

Celebrating the Achievements of the Older Generation

Celebrating the Achievements of the Older Generation:

Living Life to the Full

By

John Croucher

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Dedicated to all the
wonderful people who know
that age is just a number

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FOREWORD

Professor John Croucher has gathered in this book a pantheon of amazing people—artists, actors, authors, academics, adventurers, alpinists, an army officer, an archaeologist as well as physicians, philosophers, pianists, politicians and so many more. All of them have led the most interesting, fulfilled and long lives.

Reading each short biography makes one contemplate if there is a thread running through these individual journeys—so often there seems to be a mixture of goals, passion, dedication, creativity and for many moderate to extreme physical activity—in essence they are lives lived to the full.

You can read the biographies in one go or dip into them from time to time. You will find them inspirational and one can't read about these diverse characters without thinking about the factors which have contributed to their success and longevity.

Many of us are living longer than our parents and grandparents and many will live into our 80s, 90s and even 100s. Ideas, inspiration and motivation can be gleaned from the example these ageing pioneers from across the years, countries and professions provide for us, and can act as a compass for our own life's journey.

John has brought this kaleidoscope of different lives to our notice—it is up to us to glean what it is about them that can excite and influence us about the possible ageing adventures ahead of us.

The Hon Dr Kay Patterson AO
Age Discrimination Commissioner
Australian Human Rights Commission

PREFACE

This book was inspired by my late father-in-law, the Hon Dr Frank McGrath AM OBE, the former Chief Judge of the Compensation Court of New South Wales, who, having reached the age of 100, could reflect on an amazing career in which he received his PhD at the age of 78 years, later publishing it as a book. This was a project he embarked upon after his mandatory judicial retirement at age 72, and up until age 98 managed to spend many hours on his ride-on lawnmower where he kept the lawns on his large property in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney in immaculate condition.

As remarkable as Frank's achievements were, they led me to contemplate just how many others there are just like him—well past the time when they might be excused for putting their feet up and reflecting on a life well-lived. These are not people who have simply lived to an age well beyond what might be expected, but have achieved great things during their golden years.

In some cases, they are late bloomers who had led a relatively unremarkable life until their 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s and beyond. Then they tried something different and achieved spectacular success. Consider, for example, the case of Teiichi Igarashi, a former lumberjack and park ranger who climbed the 3,776-metre-high Mount Fuji every year between age 89 and 105, becoming the first centenarian to conquer Japan's tallest mountain. Then there is the Polish born Stanisław Kowalski who, at age 105, ran the 100 metres in 34.50 seconds, threw the shot put 4.27 metres and the discus 7.50 metres. Ida Keeling became an inspiration to everyone in 2016 when she became the first woman ever to complete the 100-metre race at the age of 100, finishing with a time of 1 min 17.33 seconds. The long-time New Yorker took up running at 67 to help cope with the grief of having lost both of her sons to drug-related violence in the span of two years.

This book includes individuals who are largely unknown to the public at large, as well as actors, political leaders and sports people who continued to perform long after others had long retired. There could easily have been hundreds more who could have been included in this volume, but the contents provide a glimpse into the lives and achievements of these

remarkable performers. Throughout the pages there are many humorous quotes written about growing old, often written by seniors themselves.

Referring to someone as “old” is not especially polite, even though it may be accurate. Generally, there are three stages of life, namely, young, middle-aged and old, but precisely when you reach the final category is a matter for conjecture. One survey of 18 to 29-year-olds found that 60% thought that a 65-year-old qualified as being classified as “old”. And yet only 16% of those aged over 60 felt the same way. Overall, a surprising two-thirds of respondents thought that age 65 was middle-aged or even young.

The research involved spanned several years; and numerous sources were called upon to create the final product. In some cases, there were discrepancies in aspects of certain places, people and events, but all efforts were made to include the one that seemed correct. There are around 400 references and notes provided at the end of the volume.

I would like to thank the Hon Dr Kay Patterson AO for writing such a splendid Foreword. Her background as a federal government minister and her role as Age Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission (2016–2023) made her an ideal choice. There was also wonderful assistance and guidance from my marvellous wife, Rosalind, who not only wrote the introduction but also ensured that the project was both enjoyable and on track.

