

# Close-ups

## A Patient's Perspective

### Aging Well: Poetry Can Help

#### 100th-year birthday poem

*I'm losing my hair and my ears and my eyes  
That my brain's also going should be no surprise  
My taste's not as keen as it was in the past  
As for climbing mountains, I've done my last  
I remember our past addresses with ease  
But I can't remember where I put my keys  
I shouldn't complain—I've had fun all the way  
And managed to reach my 100th birthday  
Now that I'm starting on a new page  
I hope no one says to me, "Peg, act your age!"*

#### 102nd-year birthday poem

*Old people bore you with tales from the past  
Each time you hear one, you hope it's the last  
But if you consider, the reason is clear  
The present is dull and the future looks drear  
So if we wander down memory lane  
And tell you the same thing again and again  
Forgive us, and think that it won't be too long  
Before you are singing the very same song!*



My eyes are failing me, but I still manage alone (except for that huge gray cat of mine, Buddy). I have several hundred verses, in case you need another, or I can make to order!—Peggy Mead

#### Commentary

These poems are written by my distant cousin. She is living independently and looks forward to calls from her family and going out with friends. At 102 years old, Peggy enjoys classy outings to restaurants and birthdays with her friends, and cooks when she can with her extensive collection of cookbooks. She shares stories of living abroad with her husband Homer when he worked as a petroleum engineer in Kuwait; Caracas, Venezuela; and Tripoli, Libya. She can also tell you about meeting Muammar Al Gaddafi with the Petroleum Women's Club of Tripoli.

The editors of *AFP* welcome submissions for Close-ups. Guidelines for contributing to this feature can be found in the Authors' Guide at <https://www.aafp.org/afp/authors>.

This series is coordinated by Caroline Wellbery, MD, Associate Deputy Editor, with assistance from Amy Crawford-Faucher, MD; Jo Marie Reilly, MD; and Sanaz Majd, MD.

A collection of Close-ups published in *AFP* is available at <https://www.aafp.org/afp/closeups>.

A 2010 Gallup poll revealed some positive aspects of aging, including overall perception of well-being, fewer worries (less than those in their 20s), and more supportive relationships. The respondents also reported better coping skills, "positivity bias" in relationships, and improved ability to regulate emotions. Aging, while putting a damper on our physical function and threatening vision and mobility, may still allow for improved well-being, happiness, supportive relationships, humor, and even inspiration for creative writing and poetry.

Janel Kam-Magruder, MD

#### Resources

National Council on Aging  
<https://www.ncoa.org/audience/older-adults-caregivers-resources/>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Aging  
<https://www.hhs.gov/aging/index.html>

Stone AA, Schwartz JE, Broderick JE, Deaton A. A snapshot of the age distribution of psychological well-being in the United States. *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA*. 2010;107(22):9985-9990. ■