

Senior Life 2011

SPECIAL SECTION 2011

IT'S A DATE

Finding companionship later in life

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Let's face it; by the time you're 50-something, you know what you like and want in a partner, and barhopping or clubbing probably isn't the right way to meet that special someone. If you find yourself looking for love, you definitely don't want to do it in all the wrong places.

Sometimes a person goes through a divorce or suffers the loss of a longtime partner late in life. Suddenly, the person left behind is facing a solitary life, and the idea of re-entering the dating scene is daunting at best. And if that person was happy in the previous relationship, the solitude could feel almost unnatural. Well-meaning friends try to fix the now eligible bachelor/bachelorette up with another eligible friend, but often those attempts fall flat.

"Online dating is a great way to meet several people at once," says "The Love Doctor," Terri Orbuch.

Nowadays many seniors are making connections on online dating sites geared for the baby boomer generation. According to Nielsen Media Research, the number of seniors using the Internet in general increased to 17.5 million in November 2009, up from 11.3 million users in November 2004. The U.S. Census Bureau indicates that 42 percent of people who are 65 or older regularly access the Internet.

According to comScore, the number of online dating site users who are 50 or older has grown twice as rapidly as the rest of the age groups. Seniors have realistic expectations about relationships and tend to look forward to their futures instead of dwelling on their pasts. They also have a clear idea of what their interests are and are more comfortable finding someone with similar interests to date.

If you have decided to try online dating, thoroughly research the different online dating sites. Read their policies, and make sure you feel comfortable with them. Though there are many ways to meet others online, most legitimate dating sites have built-in securities for their members. Consider opening a separate

email to use, one that has an aura of anonymity and could easily be dropped if the need were to arise. Some online dating sites are run much more smoothly than others. Some even have a screening process that will help make finding a special someone a little more attainable. If you do join a site and have a bad experience, contact the site's owners immediately to see what they will do to enforce their rules. If you are not happy with their "solution," find another site.

Orbuch cautions, "You need to be honest without revealing information that jeopardizes your security." Don't list your home address. Be a little vague by listing a region instead of a city or town. Give out your cellphone number rather than your home number, which can be traced back to you and your location more easily.

"Go online and chat with a person for at least a week before meeting face to face," Orbuch says. She also recommends moving from online chatting to a few phone conversations (using your cellphone) before actually meeting the person face to face. You should feel safe meeting the person before you make those arrangements.

SeniorDating.org published a list of dating sites for seniors that meet its staff's "standards in trust, quality and safety." Topping the list is SeniorPeopleMeet.com, which is the third-largest dating site, behind Match.com and eHarmony, and caters to a demographic of 50-plus singles. SeniorPeopleMeet.com's membership has grown by more than 400 percent since 2009.

"Senior singles seeking a mature dating experience must visit this site," tout the site's advertisements.

Its parent organization, IAC, launched Match.com in 1995. "Match.com is a pioneer in online dating and personals and is credited with taking the category mainstream," the company says.

Other top-ranking sites named by SeniorDating.org include SeniorMatch.com, Date.com and Senior FriendFinder. According to census data, there are 16.2 million unmarried Americans who are 65 or older.

"With age comes wisdom," says Kelly Saracino, the director of public relations for Quality Life Management. "People date for the same reasons at any age -- friendship, companionship, love and physical attraction."



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SAVE SOME DOUGH Discounts for seniors

Sharon Naylor
Creators.com

People who are 50 or older can enjoy sizable discounts on everything from travel to clothing to dining and more, but you have to know where to look to access these deals. Some deal-finder sites are specific to seniors, and some are open to all. With the economy such as it is, more retailers and travel companies understand that our budgets are tight. Therefore, they offer a greater number of special sales and free shipping to combine with your senior discount for even greater savings.

*Websites To Check

--SeniorDiscounts.com: David Smidt, owner of this specialty site listing hundreds of senior discount offers, says, "The majority of this site can be accessed for free, and a premium membership will provide you with a print version of our deals, as well as our newsletter."

Smidt says the most popular deals on his site are in the categories of travel, restaurants and clothing. "Seniors look for deals on the items that are necessities to them, and some of the more popular discounts on our site are those pertaining to grocery shopping, which might save them 10 percent or more every week. That adds up."