Much appreciation also goes to the brilliant historian Dr Annette Salt, who took on the challenge of undertaking the tremendous amount of research required to obtain relevant information and was also able to provide a valuable list of copyright permissions to pave the way for the finished work. This was a wide-ranging and daunting assignment that she undertook with relish.

Thanks also must go to the outstanding Macquarie University researcher Stephnie Hon who worked tirelessly to piece together an unformatted volume into a completed book that the reader can easily comprehend. This was a formidable task and she performed it with enormous diligence and expertise.

John S Croucher
Sydney, Australia

INTRODUCTION

The Older Generation: Living Life to the Full celebrates achievement across a wide range. Some of the people included in this book continued doing things throughout their lives, and into very old age. Some picked up skills again and developed them in different ways later in life. Others embarked upon entirely new activities and enterprises. It is a fascinating mix. Some may be familiar names; many may be surprises—and hidden gems. It is a collection of the famous and surprising—cameos of the limitless possibilities of life, where “age is only a number”, as nonagenarian marathon runner Gladys Burrill observed.

Many have been recognised and celebrated in documentaries and biographies—like playwright Arthur Miller, astronaut/politician John Glenn and actor Betty White, when she was 96. Futurist Jacque Fresco featured in semi-biographical films in his 90s—*Future by Design* and *Zeitgeist Addendum*. Artist Beatrice Wood’s 100th birthday was recognised in a film, *Beatrice Wood: Mama of Dada*. At the age of 88, opera singer Magda Olivero appeared as herself in the movie, *The Art of Singing: Golden Voices of the Century*, and Tao Porchon Lynch featured in the documentary, *If You’re Not In the Obit, Eat Breakfast*, when she was 102. Singer-songwriter Joy McKean’s 80th birthday was celebrated with a concert and when she was 90, the documentary film, *Slim and I*, told the story of Joy’s life with her husband, Australian country music singer Slim Dusty.

Some wrote their own autobiographies. Sister Madonna Buder published, at age 80, *The Grace to Race: The Wisdom and Inspiration of the 80-Year-Old World Champion Triathlete Known as the Iron Nun*. Obstetrician and gynaecologist, Dr Catherine Hamlin, at age 77, published *The Hospital by the River: A Story of Hope*, about the hospital she established to treat obstetric fistula in Ethiopia. At age 97, yoga specialist Tao Porchon Lynch published *Dancing Light: The Spiritual Side of Being Through the Eyes of a Modern Yoga Master*. At age 103, athlete Ida Keeling published *Can’t Nothing Bring Me Down*. Aviator Margaret Ringenberg published her story, *Girls Can’t Be Pilots*, at age 77. At age 80, bodybuilder Ernestine Shepherd published *Determined, Dedicated, Disciplined To Be*

Fit. Virtuoso pianist Arthur Rubinstein wrote two volumes to tell his life story, the second, *My Many Years*, when he was 93.

A number of people from the acting and creative writing worlds published autobiographies, like Christopher Plummer, Vanessa Redgrave and Agatha Christie. Political leader Nelson Mandela published *Long Walk to Freedom* at age 86, and at age 92, *Conversations With Myself*, a collection of letters, diary entries and other writings that provide a valuable insight into his life.

Some have prizes and awards named in their honour—like the runner, Paul Spangler, and the skier, Yuichio Miura. Maggie Smith was honoured on a postage stamp. David Attenborough has had 20 species and genera named after him.

Achievements are shown across a wide range. One theme is the number of world records that people have attained in the field of athletics and other physical competitions—making and remaking records as they rewrote the records categories. For marathon runner Fauja Singh, records, he said, were a “by-product” of his age, like the fastest marathon time in the 90-plus age bracket and, at the age of 100, setting five world records for his age group in a single 94-minute period. Some of these events had no previous record holder, as nobody over age 100 had ever attempted the distance.

Stanislaw Kowalski made his debut in official athletics competitions at the age of 104, when on 10 May 2014 he became the oldest person in Europe to run 100 metres. A new age division for World Masters Athletics for over 105s had to be created and, as he was the only member to have competed, all of his performances were world records. Other men in this volume in these record-breaking categories of sporting competitions, include cyclist Robert Marchand, bodybuilder Jim Arrington, marathon runners Ed Whitlock and Paul Spangler, Olympian Oscar Swahn and ironman Neville de Mestre.

