



Three hundred years ago, the average life expectancy in the Colonies was in the 30s. Life was harsh, diets were unbalanced, and (in the world before antibiotics and modern medicine) too many women died in childbirth and too many other people died of everything from scurvy to impacted teeth.

Today, scientific progress not only allows us to reach our 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s—it also gives each of us a real opportunity to live better lives.

Next year, Americans will celebrate a huge, ongoing birthday party, as the first members of the Baby Boom generation (born between 1946 and 1964) turn 60. These aging Boomers have an unprecedented capacity to do, to enjoy and to influence the world around them, as **PARADE** will explore in our *Live Longer, Better, Wiser™* series.

We plan to feature articles on health, fitness, sex, nutrition, personal finance and relationships by leading experts. We also will offer resources in the magazine and at www.parafe.com to help you and Americans of all ages live to your full potential.

—The Editors

The author of *Passages* explores the exciting next stage. Life Begins At 60

By Gail Sheehy

THE BUSINESSWOMAN in the big chair closes her eyes while concealer is applied by a makeup artist. She is getting ready to speak at an important conference. “I don’t keep a mirror in my office,” she says. “Why spoil my self-image? In my head, I’m still 30.”

In reality, the businesswoman is 60. Believe it or not, that is the birthday to be celebrated in 2006 by the vanguard of Baby Boomers. And right behind them are 4.3 million more Boomers who will celebrate—or deny—turning 50 next year. Will they approach the journey from here on with a what-the-hell-the-kids-are-gone *joie de vivre*? Or will they deny the reality of sure maturity and rely on diets and spandex in the effort to preserve their youthful self-image forever?

Age phobia among Baby Boomers is a well-known phenomenon. I was first made aware of it 30 years ago, when I wrote *Passages*, a book that delineated the stages of the adult life cycle. Readers then age 20 to 30 repeatedly told me they

only read up to their own passage; the other side of 30 was a dark continent better left unexplored.

I have to admit, I stopped before age 50 in *Passages*. I found it impossible to picture myself at such an advanced age. Back then, once past the big five-oh, careers were settled: One was either coasting toward retirement, resigned to failure or patronized as a has-been success. Children were launched. Idealism had faded. Learning was completed. Love was about cuddling or rocking grandchildren, certainly not associated with computer dating or uninhibited sex.

Fifty is still a threshold. For men, the specter of being stripped of the robes of position or power—as younger, cheaper Websters snap at their heels—begins to throw them off balance. For women, the marker event is, of course, menopause. My friend Liz Smith, the syndicated columnist, quips: “Women would rather stand up in a crowded restaurant and say, ‘I have bird flu,’ than admit to being in menopause.”

But now that I’m a seasoned woman in her 60s, enjoying the freedom of being



in what I call the Second Adulthood, I have a rebellious purpose: to put out the word that midlife today is a gift that keeps giving.

In the space of a single generation, Boomers have fundamentally altered the shape of the adult life cycle. By taking longer to grow up and delaying marriage, parenting and retirement, they have shifted all the stages of adulthood ahead by 10 to 15 years. Science now tells us that after our mid-50s, 70 percent of aging is controlled by our lifestyle: how actively we move around, whether we smoke or we drink to excess, how well we sleep, how many close friends we keep up with, and how engaged we remain in life, work and community. Medicine, together with alternative medicine and the fitness and yoga booms, has expanded the life course so that the average Boomer male is now expected to live into his high 70s and the average female into her 80s. Possibly 3 million or more are predicted to last until 100.

The years between 50 and 75 I call the Age of Mastery. In our First Adulthood, we are bound by our roles—student, apprentice, spouse, parent—and at pains to please those whose approval defines us. But after 50, we can finally be truly ourselves. A Midwestern teacher who re-

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Who's Turning 60?

Laura Bush
November 4



George W. Bush
July 6



Sylvester Stallone
July 6



Donald Trump
June 14



Diane Keaton
January 5



Bob Vila
June 20



Judy Woodruff
November 20



Reggie Jackson
May 18



Tommy Lee Jones
September 15



Suzanne Somers
October 16

cently deposited her last child at college and started her own business spells out a typical attitude: "I've spent 50 years of my life pleasing everyone—my teachers, my bosses, my boyfriends, my husband, my children. Now," she says, "I care about pleasing some people, and the rest can just go fly a kite!"

Free at last! Vital, visible, assured, alluring, veterans of failure, beneficiaries of the financial prudence of their parents—these are more fitting descriptions of the vanguard of Boomers than labeling them by age. By the sheer heft of their numbers and bold expectations, they may frame a new vision of aging.

