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The newest story on earth is the story of aging. Both in raw numbers and as a proportion of the world's population, there are more people over 50 alive today than ever before. In this special portfolio, we examine the many challenges and tremendous opportunities that come along with this unprecedented demographic phenomenon—from the science of healthy aging to advice for visionary investing to insight into how to reimagine a cultural treasure for our times. This is your story.



A New Age

The acclaimed photojournalists of *Magnum Photos* capture scenes of aging around the world



Living in Our History

Today's older people have seen upheavals and tragedies over many years. They share their hard-won wisdom—and their empathy—with the beloved generations who follow.



A Survivor's Story

PHOENIX, ARIZONA
Gerda Weissmann Klein, 95, likes to say that even a boring day is beautiful if you're living in freedom. The Holocaust survivor doesn't take these words lightly. After she endured six years of Nazi brutality, she was liberated by U.S. troops—including Kurt Klein, who would become her husband. The gift of survival inspired Klein to spend her life teaching tolerance and the blessings of American citizenship, a calling that earned her a Presidential Medal of Freedom.

—Photograph by Patrick Zachmann



Stepping Into the Breach

MOSUL, IRAQ One of her sons was killed by terrorists in 2007, and two sons, a daughter and a son-in-law died during the 2016-17 battle that liberated Mosul from the Islamic State. Now **Sana'a Ahmad Ibrahim al-Taei**, 61, helps care for 22 of her orphaned grandchildren. Because the family home was destroyed, she and her husband share a four-room apartment with her daughter and two of her sons' widows. The neighborhood is returning to life—and hope—but al-Taei is worried about the future, because her own health is failing. "My tears never dry," she says. "When I look at these kids, my heart melts for them." —Photograph by Moises Saman

The Capacity to Care

ATHENS, GREECE The world's population of migrants is the largest ever—1 in every 30 people live outside their birth country. **Deborah Carlos-Valencia**, 69, knows the refugee experience from both sides. She and her husband, Joe, emigrated from the Philippines to Greece in the 1980s. Now they run a nonprofit, called the Melissa Network, that helps recently arrived refugees build new lives.

—Photograph by Enri Canaj



Age Is the Gift

More years provide us with more time to bond, more time to create, more time to find our community—and also enough perspective to know a good thing when we've got it.

Friends for Life

OKINAWA, JAPAN Scientists have not yet uncovered all the secrets to super longevity, but one thing is certain: Okinawa is a very good place to grow old. Listed among the world's five Blue Zones—sites with an extraordinary number of centenarians—the islands of Okinawa count more than 900 residents over age 100. Not included are youngsters such as these gentlemen, *bottom*, from the village of Nakijin (*from left: Shigeru Uchima, Sadaji Tamashiro, Kazumasa Oshiro and Yasuji Miyagi, each 92*). "Lifestyle" is often cited to explain Okinawan longevity, though the Japanese term "ikigai" may express it better; it roughly translates to "a reason to get up in the morning." That means gathering often with friends, even if it's to dress in costumes for karaoke, like, *below, from left, Sueko Nakamura, 71, and Yoshi Shiroma, 97*. —Photographs by Jim Goldberg



Footloose

CHONGQING, CHINA In the mornings, dancers get their groove on at Bao Zhu, one of this city's nearly two dozen popular dance halls. The halls usually have three sessions—morning, afternoon and evening—but the older clientele favors the 8:30-to-11 a.m. slot. The mix of ballroom, Latin and modern rhythms helps the dancers to feel less isolated in a country where, until recently, couples were allowed to have only one child, and young adults frequently relocate long distances for work. **Wu Difang, 66**, and her dance partner, **Long Junyou, 75**, *above*, are regulars, but you don't have to come with a partner. For those who are widowed, the dance hall provides companionship and a sense of freedom. —Photograph by Slim Chi Yin



For Art's Sake

NEW YORK, NEW YORK If you're an artist who hasn't quite made it, take heart in what's on display at the Carter Burden Gallery in New York City. Dotted among a trio of exhibition spaces in Chelsea are works by painters, sculptors and mixed-media masters with one bio detail in common: They're all at least 60 years old. Pieces by previously undiscovered artists sell from several hundred to many thousands of dollars—market proof that the art scene isn't just for younger up-and-comers. Artist **Marilyn Church, 79**, *above*, had an illustrious career as a New York City courtroom artist, but her solo shows allow her to express herself in a more authentic way. "It's a true joy to paint more abstract figures that contain mystery, ambiguity and emotion that's all my own," she says. —Photograph by Jérôme Sessini



