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Celebrating Life



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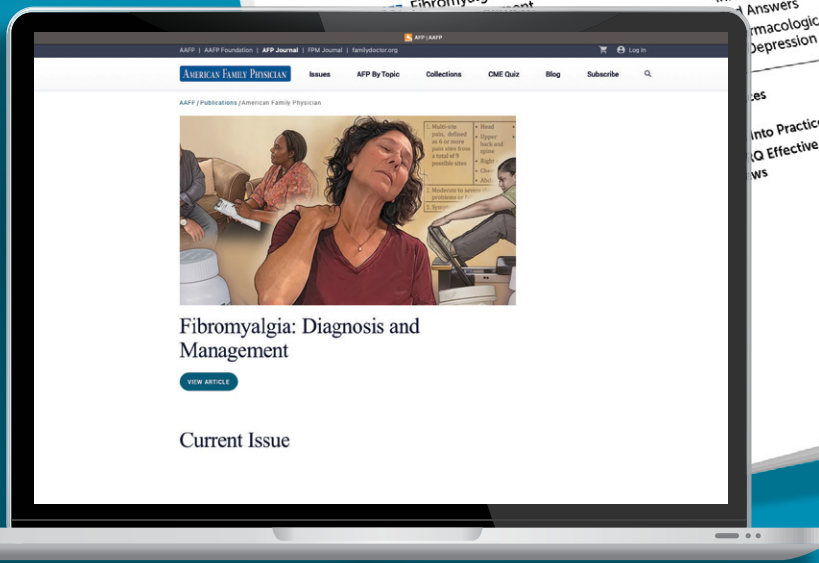
AN EDITORIALY INDEPENDENT, PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS



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Fibromyalgia: Diagnosis and Management

VIEW ARTICLE

Current Issue

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Dear Healthcare Marketer,

While preparing for this life celebration issue, I found myself reflecting back to when Maddie was first preparing for college. The world was dealing with the height of Covid. Her high school graduation had been unique to say the least. Rather than receive their diplomas in person, each student was videotaped at the school getting their diplomas. Then a video of all the graduates was put together that we all watched livestreamed on our own home computers. I arranged a drive-by parade for Maddie led by the town's rescue squad. We stood on the front lawn with balloons and horns, Maddie in her graduation gown, cheering and celebrating as much as we could given the circumstances.

I'm looking forward to her graduating college in May. We'll be celebrating the traditional way with a big kick-ass party in honor of four long years of engineering school! Although it is bittersweet. We will be cheering Maddie on for all of her accomplishments in an extremely competitive field. And we will also be saying goodbye because she's moving to the Raleigh, North Carolina, area for her new job at Caterpillar. We just found her a great apartment in Cary, thanks to some input from Amy Luchsinger, Joe Schuldner, and Kelly Morrison. I'm very proud of and excited for Maddie...and a little weepy too.

I love this time of year, especially this spring after a long, gray winter. Everything is bursting with life again – the trees are budding, the birds have returned, the weather is warming. It's also a season of many celebrations. In addition to religious occasions and graduations at every school level, the wedding season kicks off. I have four to attend this year, which are all out of town. A wedding weekend in a destination is a wonderful way to reunite with family and enjoy some travel, too.

This issue is a celebration of so many of life's joys, from the legacy of loved ones to the events we cherish and the smaller moments we will carry with us forever. In a beautiful touching tribute, **Heath Morlok** shares the story of his mother who overcame so much to break with the constraints of tradition. **Lalitha Priya Chandrashekar** honors her paternal and maternal grandparents and the way their influence and support have been woven into the fabric of her life. We're celebrating with **Jeanne M. Jennings** as she tells us about the two milestones she is savoring – as well as all the moments in-between. **Linsey Rosenthal** brings us along on her 100-day college trip aboard a ship – first stop Cuba, before travel restrictions were relaxed. Recently stepping aside from her industry position, **Lisa Westhafer** celebrates each woman's uniqueness, inside and out, through her product line, True Beauty Lashes.