Of the women, athlete Olga Kotelko set no fewer than 30 world records and won hundreds of medals in her age category. In the 90–95 age category she was regarded as one of the world’s greatest athletes, holding every track and field world record she attempted for her age group. Marathon runner, Gladys “Gladyator” Burrill, entered the Guinness World Records for being the oldest woman, at age 92, to complete a marathon, power walking and jogging her way throughout the race. Sister Madonna “Iron Nun” Buder achieved fame at the age of 82, in 2010, when she became the overall “ironman” world record holder and has opened up about five new age

groups for competitors. Runner Ida Keeling became the first woman ever to complete the 100-metre race at the age of 100, in 2016. In the same year, just before her 101st birthday, she set the world record for the number of push-ups in her age bracket, as well as breaking her own world record over 100-metres. She also became another world record sprinter at the age of 103. Swimmer Katherine Pelton set 34 FINA Masters World Records from the age of 83.

There are examples of older people doing singularly extraordinary things. Former nurse, Barbara Hillary, became one of the oldest people to set foot on the North Pole, and the first black woman, in 2007, when she was 75, and at 79, to do the same at the South Pole. Nearing his 100th birthday, Tom Moore became a celebrity in the UK and worldwide in early 2020, with his fundraising campaign to support the National Health Service. Tom's ambition was to complete one hundred 25-metre lengths of his garden, ten lengths per day, with the help of a walking frame. He named his campaign "Tom's 100th Birthday Walk for the NHS".

While his initial goal was to raise £1,000, he raised almost £40 million and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his work. Australian Indigenous artist, Emily Kame Kngwarreye, only took up painting in her 70s. Completing an estimated 3,000 artworks in eight years before her death in her mid-80s, she became one of the world's great painters.

There are examples of people who have contributed throughout their lives, like Dr Leila Denmark, paediatrician, who practised medicine in Atlanta for 73 years, finally retiring at age 103 as the world's oldest practising physician in the country (according to the American Medical Association), and Australian artist Guy Warren who continues to paint at age 100. In 2000, Manoel de Oliveira, at age 92 he earned the mantle of "the world's oldest active filmmaker".

There are also many "firsts" among the selected subjects. Diana Nyad, at age 64 became the first person confirmed to swim from Cuba to Florida without the aid of a shark cage, her journey from Havana to Key West covering a distance of 180 kilometres. Aleksander Doba, at age 71, was the first person to paddle a 7-metre sea kayak across the Atlantic Ocean in an easterly direction. At 74, he set a record for the longest open water crossing ever undertaken by a kayaker, taking about 99 days.

There are UK honours: in addition to Tom Moore, Michael Caine, PG Wodehouse, William Crookes, David Attenborough and Anthony Hopkins received knighthoods; and Agatha Christie became a Dame. There are also

two Nobel prize winners: Christian Mommsen, the Nobel Prize for Literature, at age 84, and Nelson Mandela, joint winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993, at age 76.

There are many Guinness World Records among the included entries, for being “the oldest” in a wide range of categories. Like Doris Long, who at age 92, abseiled 67 metres down the iconic Portsmouth’s Millgate House tower block. On her 100th birthday, she abseiled almost 100 metres down the Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth and, at age 101 years and 55 days, Doris abseiled the same tower again. Other Guinness-worthy feats include, for example: Ernestine Shepherd—World’s Oldest Performing Female Body Builder, at age 73; Tao Porchon Lynch—World’s Oldest Competitive Ballroom Dancer, at age 97; Nola Ochs—World’s Oldest College Graduate, at age 95; Allan Stewart—World’s Oldest Graduate, at age 97; Peter Weber Jr—World’s Oldest Qualified Pilot still licensed and flying solo, at age 95, a category made for him; Walter Bingham—World’s Oldest Skydiver, at age 95, and at age 97, the oldest Radio Talk show Host.

