence policy include:

► **Power in numbers.** AARP is widely recognized as one of the most powerful advocacy organizations in America by lawmakers and the public alike. In part, this power reflects the sheer magnitude of our constituency: We represent and fight for more than 120 million older Americans. For example, the landmark 2022 law to reduce prescription drug prices was made possible by AARP's strong advocacy—and by people like you joining us in this essential fight.

► **A bipartisan approach.** AARP does not endorse candidates, make campaign contributions or have a political action committee. When we endorse legislation, we seek sponsors on both sides of the aisle. That has earned us a reputation as a trustworthy source of information that lawmakers can work with, and as an advocate with no hidden agenda.

► **A deep advocacy tool kit.** Over the years, we have cultivated trusted relationships with leaders in government at all levels. We have estab-



lished a grassroots army of dedicated volunteers, and we work closely with like-minded organizations.

► **Influence in state capitals.** In states and local communities, AARP has made real progress in addressing the health and financial security of older Americans. In 2023, we notched more than 600 advocacy wins at the state level on issues related to caregiving, paid leave, home care, taxes, and housing. And AARP has scored more than 480 legislative victories in state capitals in 2024.

► **Policy expertise.** In the coming years, AARP will continue our focus on strengthening Social Security and Medicare, and ensuring that older Americans are able to remain in the communities they love. We will seek ways to help hard-pressed family caregivers, contain prescription drug prices, and advocate for lower health care costs. As politicians and parties come and go, AARP's commitment is constant, reflecting our 60-year mission to make life better for older adults and their families.

—**Nancy LeMond, chief advocacy and engagement officer, AARP**

**AARP BOARD OF DIRECTORS** Lloyd E. Johnson (**Board Chair**), Margot James Copeland (**First Vice Chair**), Robert Blancato (**Second Vice Chair**), Joseph F. Coughlin, Jeffrey D. Dunn, Beth Ellard, Jo Ann Jenkins, Rosanna A. Márquez, Alan Murray, Marie Quintero-Johnson, Libby Sartain, David Windley



## Use Your Head to Give from the Heart

If you are 70½ or older, you can reduce your tax bill when you donate to AARP Foundation directly from your Individual Retirement Account.

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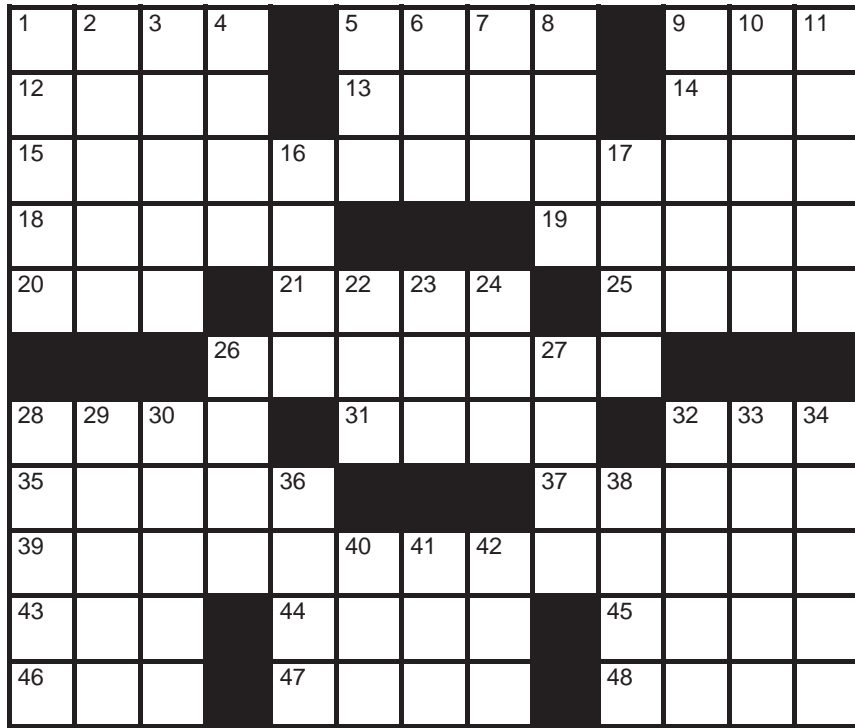
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PUZZLES BY STANLEY NEWMAN