Though the site's travel deals are in demand, Smidt says, "Travel discounts are becoming fewer and fewer because airlines and travel industry companies are experiencing great competition online at price-cut sites, such as Orbitz and Expedia. They're usually posting their absolute lowest prices online." It's advisable to check these travel discount sites for low fares and compare them with any senior rates you might find. You might be able to do better with an Orbitz purchase, for instance.

Smidt says that more seniors are cashing in on discounts for cellphones and cellphone plans. "Many seniors don't need high-tech features such as camera and video. They would rather just have a phone that works, for a lower amount of min-

utes per month."

Ask yourself what you need and what you use every day. According to Smidt, "you will likely be able to find discounts. Some metropolitan areas and towns offer seniors need-based discounts on their electric bills and garbage disposers, for instance."

--Gift Card Granny: This extensive website lists hundreds of current discounts, including 5 to 35 percent or more off retail shopping sites, travel sites and other in-demand categories. It also shows discounted rates on gift cards, such as the opportunity to buy a \$50 gift card for \$25, which seniors may use for their own enjoyment or give as affordable gifts.

--RetailMeNot: This popular discount-listing site invites you to input the name of the





WISH OF A LIFETIME

A foundation that's fulfilling dreams

Chandra Orr
Creators.com

Jeremy Bloom believes every senior has a dream, one thing in life that he or she has always wanted to experience. For many, the lack of financial means or social connections bars them from fulfilling these lifelong dreams, but his foundation, Jeremy Bloom's Wish of a Lifetime, aims to fix that.

Bloom, a two-time Olympic skier and former NFL player, established the nonprofit as a way to honor, aid and give back to senior citizens for their many years of wisdom and service.

"My relationship with my 85-year-old grandmother and 88-year-old grandfather was the inspiration behind Wish of a Lifetime, and they continue to be the heart and soul driving our efforts," Bloom says.

The foundation's mission is simple: to grant lifelong wishes to deserving seniors.

"The unfortunate reality is that a large percentage of seniors live an isolated and lonely life," Bloom says. "In many cases, their loved ones don't visit and their siblings have passed on. Our organization aims to knock on their door and make them feel special and important by helping them fulfill their lifelong wishes."

Bloom, 97, for example, was a professional drummer in the 1930s. He suffered from severe Alzheimer's disease

but never lost his passion for drumming. He longed to play with a dance band one more time, and with the foundation's help, that dream became a reality. About a month before he passed away, he took the stage with a local dance band to rekindle his days as a professional musician.

"It's not hard to see the challenges that seniors face on a daily basis," Bloom states on the foundation's website. "I believe many people regrettably move on from this world with unfulfilled dreams. I have been very fortunate in my own life to have had the ability and the resources to chase every dream that I have ever imagined, and I am delighted to start a foundation that will help others do the same."

Phyllis, an 88-year-old avid bridge player, began to lose her eyesight and was unable to play bridge on her own, she sought to find a companion to assist her.

"Phyllis' wish was simple but remarkable. Phyllis passed away shortly after her wish was fulfilled, and her wish was so meaningful that it inspired her family to request that donations in lieu of flowers be sent to the foundation," Bloom says. "The fact that a wish granted by JBWOL inspired others to contribute to our cause, as well as the outpouring of support we received in honor of Phyllis, was truly heartwarming."

One of the most meaningful wishes the foundation

granted, according to Bloom, was for a 65-year-old man suffering from diabetes. "Bill's wish was simply for a set of rugs so that when he woke up and went to the bathroom, his feet would not get cold. The simplicity of Bill's wish and the sheer joy he expressed when it was granted have stuck with the staff to this day. Bill's joy and happiness highlighted how seniors in our society have, in general, asked for very little throughout their lives and how the simplest act of kindness can make all the difference."

Seniors who are 65 or older are eligible to apply to have their wishes granted. To qualify, applicants must be legal residents or citizens of the U.S., be unable to fulfill their wish on their own and be in good enough health to experience the wish.

There is no financial limit for wishes. However, to be considered, an applicant's wish must meet certain requirements; the foundation will not grant requests for cash assistance, technology purchases, medical care, new homes or vehicle repair.