Professional draughts player, Asa Long, achieved the status of being both the oldest (at 80) and youngest (at 18) US national champion. There are also oldest Academy Award winners: Christopher Plummer—at 82, was the oldest to win an Academy Award, overtaken in 2021 by Anthony Hopkins, who won the award for Best Actor at 83. While not a record of such status, Marie Hunt’s award of an honorary high school diploma at age 103, said to her that she had had “a successful life”.

Her late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, holds a special place in this collection. In 2011, she celebrated her Diamond Jubilee for 60 years as monarch and in 2015, at the age of 89, she became the longest reigning British monarch, surpassing the record of her great-great-grandmother Queen Victoria. Queen Elizabeth II was the longest-lived and longest-reigning British monarch, as well as the longest-serving female head of state in world history. Her Majesty was also the world’s oldest living monarch, the longest-reigning current monarch, and oldest and longest-serving head of state.

Some died doing what they love. Aleksander Doba died while climbing Kilimanjaro at age 74, and figure-skater Yvonne Dowlen passed away on the ice at age 90.

A number of the subjects commented on the secrets to their longevity. The athletes in the collection regularly spoke of diet—like marathon runner Fauja Singh, cyclist Robert Marchand and marathon runner Sister Madonna

Buder. The secret for others was very individual. For athlete Stanislaw Kowalski, it was “never going to the doctor”, and doing whatever he wants. For Yvonne Dowlen it was doing the thing she loves, figure-skating. For Doris Travis it was dancing. But for artist Beatrice Wood, it was “art books, chocolates, and young men”. For Guy Warren it was a combination of things, “good genes, good luck and a whiskey every night, and two golden rules — “Don’t sit around in pubs” and “Look for the good in everything”.

Positivity was a common theme. Centenarian paediatrician Dr Leila Denmark said, simply, “you keep on doing what you do best as long as you can”. And marathon runner, Gladys Burrill, declared, “it’s so important to think positive. It’s easy to get discouraged and be negative. It makes such a difference in how you feel and your outlook on everything.”

The author has included some very entertaining quotes to open each entry in the book — some quite irreverent and even risqué. The subjects themselves also offer some very memorable thoughts. Reflecting on the idea that “age is only a number”, Gladys Burrill said, “People can be old at 40. It’s important to think positive and to dream.”

“To inspire, that’s the name of the game”, said Olga Kotelko. And, as Allan Stewart remarked, “It is never too late to expand your mind, make new friends and challenge yourself to achieve something worthwhile.”

The book provides a selection of talent and achievement, in concise biographical cameos, presented alphabetically. For every person included in this volume the cameo is but a short snippet of a rich, lived life. Their stories should be an inspiration to the ageing populations around the globe.

Emeritus Professor Rosalind F Croucher AM FAAL FACLM(Hon)

Respect old people. They graduated school without Google or Wikipedia.
Unknown

MOMOFUKU ANDO



Born: 5 March 1910

Died: 5 January 2007 (aged 96)

Field: Inventing and business

Momofuku Ando was born into a wealthy family of Hoklo Chinese ethnicity in Chiayi County, Taiwan, at a time when it was under Japanese colonial rule. Following the death of his parents, he was raised by his grandparents who operated a small kimono fabrics store within the city walls of Tainan. They later inspired the 22-year-old Momofuku to raise 190,000 yen to begin his own textiles organisation in Taipei. The following year he travelled to Osaka, Japan, establishing a trading company. In 1966 he married his Japanese wife, Masako Andō, and became a Japanese citizen.

Momofuku became involved in a variety of other business ventures, including the manufacture of slide projectors, charcoal production, the fabrication of barrack housing, salt production and the founding of a school. He engaged in all of these businesses on the basis of a firm conviction that he should seek out work that contributed to people's lives.

Japan faced dire food shortages after the end of the Second World War. The streets were filled with hungry people, and countless numbers collapsed and died of malnutrition. Momofuku, who witnessed this horrifying spectacle, became keenly aware of the critical importance of food. He realised that, in the absence of food, clothing and shelter are useless and there can be no art or culture.