This is a generation that has made a habit of reinventing themselves. Madonna, who at 47 calls herself Mrs. Guy Ritchie, has eschewed being a "very selfish person" for frolicking with her family on a "veddy British manor" in the English countryside. Her 2004 tour, "Re-Invention," amounted to a musical seminar for aging Boomers on how to do it (provided they're rich and famous).

The Goldie Hawns and Kurt Russells have inspired older Boomers not to settle for roles defined by age. Paul McCartney doesn't allow being knighted to get in the way of remaining a mop-haired rocker who keeps reminding us that our inner child is still very much alive.

Boomer women have broken the biological clock. For 30,000 generations,

one of the most basic instincts has been to reproduce ourselves as soon as we are able. But once Boomer women kicked open the doors of opportunity to fulfill themselves as more than breeders, they demanded the medical help to give birth later and later, and they got it. The actress Susan Sarandon was the emblematic late-baby model, birthing two children in her mid-40s. She turns 60 next year and won't see those children off to college until she arrives at what used to be standard retirement age.

Those in their 60s have active minds and vigorous bodies and enjoy the benefit of a mature perspective on life.

Geena Davis, America's first (fictional) female President, as star of the new ABC-TV series *Commander in Chief*, is following the pattern: She gave birth to her first child at 46 and followed up with twins at 48. "I'm so glad I waited," she says, on the brink of turning 50. "I can be a much better mother now." This may be the most radical voluntary alteration of the life cycle of all the changes wrought by the Boomer generation.

For the vast majority of American and European women and men today, the 60s are a stage where a maximum of freedom of choice co-exists with a minimum of physical limitations. While some are struggling with serious illness, financial hardship or caretaking of elderly relatives, as a broad generalization, today's 60-somethings still have active minds and vigorous bodies and

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Taking Our Pulse

The PARADE/Research!America Health Poll

What Americans Think About Aging

PARADE and Research!America recently polled a cross-section of 1,000 Americans about their attitudes toward aging and longevity. This is what we learned:

How long would you like to live?

A majority of Americans (58%) said they'd like to live to 85 at least, and 26% would like to reach 95 or older.

When asked, "How long do you think you will live, 43% said they anticipated a lifespan of 85 or beyond, and 10% expect to live to 95 or older.

In 20 years, how do you think life will be for 80-year-olds?

49% of Americans said 80-year-olds will be much healthier in 20 years than 80-year-olds today; 33% said life will be the same as it is for 80-year-olds today; and 9% believe that, in the year 2025, 80-year-olds will be able to do and enjoy virtually everything that 40-year-olds can do today.

What makes a person seem young?

50% answered that they considered a person young if he or she is "active," "busy" or "energetic." Others linked youth to "appearance" (13%), "a positive attitude" (10%) or "mental alertness" (5%).

Only 3% of those polled said "age" is the one factor, above all others, that makes them think of a person as "young."

What makes a person seem old?

30% answered that a physical problem or limitation is the one quality that makes a person seem old; 15% said a mental limitation, while 13% said a person is old when he or she is incapable of self-care. Only 5% cited a person's actual age.



Research!America is a nonprofit public-education and advocacy group for medical research. For more about medical and health research and its relationship to longevity, visit www.researchamerica.org on the Web.



Cher
May 20



Bill Clinton
August 19



Patty Duke
December 14



Al Green
April 13



Pat Sajak
October 26



Hayley Mills
April 18



Susan Sarandon
October 4



Candice Bergen
May 9



Ben Vereen
October 10



Linda Ronstadt
July 15



Rollie Fingers
August 25



Sally Field
November 6



Donovan
May 10



Steven Spielberg
December 18

enjoy the benefit of a mature perspective on life—the first time they possess that potent combination.

The Age of Mastery cannot be about coasting until retirement or playing endless rounds of games. It must be a preparation for stages that in the past only the exceptional among us ever reached. Most Boomers expect to continue to work in one way or another—part-time or as consultants, contract teachers, community volunteers or self-employed entrepreneurs—through their 60s and some into their 70s or beyond. This brand-new expectation is fueled not only by their desire to feel a continuing sense of purpose and social participation but also because they must be prepared to support themselves for greatly elongated later lives.