On the wedding front, **Gina Bennicasa** is still relishing fond recollections of the unforgettable music-laced festivities she attended several years ago. In a story with a couple of twists, **Dick Barnett** recounts one of his more dramatic memorable wedding experiences. **Joe Loftus** recently experienced the excitement of *U2 live at the Sphere*, a jaw-dropping audio-visual extravaganza at this next-generation venue. **Fabrizio Gambino** warms our hearts with his reflections on how his son Max is embracing unfolding family adventures and explorations. **Tom McGill** is celebrating how he made walks, and now daily bike rides, a part of enjoying every day. And **Debbie Kenney** gives us some insight into her lovely life in this month's *Personal Exchange*.

I love an issue like this! It serves as a reminder to all of us to embrace all that life offers, from the highest peak moments to the gentle whispers of being able to enjoy an ordinary day.

Carpe Diem,

Nancy



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

ONWARD & UPWARD

promotions • additions

AbbVie has announced Chief Executive Officer **Richard Gonzalez** will be stepping down July 1 and will be succeeded by **Robert Michael**, President and Chief Operating Officer. Joining the company is **Harilaos Stavrinas** as Head of Marketing – Eye Care, OSD.

Biolumina has announced the appointment of **Noushaba Rashid** as Vice President, Associate Creative Director.

Bristol Myers Squibb has announced the appointment of **Nicholas Bartolomeo** as Director, Omnichannel Strategy, Oncology Solid Tumors – Lung.

Calcium+Company has announced the appointment of **Bruno Brasileiro** as Executive Creative Director

CMI Media Group has announced the following appointments: **Michael Withman** as Director, Business Insights; **Katerina Rohlicek** as Associate Analyst, Programmatic; **Naim Martin** as Analyst, Business Insights; **Katrina Del Rosario** as Supervisor, SEM; **Jessica Conahan** and **Gerardo Heredia** as Senior Engagement Planners; **Brian Yang** and **Kelly Kent** as Associate Engagement Planners; and **Nora Hinke** and **Caroline Knotts** as Associate Analysts, Paid Social.

ConnectiveRx has announced the appointment of **Kristen LaBarbera** as Associate Director.

DDB Health New York has announced the appointment of **Thomas Cordell** as Group Project Supervisor.

Dentsu Health has announced the promotion of **Matt Brown** to Director, Paid Search.

Eli Lilly and Company has announced the appointment of **Benjamin L. Basil** as Senior Vice President, Global Customer Office Strategy, Capabilities and Operations, and the promotion of **Lesley Spellmeyer** to Director of Media Strategy.

Fingerpaint Group has announced the appointment of **Anachrista Best** as Senior Project Manager, Multicultural Marketing.

GCI Health has announced the appointment of **Dan Oh** as Group Creative Director.

GoodRx has announced the appointment of **Bob Reh** as Senior Director, Integrated Marketing.

Good Apple has announced the promotion of **Katie Hamel** to Media Planner.

Healio has announced the appointment of **Hansa Bhargava, M.D.**, as Chief Clinical Strategy and Innovation Officer.

Healio Strategic Solutions has announced the appointments of **Adam Sansolo** as Senior Director, Business Development and Market Strategy, and **Natalie Natoli** as Senior Director, Agency Partnerships. **Natalie** can be reached at natalie@healiohss.com.

Merck has announced the appointment of **Laurie Brown** as Associate Vice President – Enterprise Strategy, Commercial Lead. **Laurie** can be reached at Laurie.ferranda@merck.com. **Sheri Brenner** has been appointed Oncology Promotions Manager. **Sheri** can be reached at fybsbb@gmail.com.

Mosaic Group, An IPG Health Company, has announced the appointment of **Douglas Levy** to Senior Vice President, Management Director. He can be reached at Doug.levy@mosaic-mm.com.

Ogilvy Health has announced the appointment of **Renata Maia** as Chief Creative Officer.