As Momofuku was passing a black-market area near Osaka Station one day, he happened to see people form a long line in the cold at a makeshift stall to wait for a bowl of ramen noodles. The sight reminded him of how much Japanese people liked noodles, and at the same time convinced him that this was a sign of an enormous hidden demand. A few years later, the Ministry of Health in Japan encouraged its citizens to eat bread made from wheat flour that was supplied by the USA. Momofuku wondered why bread was recommended instead of noodles, which were more familiar to the Japanese people.

In 1957, the credit union, where he had reluctantly accepted the position of director at the request of an acquaintance, went bankrupt, causing him to lose all his property except a rented house in Ikeda City, Osaka. Momofuku cheered himself up with the thought that all he had lost was property, and that the experience of failure had strengthened him. Recalling the sight of the queue of people at the black-market ramen stall and the fact that noodles were a favourite food of the Japanese people, he resolved to create "Ramen that can be quickly prepared and eaten at home with only hot water". This marked Momofuku's first step toward the realisation of an idea he had been incubating for a long time to claw his way out of a difficult situation.

After one year of experimenting with his "flash-frying" method, at age 48, on 25 August 1958, he marketed the first package of pre-cooked instant noodles with an original chicken soup-based soy sauce flavour called Chicken Ramen. It was considered a luxury item, costing the equivalent of US\$5.70 [35 yen], placing it at around six times the cost of traditional udon and soba noodles at the time.

In 1964, in an effort to promote the instant noodle industry, he founded the Japan Instant Noodles Industry Association, to develop guidelines for

fair competition and product quality, while introducing several industry standards. These included stamping production dates on packaging.

In 1966, at age 56, he decided to spread Chicken Ramen internationally and embarked on a trip to Europe and the USA. During one visit with the buyers for a supermarket chain in the US, he saw the managers in the office divide up a block of Chicken Ramen, place the noodles in paper cups or coffee cups, add hot water, then begin eating with forks. When they were finished, they discarded their cups into the rubbish tin. At once he realised that paying close attention to differences in eating habits was the key to making instant noodles a global food. It heralded his new product: noodles in a cup that could be eaten with a fork.

Momofuku followed the principle that “Tenacity is the breeding ground for inspiration”. At age 61, on 18 September 1971, he unveiled Cup Noodles, igniting the popularity of instant noodles internationally, with the introduction of a waterproof cup which was wider at the top than the bottom. Understanding how Americans ate their noodles, he concluded that a Styrofoam-type cup with a peel-off lid would keep the noodles warm and all the user had to do was add boiling water and stir.

His idea was masterful, and the efficiency and low price would transform the industry. He founded what was later known as Nissin, in Ikeda, Osaka, Japan, which had begun as a small family-run enterprise producing salt. As the price of his instant ramen dropped, his business flourished. His product was introduced in the US market in 1973 under the name “Cup O’Noodles”. Soon after he opened businesses in Brazil, Singapore, Hong Kong, India, the Netherlands, Germany, Thailand, and other countries.

Known as the inventor of instant noodles (ramen noodles) and the creator of the brands Chicken Ramen and Cup Noodles, Momofuku passed away of acute myocardial infarction at age 96 on 5 January 2007 in Ikeda. He was survived by his wife Masako, two sons Hirotoshi Ando, Koki Ando and a daughter Akemi Horinouchi. Momofuku claimed that the secret of his long life was playing golf and eating Chicken Ramen almost every day—which he is said to have done until the day he died. At the time of his death, his company had recorded US\$300 million in annual profits.

On 8 April of the following year, 2008, a ramen summit, Heisei 20th, was held in Osaka and a bronze statue of him was unveiled at the Momofuku Ando Instant Ramen Museum in Ikeda. It depicts him standing on top of a base resembling a Cup O’Noodles container while also holding a Cup

O’Noodles container in his right hand. The then Prime Minister of Japan, Yasuhiro Nakasone, was present at the unveiling ceremony. On 1 October the same year, the company’s name was changed to “Nissin Foods Holdings” at the same time as the launching of Nissin Foods Products Co. Ltd.

The instant noodles created by Momofuku remain extremely popular today in many parts of the world, with the flavours on offer designed to satisfy the locals. In 2018, the World Instant Noodles Association (WINA) reported that there were two areas dominating world instant noodle consumption of 103,620 million servings. These included 40,250 million servings in China (including Hong Kong) and 12,540 million servings in Indonesia. The countries with leading annual per capita consumption are South Korea with 75 servings, Vietnam with 54, and Nepal at 53.