Men in corporate life have typically topped off around 55, but this generation of grayheads is still in demand. Companies are looking for the two E's—Experience and Energy. The grayheads who are the easiest to place, says Ed Koller, president of a leading media-recruitment firm based in Manhattan, are Boomers who have not left their jobs or been pushed out but who have grown bored. They wish to work another five to seven years in

What Would You Call The Stage Of Life Between 60 and 80?

That's what **PARADE**, the Harvard School of Public Health and the MetLife Foundation want to know. Several million Baby Boomers are entering their 60s with unprecedented good health, energy and expectations for longevity. Suddenly, traditional phrases like "senior citizen," "old" or "retired" seem outdated. Author Gail Sheehy has referred to this period as the "Second Adulthood" and the "Age of Mastery." But what would you call this stage of life? And why? The best ideas may be published in a future issue of **PARADE**.



Send your ideas to "Stage of Life," c/o **PARADE**, P.O. Box 4943, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163-4943 (include your name, address and age). Or go to www.parade.com to send your response and to learn more. Submissions may be edited and may be published or used in any medium. All submissions become the property of **PARADE** and will not be returned.

more interesting settings.

Many of today's women entering the Second Adulthood are more feisty than fearful. They don't want a man or a role to define them anymore. They are defining themselves. As women age and develop greater mastery over their emotions and their environment, many gain deepened confidence, power and inner harmony. Across cultures, older women become more focused, managerial, aggressive and political.

Workforce participation by older women also has increased dramatically. In 1970, half of women aged 50


to 59 were still working. By 2004, their participation was up to 70 percent.

At Catalyst, a nonprofit research organization working to advance women in business, the trend they see among women who have had significant careers in the commercial world is a desire for a new career in the nonprofit world, says Ilene Lang, its president, who made the change herself. "I look at my genetic profile—I could live to be 100. Two of my kids are still in college or grad school, so I'm not over the hump yet. Lots of people in their 50s are feeling the same way. And they want to put to use the great career expertise, experience and network they have built to help others."

It remains to be seen if the Boomers' youthful zeal for social action will be reborn as they reach the stage the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson said calls for "generativity"—the voluntary obligation to care for others. Thus far, compared to their parents' generation, Boomers have done less in every measure of civic engagement, including voting and community service, according to a report by the Harvard School of Public Health and the MetLife Foundation. Their added years of life give Boomers another chance to create a social legacy

of profound importance. All of us have a stake in appealing to this vital generation to give back, in appreciation for the cornucopia of opportunities they have been able to enjoy in our open society.

Inevitably, at some point in our 50s or 60s, most of us will face a crisis of great magnitude, such as when a serious illness strikes us or our partner, or one or the other is shoved off the career ladder and left hanging in meaninglessness, or a war puts an adult child in harm's way. Dramatic life accidents such as these strip away the edifice of our well-defined lives, and a hunger wells up for a greater depth of meaning and value in the activities of our everyday lives.

The acknowledgement of death can be an enormous asset in one's life. It pushes us to search for meaningfulness. And the search for meaning in whatever we do becomes the universal preoccupation of the Second Adulthood. It is rooted in a spiritual imperative that grows stronger as we grow older. Some people are moved to make a spiritual quest. Others do not relate this hunger to any religious belief but feel the need to stretch beyond self and even relationships, reaching toward a deeper appreciation of a collective intelligence working in the universe. 

PARADE Contributing Editor Gail Sheehy is the author of "Passages," "The Silent Passage" and her latest, "Sex and the Seasoned Woman."



Greg Gumbel
May 3



Liza Minnelli
March 12

Connie Chung
August 20



Barry Gibb
September 1



Susan St. James
August 14



Michael Milken
July 4



Dolly Parton
January 19



Oliver Stone
September 15



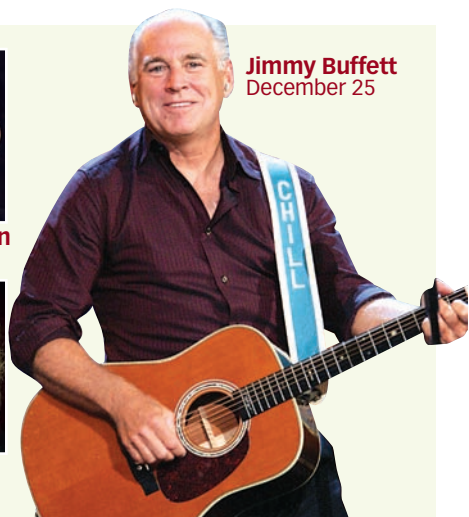
David Lynch
January 20



Larry Csonka
December 25



Tyne Daly
February 21



Jimmy Buffett
December 25