## CROSSWORD

### Snowy

#### ACROSS

- 1 Open-mouth stare
- 5 Assist in wrongdoing
- 9 Traffic tie-up
- 12 Taj Mahal city
- 13 Sport played on ponies
- 14 Metallic rock
- 15 Corn cereal brand
- 18 Not as many
- 19 Lenders' legal claims
- 20 Long, thin fish
- 21 Corn Belt state
- 25 WWII turning point
- 26 "Charlotte's Web" author
- 28 Top of a mountain
- 31 Harp-shaped constellation
- 32 Industrial tub

- 35 Polite military denial
- 37 City near the Sphinx
- 39 Detective's fingerprint revealer
- 43 Early afternoon hour
- 44 Fuel for Old West locomotives
- 45 Grassy fields
- 46 Streets or avenues: Abbr.
- 47 Feeling nervous
- 48 Just average

#### DOWN

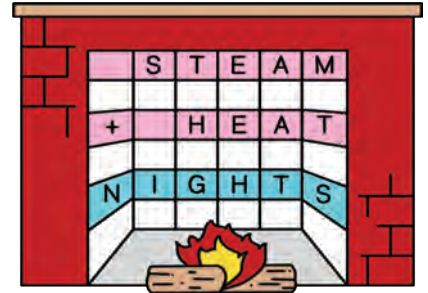
- 1 Minor mistake
- 2 See eye to eye
- 3 Hunt like a lion
- 4 Make simpler
- 5 Chimp or gorilla
- 6 Physique, for short
- 7 North Pole toymaker
- 8 Turnpike charge
- 9 Kidded around

- 10 Venue for boxing
- 11 Needing straightening up
- 16 Chicago newspaper's nickname
- 17 Personal assistant
- 22 Big-eyed bird
- 23 "How come?"
- 24 Ventilate
- 26 Freeway off-ramp
- 27 Crunchy Mexican food
- 28 Conjunction with a slash
- 29 British currency
- 30 Double-curve letters
- 32 YouTube upload
- 33 Regions
- 34 Sculpted upper body
- 36 Starch in sushi
- 38 Holmaking tools
- 40 Head gesture
- 41 Comedian's one-liner
- 42 Two-\_\_ paper towels

## NUMBER FUN

### WINTER WARM-UP

Each of the nine letters in the equation represents a different digit. T is three times G, and 4 is not used. What is the solution?

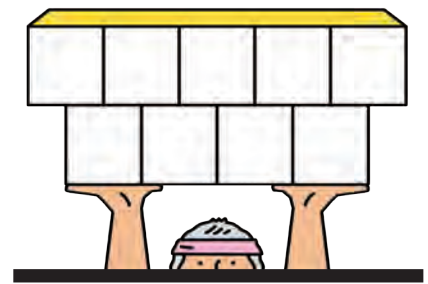


## WORDPLAY

### MENTAL AGILITY



Delete one letter from the word ACROBATICS and rearrange the rest to get the two-word name of a nation in the Western Hemisphere.



## THINK!

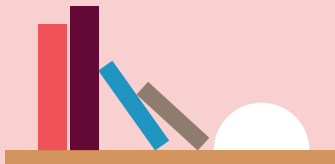
### SAY THAT AGAIN

What four-letter word for a common type of bird, pronounced differently, is also a common past-tense verb?



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# “I was able to exhale for the first time in years.”