Momofuku received widespread recognition and awards for his invention and achievements. In 1977 he was awarded the Medal of Honour with Blue Ribbon, in 1982 the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Second Class, Gold and Silver Star, and in 1983 the Medal of Honour with Dark Blue Ribbon. At the age of 82 he received the Science and Technology Agency “Distinguished Service Award”, and at age 92 in 2002, the Order of the Rising Sun, Second Class, Gold and Silver Star, Second Class, the second-most prestigious Japanese decoration for Japanese civilians.

He bequeathed many sayings and suggestions that give an insight into his character and beliefs. They include “The fundamental misunderstanding of humanity is believing that we can achieve all our desires without limitation”, “Peace will come when people have food” and “Eating wisely will enhance beauty and health”. One of his more endearing quotes is “Mankind in noodlekind”, although its precise meaning still remains unclear.

*When I was a kid, I went to the store and asked the guy,
"Do you have any toy train schedules?"*
Steven Wright

JIM ARRINGTON

Born: 1 September 1932

Field: Bodybuilding

Jim Arrington was born in the USA. He suffered from asthma as a young child, which meant he was unable to run very far or play games as much as he wanted. His nickname was “Skinny Bones”. At age 13, when walking around a local drug store, he noticed a bodybuilding magazine and it changed his life forever. He instantly “fell in love” with bodybuilding when he saw the pictures of the muscular bodies. He later said that “They were so huge I just couldn’t believe it! Even their forearms were massive, just like Popeye. Everything else was huge, too”.

Soon after, he ordered a 25-cent pamphlet that contained basic training advice, using it to start his transformation through bodybuilding. Using the pictures from the pamphlet as a source of inspiration, as well as guidance on training correctly, he began working out. As a result of his regular exercise routine, Jim soon became much healthier, and his physical condition was greatly improved. Within three months of training, he went from 52.3 kilograms to 56.8 kilograms, and by age 15, he weighed 68.2 kilograms, nearly 16 kilograms more than when he began training.

In the following years he trained harder and harder in the gym, his physique improving with each passing year. His fascination with bodybuilding was becoming a lifelong commitment. However, it was only in 1977, when he was 45 years old, that he decided to enter competitions for the first time. Before then, he did not think he was big enough. Training in the “Mecca of Bodybuilding” in Venice Beach, California, he felt that he did not have the genetics or bone structure to match those of other regular bodybuilders of a younger age.

The following year, he put the spray tan on for the first time in his life. His debut came at the 1978 Mr America contest, in the 40-plus category. Of

the 15 competitors, Jim was proclaimed the winner of his weight division, earning him the “Most Muscular” title. He finished in 2nd place overall. After his success, he became a regular in America’s bodybuilding contests. He appeared in Venice Muscle Beach’s competitions each summer, as well as competing at the national level in the Master’s division.

Throughout his competitive career, Jim took part in over 60 bodybuilding contests, winning 16 of them. At age 83 years and 6 days, Jim officially set the world record as the oldest male bodybuilder, winning the national amateur competition. He was presented with a Pro Card Invitation and, shortly after, won his Masters Pro Card.

Jim’s philosophy is “Everyone always says there’s something they have to work a little more on, and they say they aren’t ready yet, they tell themselves they’ll compete later. You can’t look at it that way, you need the experience—you just have to do it.” Although his training is now not as rigorous as it once was, he still keeps a regular training schedule and, in some weeks, trains four or five days for about an hour. During the workout, he typically trains all of his muscles in one training session, making them more efficient — both in terms of muscle strength and cardio.

Jim maintains a regular diet that is high in protein and healthy fats, and moderate in carbohydrates. When training for a competition, he lowers his carbohydrate intake, and stays in a slight caloric deficit until he is satisfied with his physique. He considers himself the proof that, by staying active and eating nourishing foods, you can live a happier and healthier life, and, as he says, by acting out your goals and sticking to them.

At age 89, in an interview with *Body and Soul*, Jim declared, “For some reason, and I can’t understand it, people seem to be inspired by me. And that keeps me going because that inspires me, that other people can be inspired by me, even though I can’t believe they are!”