"The staff looks to grant wishes that will enrich the life of the senior on an emotional, physical and spiritual level," Bloom explains. "Additionally, the foundation grants wishes that will inspire others to shift their own views on seniors and aging."

In the past, Wish of a Lifetime has granted wishes to reconnect with loved ones, attend sporting events and

BYPASS OPERATION

Not always the best option for an ailing heart

Dr. David Lipschitz
Creators.com

Over the years, treatment has improved for heart attacks and coronary artery disease. With new technology, more experienced surgeons, and hospitals with highly successful diagnostic, preoperative and postoperative care, better outcomes have been seen in patients undergoing coronary artery bypass graft surgery.

In the best institutions -- with adequate numbers of operations annually -- the risks of death and serious complications have decreased. As a consequence, the number of bypasses being done is increasing significantly, and the procedure is being offered to the very old and patients with more complicated conditions.

Simultaneously, the effectiveness of the medical management of patients with coronary artery disease has improved, leading to a much lower risk of recurrence of second heart attacks, a reduction in symptoms and heart failure, and a prolongation of life. Patients are likelier to be treated successfully with medications to reduce the risk of recurrent heart attacks by positively affecting heart muscle and function, preventing platelet clotting, and the effective treatment of elevated cholesterol, diabetes and high blood pressure.

The outcomes of angioplasty -- in which a blocked artery is opened up and patency maintained using metal stents that are coated with medications -- have improved, as well, with fewer arteries reoccluding and fewer recurrent symptoms.

Because of improvements in bypass surgery, angioplasty and medical management, recent studies have provided much-needed information on the value of surgery over less invasive approaches. Today more conservative approaches are providing as good an outcome as a bypass for many of the ways in which coronary artery disease can cause harm.

Until recently, a bypass was thought to be needed in patients who had occlusion of the left main coronary artery, also known as the widow-maker, because of the high risk of death. But a study published recently in The New England Journal of Medicine showed that outcomes from angioplasty were no different

PHOTOS AND HOME MOVIES

Preserve your memories

Tawny Maya McCray
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Pictures and home movies are among many people's most valued possessions, but oftentimes they sit dormant in photo albums, on computers or in boxes that hardly ever see the light of day. Today there are many companies that can help you organize all those captured memories into one place, ensuring they will live on for generations.

"This is the first time in history that we have analog media that now we can convert to digital media," says Chuck Temple, owner of DVD Your Memories. "Analog formats degrade over time; there's not a lot of degradation with digital."