Love, Actually

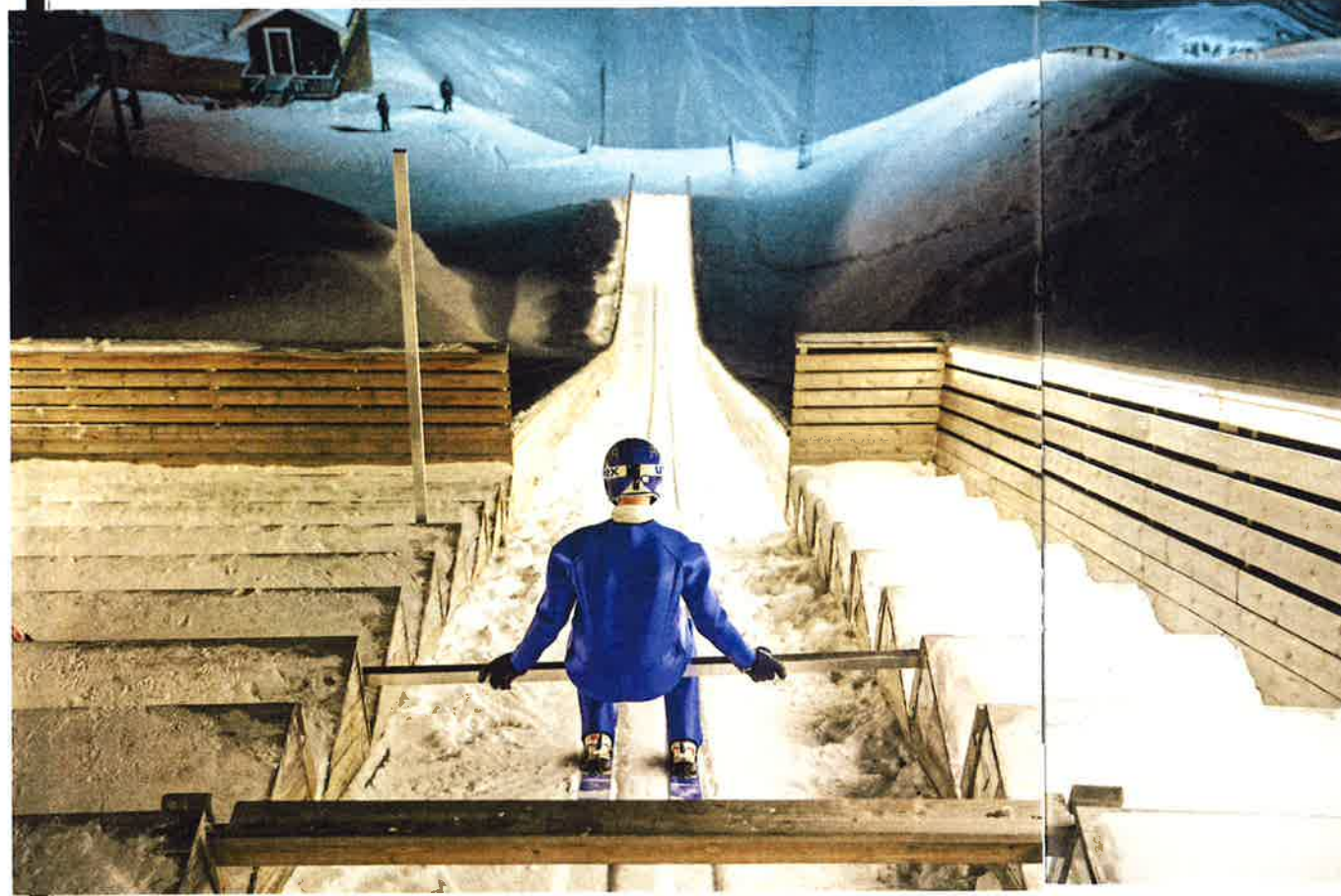
PORT ST. LUCIE, FLORIDA **BJ Ridings, 70**, met **Dennis Guariglia, 72**, through the dating site OurTime.com, and they have been together for seven years. As people live longer, later-life romances like theirs have become increasingly common. And why not? Technology opens new avenues for meeting, and older adults are (usually) more attuned to what they need in a partner. "At this point in life, we're beyond game playing and the dramas that come with more youthful relationships," Ridings says. "We love each other, and that's it." —Photograph by Carolyn Drake

Our Bodies, Our Minds

Better public health and key medical breakthroughs have allowed more of us to live long, active lives—but that means more of us live long enough to develop diseases of aging.

The Thrill of the Jump

TOLGA, NORWAY Norwegians invented ski jumping in the 19th century, and they still dominate the sport. The generation that helped define ski jumping in the 1960s is still at it, including **Rolf Markussen**, below, born in 1945, seen setting off for a training jump the night before the Veterans Ski Jump Association's 2019 championships. He's in purple at right, with fellow competitors **Magnar Haukdal** (in white, born in 1952) and **Jan Willy Oskal** (in red, born in 1945). Markussen went on to win a gold medal in the competition. —Photographs by Jonas Bendiksen



Quest for a Cure

HOUSTON, TEXAS **James Allison** has always been fascinated by the blood's disease-fighting T cells. Last year the Ph.D. scientist's groundbreaking research into the cells' function earned him a Nobel Prize. The work has also led to the development of a new class of immunotherapy drugs called immune checkpoint inhibitors, which are helping some late-stage-cancer patients to survive for years longer. Allison, 70—above, back row, taking a selfie next to a photo of himself—offers his young colleagues the same advice that has guided him: "Find something you're interested in. Follow your heart!"