He also revealed how he performs a regular “split routine”, disclosing that “I cut the body up in three sections. For instance, I would do legs on Monday. And mid-body, including the abs, chest, and the lower and middle back on Wednesday. And then I do shoulders and arms on Friday”.

You know you are getting older when “Happy Hour” is a nap.
Gray Kristofferson

DAVID ATTENBOROUGH



Born: 8 May 1926

Field: Biology, broadcasting, writing, and natural history

David Frederick Attenborough was born in Isleworth, Middlesex, England, to Mary and Frederick Attenborough, his father being the principal of the University College of Leicester. David's siblings are two fostered girls, Helga and Irene Bejach, along with brothers John Attenborough and Richard Attenborough, the latter becoming an actor and director of some renown. When he attended Wyggeston Grammar School for Boys in Leicester as a young boy, David became interested in collecting fossils, stones and natural specimens.

In 1945, he won a scholarship to Clare College in Cambridge University from which he obtained a degree in natural sciences. In 1947, he was called up for national service in the Royal Navy, spending two years stationed in North Wales and the Firth of Forth in Scotland. In 1950, he married Jane

Elizabeth Ebsworth Oriel and the couple later had two children, Robert and Susan.

After leaving the Navy, in 1952 David joined the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and later became a producer for the “Talks Department”, which handled all non-fiction broadcasts. His earliest projects included a series titled *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral?* and *Song Hunter*. He then appeared in a three-part series, *The Pattern of Animals*, concerning an animal-collecting expedition. First broadcast in 1954, *Zoo Quest* became the first of his many Natural History Unit productions for the BBC.

In 1957, when the BBC formed a Natural History Unit, David created a Travel and Exploration section to assist him with *Zoo Quest*, along with the *Travellers' Tales and Adventure* series. In the early 1960s, he left the BBC temporarily, to study social anthropology at the London School of Economics.

In 1965, he became the controller of BBC Two, which included music, arts, entertainment, archaeology, experimental comedy, travel, drama, sport, business, science and natural history in its schedule. Two years later, when broadcasts were in colour, he introduced televised snooker and the “BBC2 Floodlit Trophy”, a competition for British rugby league clubs held between 1965 and 1980. In 1975, he presented three programs, *The Tribal Eye*, *The Explorers* and *Fabulous Animals*. In the following year, the BBC signed a co-production deal with Turner Broadcasting to produce and present the natural history television series, *Life on Earth, a Natural History by David Attenborough*, that was first broadcast in January 1979. The program made television history by using innovative computer technology.

David later presented the twelve-episode documentary, *The Living Planet*, that ran in the UK between 19 January and 12 April 1984. It won a Primetime Emmy for “Outstanding Informational Series”. In November 1993, then aged 67, he presented a six-episode series, *Life in the Freezer*, that explored life on the planet’s icy regions. In January 1995, he wrote and presented the six-episode series, *The Private Life of Plants*, that employed time-lapse photography to show an accelerated version of the growth of plants.

In 2002, at age 76, he presented the ten-episode series, *The Life of Mammals*, using infrared cameras to uncover the habits of nocturnal mammals. David wrote and presented the five-episode series, *Life in the Undergrowth*, that premiered in November 2005, utilising macro photography to capture the behaviour of very small animals. Between

4 February and 3 March 2008, when David was aged 81, he wrote and produced the five-part series, *Life in Cold Blood*, that highlighted the lives of reptiles and amphibians. This was the final collection of his programs on all major groups of terrestrial animals and plants.

Since 2014, David has been a presenter on BBC Radio 4's *Tweet of the Day*, as well as narrating the successful documentary series, *Blue Planet I*, in 2017 that looked at the marine environment. In 2018, he narrated the five-part series, *Dynasties*, each episode of which dealt with a particular species, and in the following year, narrated the eight-part documentary series, *Our Planet*, for *Netflix*. In October 2020, at age 94, he began filming in Cambridge for the series, *Green Planet*.

David has received many honours and awards for his outstanding work. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Science degree from the University of Cambridge (1984) and a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Oxford (1988), along with 32 other honorary degrees from several British universities.