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Wardrobe credits: Jumpsuit: Tom Ford; Earrings: JACQUEMUS; Shoes: Amina Muaddi. **Michelle Yeoh Page 36-38:** Wardrobe credits: Jumpsuit: Tom Ford; Earrings: JACQUEMUS; Shoes: Amina Muaddi. **Page 38:** Wardrobe credits: Knitwear: Surkana; Denim: Icon Denim; Earrings: Bottega Veneta; Rings: L'Atelier Nawbar. **Movies For Grownups Page 50:** From left: Dominic Leon/Courtesy A24; Kurt Iswarlenko/FX **Page 51:** Clockwise from top left: Courtesy Magnolia Pictures; Macall Polay/Courtesy Searchlight Pictures; Getty Images. **Center:** Courtesy Paramount Pictures **Page 52:** Clockwise from top left: Courtesy Focus Features; Courtesy Apple TV+ (2); Courtesy Netflix; Courtesy Universal Studios **Big 5-Oh Page 76:** Bradley Cooper primary photo: Alberto Rodriguez/Variety/Getty Images. Clockwise from top: Jeff Kravitz/Getty Images; Alamy Stock Photo (2); Jason McDonald/Netflix /Everett Collection; Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures/Everett Collection; Alamy Stock Photo. Lane: Taylor Hill/Getty Images; Evert: Roy Rochlin/Getty Images; Washington: Ethan Miller/Getty Images; King: Paul Morigi/Getty Images; Selleck: Gary Gershoff/Getty Images; Dench: Karwai Tang/WireImage.

**TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!**

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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**Email:** aarpmagazine@aarp.org

**Phone:** 888-687-2277 or international callers: 202-434-3525

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**SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES ON PAGE 71**

G	A	P	E		A	B	E	T		J	A	M	
A	G	R	A		P	O	L	O		O	R	E	
F	R	O	S	T	E	D	F	L	A	K	E	S	
F	E	W	E	R					L	I	E	N	S
E	E	L			I	O	W	A		D	D	A	Y
					E	B	W	H	I	T	E		
A	P	E	X		L	Y	R	A		V	A	T	
N	O	S	I	R					C	A	I	R	O
D	U	S	T	I	N	G	P	O	W	D	E	R	
O	N	E			C	O	A	L		L	E	A	S
R	D	S			E	D	G	Y		S	O	S	O

**WINTER WARM-UP:** 96783 + 5786 = 102569, **MENTAL AGILITY:** COSTA RICA, **SAY THAT AGAIN:** DOVE

**Like our puzzles?** Send us your comments, plus other puzzle types you'd like to see, at [aarpthemagazine@aarp.org](mailto:aarpthemagazine@aarp.org).

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

## Bradley Cooper

**(JANUARY 5):** Whether he's playing a musician, chef or Navy SEAL, this actor and filmmaker is known for fully inhabiting his roles.

**EARLY YEARS:** Cooper grew up near Philadelphia and, like his character in *Silver Linings Playbook*, is a fan of the Eagles.

★ \$13 billion

Amount Cooper's films have grossed

**'ELEPHANT' FAN:** As a kid, Cooper saw the film *The Elephant Man* and was inspired to act. In 2014, he starred in a Broadway version.

**METHOD MAN:** Cooper has acquired specific skills for his on-screen roles, including playing guitar and piano (*A Star Is Born*), cooking (*Burnt*) and marksmanship (*American Sniper*).

**QUOTABLE:** "Your voice is everything as an actor," Cooper told *The New York Times* in 2018. "It's like plugging in the electrical cord to truth." —Whitney Matheson



### MORE MILESTONE BIRTHDAYS

**Diane Lane**  
JANUARY 22  
The actor reprised her role as Riley's mom in the 2024 Pixar hit *Inside Out 2*.

60

**Chris Evert**  
DECEMBER 21  
The tennis legend recently shared that she has fought ovarian cancer—twice

70

**Denzel Washington**  
DECEMBER 28  
The acclaimed actor is set to star in Shakespeare's *Othello* on Broadway.

70

**Gayle King**  
DECEMBER 28  
The *CBS Mornings* cohost welcomed a second grandchild to her family in 2024.

70

**Tom Selleck**  
JANUARY 29  
The *Blue Bloods* and *Magnum, P.I.*, star released a memoir in 2024 titled *You Never Know*.

80

**Judi Dench**  
DECEMBER 9  
The esteemed actress cowrote the book *Shakespeare: The Man Who Pays the Rent*.

90



Photo credits and information on page 74

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