—Photograph by Peter van Agtmael

Helping Hands

EINDHOVEN, NETHERLANDS The Dutch have a unique approach to dementia care, and it's considered among the best in the world. By creating respectful and socially rich environments, some Dutch facilities help residents experience a sense of normalcy, which mitigates symptoms. In front of a mural at the Vitalis Peppelrode, **Mevrouw Sjaan Brok**, far right, who was born in 1928, reenacts the familiar chore of hanging laundry. —Photograph by Rafal Milach



The Value of Experience



Peak Performance

DERBYSHIRE, ENGLAND **Lorraine Field** wasn't unhappy with her desk job at a telecom company, though she wasn't thrilled either. So when she was laid off in her late 30s, she grabbed the chance to return to school for a bachelor's degree and then a Ph.D. in a field she was passionate about: volcanology. Now 54, Field is a petrologist with the British Geological Survey. She also teaches students at the University of Nottingham about rock formations such as the Calton Hill volcanic site. —**Photograph by Olivia Arthur**



To Greet the Future

MOFFETT FIELD, CALIFORNIA Some might say being an "old" futurist is an oxymoron, but **Ray Kurzweil**, 71, sees only expanding horizons for those who are 50 and older. As a director of engineering at Google and arguably the foremost futurist in Silicon Valley, Kurzweil leads a research team that collectively anticipates how technology can better help us to think, learn and live. He also cofounded Singularity University, which educates people about advancements in machine intelligence. One example is this adorable little brainiac named Pepper, capable of around 90,000 cheerful interactions. —**Photograph by Gregory Halpern**

It's no longer surprising to see people in their 60s, 70s and older remaining in the workforce. For many it's an economic necessity, but it's also a way to find purpose.

Unbroken Tradition

VALLE DEL LEÓN, CHILE It takes skill to roam the vast fields of Patagonia as a cattle and sheep rancher, which is why older gauchos such as **Heraldo Soto**, 51 (*below*, seen riding El Engaño), earn the utmost respect. Soto's family has been in this remote valley near the Argentine border for three generations. The valley first got electric power in 2010, yet despite the residents' isolation, they have a rich social life, helping one another with construction projects, visiting often and communicating frequently through a radio system. —**Photograph by Cristina de Middel**



Building Joy

QUEENS, NEW YORK If you get a warm and fuzzy feeling from the Muppets, give some credit to **Rollie Krewson**, 66, whose work as a designer, builder, project leader and wrangler has given life to scads of beloved characters, including Elmo (she's often called Elmo's mom) and the ever-huggable Zoe, *above*. Krewson started in Jim Henson's Creature Shop in 1973 and has worked on almost every production there since. Her contribution to *Sesame Street*—which this year celebrates its 50th anniversary—has helped millions of kids learn to read and count. It has also helped Krewson continue to exercise her creativity. —**Photograph by Alex Webb**

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Women Rising

Ageless Beauty

BRONX, NEW YORK For too long, the fashion industry saw age as something to fear or to nip and tuck away. At 67, **Coco Mitchell** is one of a growing number of older models helping to change that perception. "Beauty isn't something that somehow stops as you get older," says Mitchell, who broke barriers in the 1980s as one of *Sports Illustrated's* first African American swimsuit models. "To me, beauty is never losing faith in who you are."
—Photograph by Olivia Arthur



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Girls once constrained by societal norms have grown up fighting for—and winning—the rights to learn, work and govern alongside men. In so doing, women lift up one another.



To Empower Others

NAIROBI, KENYA A couple of decades ago, it was difficult to find female entrepreneurs in Africa, but today women all over the continent are running successful businesses. **Jennifer Riria**, 59, is one of the reasons why. Born into poverty in rural Kenya, she got herself through school and in 1991 joined a microfinance institution teetering on failure. Since then, she has stabilized it and climbed to the rank of group CEO, rebranding the firm as Echo Network Africa. The lender has transformed the lives of more than 3 million women, awarding over \$1.3 billion in small-business loans, most for less than \$600.
—Photograph by Lindokuhle Sobekwa



Top Chefs

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA Though only 7 percent of U.S. restaurants are led by female chefs, women's enrollment in cooking schools is soaring, as a new generation follows pioneers such as **Mary Sue Milliken**, 61, *above, center*, and **Susan Feniger**, 66, *above, right*. With landmark restaurants Border Grill and the now-closed Ciudad, the two have created gourmet, authentic dishes, revolutionizing how Americans eat Mexican food. —Photograph by Diana Markosian



At Last, a Chance to Learn

MAHARASHTRA, INDIA At the Grandmothers School, about 30 women over 50 are learning to read and write. Many grew up in wretched poverty, without access to even a primary education, unlike their brothers. The school, opened in 2016, affords students autonomy as well as dignity. "Earlier I used to just put my thumb-print on bank documents," one student told a reporter. "Now I can sign my own name—imagine that!" —Photograph by Cristina Garcia Rodero