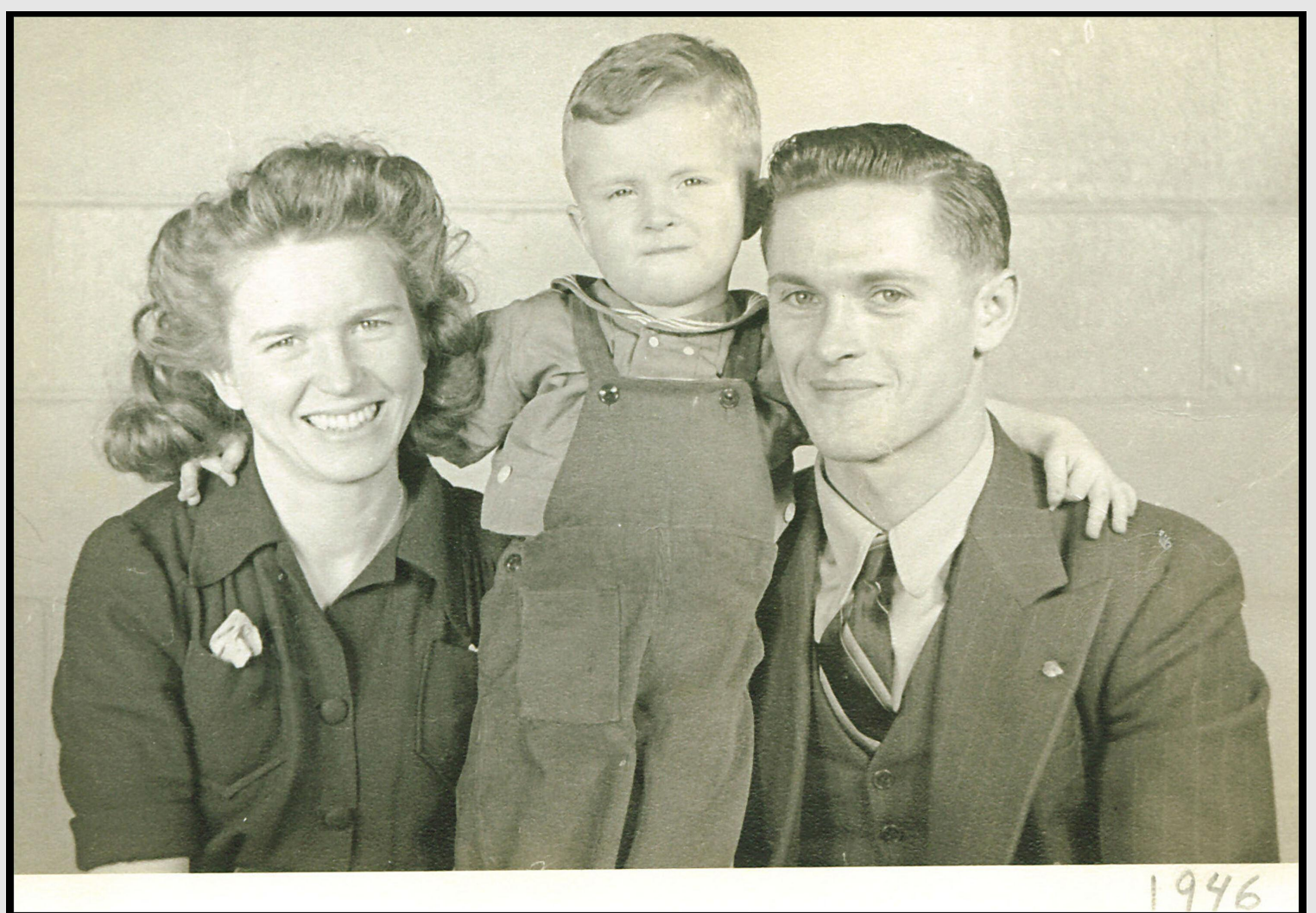
Temple says analog media include videotapes, which generally last 10 to 15 years; photos, which fade over time; slides, which become red over time; and old movie film, which becomes red or green over time and eventually curls up and starts smelling like vinegar.

Temple started his company in 2006 and has since helped hundreds of customers compile slideshows and other digital keepsakes of birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, bar mitzvahs, bat mitzvahs, sweet 16s, family reunions and everything in between. He says that no matter what medium people have used to capture their memories -- be it old film, slides or videotape -- his company can convert it to digital media.

Temple says that along with working with people's personal photos, his company also has worked with businesses and historical societies. He's seen photographs as old as 100 years and slides from the 1940s, and he even has worked with original NASA slides.

"I feel as if I've seen every spot of the entire world from every angle and from every year," he says. "It's cool; you kind of see everything. And you make people happy."

The importance of pictures and videos in people's lives is especially



evident in times of disaster, Temple says, and he experienced that firsthand during the devastating Southern California fires in October 2007, which claimed lives and homes and forced thousands of people to evacuate. He says his San Diego store was as busy that November as it had been during the entire months of January through April of that year.

"The first thing people grab is, of course, their kids and family. The second thing would be their pets. And then the third thing is always their photo albums or their stack of videotapes," Temple says.

According to Temple, the digitization process is a one-time thing, and once you've gotten everything on a hard drive, you'll be prepared to transfer it to whatever format comes out in the future. He adds that all the media anyone could possibly have could fit into a 1- or 2-terabyte drive, which is relatively inexpensive, costing anywhere from about

\$100 to \$150.

Fred Mentell, co-owner of Affordable Slide Scanning, says an added bonus of getting all your media digitized is that you then can make copies of them and give them to your loved ones. The cost for each scan at Affordable Slide Scanning is 39 cents, he says, and that includes scanning, Photoshop editing and the disk.

Mentell stresses that his company does all of its work in-house, which is important, as there are many companies that will ship your order out of the country, to places such as India, Costa Rica and Mexico.

"Once you ship it to one place and they ship it to another place, you lose possession," Mentell says. "Once a third person is in there, you no longer have any right to those slides, that film or those photos."

Temple, whose stores also do everything in-house, agrees, saying