In 2002, a poll taken by the BBC placed him among the “100 Greatest Britons”. He is also one of the top ten “Heroes of Our Time” according to *New Statesman* magazine in 2011. A *Reader's Digest* poll in 2006 named him the most trusted celebrity in Britain. The following year, he won *The Culture Show's* “Living Icon Award”. He is the only person to have won British Academy of Film and Television Arts Awards (BAFTAs) for programmes in each format of black and white, colour, HD, 3D and 4K.

David was made a Knight Bachelor in the 1985 Queen's Birthday Honours and a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George (GCMG) in the 2020 Queen's Birthday Honours for “services to television broadcasting and to conservation”. In 1983, he was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS). In 2017, he was made an Honorary Member of the Moscow Society of Naturalists and, in the following year, won a Primetime Emmy Award for “Outstanding Narrator”. At least 20 species and genera, both living and extinct, have been named in his honour. His older brother, the actor Richard Attenborough, passed away in 2014 at the age of 90.

He's as old as some trees.

Pat Burns

WILLIAM IVY BALDWIN



Born: 31 July 1866

Died: 8 October 1953 (aged 87)

Field: Ballooning, parachuting, high-wire performing

William Ivy was born in Houston, Texas, to John F and Elizabeth Ivy. At age 12, he ran away from home to join a visiting circus, where he became skilled in wire-walking, acrobatics and ballooning. He was a tightrope walker for Thayer Dollar Circus, then joined Thomas and Sam Baldwin as "The Baldwin Brothers", performing high wire acts, balloon ascensions and parachuting. The Baldwin Brothers used handmade balloons filled with hot air, from which Ivy performed acrobatics and then parachuted to the ground as the balloons ascended to 750 metres. In 1883, he adopted the name of "Ivy Baldwin". In 1890, when Ivy was aged 24, the businessman and zookeeper, John Elitch, brought him to Denver, Colorado, where he

performed balloon ascensions and parachute drops at Elitch Gardens. He loved Colorado and it became his home for the rest of his life.

In 1893, Ivy became a solo performer and, the following year, joined the US Army Signal Corps as a Sergeant, at the urging of Lt William A Glassford. Ivy piloted and maintained the Signal Corps' demonstration balloon and headed the first "balloon train" since the Civil War. By 1896, the Army's one balloon had become useless, and it had no money to purchase a new one. However, Ivy persuaded them to provide \$700 with which he would make his own balloon. And so, he and his wife Bertha cut and sewed a pongee silk balloon at their home. Ivy covered the silk with varnish to make it airtight and used the rope webbing and basket from the original craft. Instead of the risky hot-air method, the new balloon was inflated with hydrogen, which was manufactured and compressed into tanks at the military post.

In 1898, as part of the US campaign to capture Spanish-held Santiago de Cuba on the southern coast of Cuba during the Spanish-American War, Ivy piloted the balloon that provided location information of Spanish snipers before the Battle of San Juan Hill. The balloon was shot down on 30 June that year and landed in the Aguadores River, making Ivy the first aviator to be shot down during wartime in the US. After receiving an honourable discharge, he took fragments of the balloon with him, which he later sold when he performed, calling himself "the air hero of the late War".

Ivy was small in stature, weighing barely 45 kilograms and was about 160 centimetres tall. Despite his slight frame, he demonstrated great courage and an adventurous spirit. He became rather a daredevil, refusing to quit when the going got tough. When he walked on the high wire, he used ordinary cloth shoes with resin soles. He balanced himself with an 8-metre pole weighing 4.5 kilograms, on each end of which was a 45-gram knob. His most dangerous walk took place in 1885 in San Francisco, when at age 18, Ivy walked a wire stretched over the Pacific Ocean from Cliff House to Seal Rocks, with a pounding surf below.

With the invention of the aeroplane, Ivy became a specialist in parachute jumping and made more than 2,800 jumps from balloons and aircraft. His remarkable stunts made him world famous, once performing for the Emperor of Japan who had a silk kimono made for him with pictures of Ivy and his wire act embroidered down the front.

In 1910, at age 44, Ivy built and flew his own plane. He was selected to be in the Nevada Aerospace Hall of Fame for being "the first person to