PROPELLER has announced the promotion of **Rachel Heller** to Senior Manager of Digital Production. She can be reached at Rachel.heller496@gmail.com.

Publicis Collective has announced the appointment of **Zachary Moskowitz** as Associate Director of Brand Experience.

Publicis Groupe has announced the appointment of **Adrianna Aguayo** as Vice President, Group Account Director.

Publicis Health Media has announced the promotions of **Natalie Onopchenko** to Senior Associate, Media Strategy, and **Rachel Potts** to SEO Account Supervisor. Joining the company is **Caitlin Capriotti** as Supervisor, Strategy. **Caitlin** can be reached at Caitlin.capriotti@publicishealthmedia.com.

Publicis Worldwide has announced the appointment of **Amanda Liebeskind** as Associate Director, Program Management.

Regeneron has announced the appointment of **Tony Meditz** as Senior Director, Solution Partner. Promoted at the company was **Andrew Gage** to Associate Director, Consumer Marketing.

RevHealth has announced the appointments of **Ben Beckley** as Chief Executive Officer, **Deb Jamer** as Chief Operations Officer, and **Marcia Goddard** as Chief Creative Officer. **Deb** can be reached at Deb.jamer@revhealth.com.

Sermo has announced the appointment of **Dave Shoup** as Vice President, Medical Affairs. **Dave** can be reached at david.shoup@sermo.com.

The Bloc has announced the appointments of **Erin Bomholt** as Vice President, Account Director, and **Adam Hessel** as Head of Creative and Experience.

UCB has announced the appointment of **Jesse Ford** as Omnichannel and Digital Marketing Lead – Rare Diseases.

ViiV Healthcare has announced the appointment of **Chris Larsen** as Director, Strategic Initiatives, Long Acting Injectables.

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

awards • mergers • approvals

AbbVie and **Tentarix Biotherapeutics** announced a multi-year collaboration focused on the discovery and development of conditionally-active, multi-specific biologic candidates in immunology and oncology. This collaboration will enable the company to expand its oncology and immunology portfolio.

Alvotech and **Teva Pharmaceuticals** have received U.S. FDA approval of SIMLANDI (adalimumab-ryvk) injection as an interchangeable biosimilar to Humira, for the treatment of adult rheumatoid arthritis, juvenile idiopathic arthritis, adult psoriatic arthritis, adult ankylosing spondylitis, Crohn's disease, adult ulcerative colitis, adult plaque psoriasis, adult hidradenitis suppurativa, and adult uveitis.

AstraZeneca has received U.S. FDA approval for Tagrisso (osimertinib) plus chemotherapy for patients with locally advanced or metastatic non-small cell lung cancer whose tumors have EGFR exon 19 deletion or exon 21 L858R mutations, as detected by an FDA-approved test.

Boston Scientific Corporation has received U.S. FDA approval for the AGENT™ Drug-Coated Balloon (DCB), which is indicated to treat coronary in-stent restenosis (ISR) in patients with coronary artery disease. ISR is the obstruction or narrowing of a stented vessel by plaque or scar tissue.

Iovance Biotherapeutics, Inc., has received U.S. FDA approval for AMTAGVI™ (lifileucel) suspension for intravenous infusion. AMTAGVI is a tumor-derived autologous T cell immunotherapy indicated for the treatment of adult patients with unresectable or metastatic melanoma previously treated with a PD-1 blocking antibody, and if BRAF V600 mutation positive, a BRAF inhibitor with or without an MEK inhibitor.

Mallinckrodt, plc, has received U.S. FDA approval for the supplemental New Drug Application (sNDA) for Acthar® Gel (repository corticotropin injection) Single-Dose Pre-Filled SelfJect™ Injector, a new delivery device for Acthar Gel for appropriate patients with a range of chronic and acute inflammatory and autoimmune conditions. SelfJect is intended to provide the appropriate subcutaneous dose of Acthar Gel to help give patients control of their administration.

SFC Group has announced the acquisition of **CareContent**, a Chicago-based content creation company specializing in producing accessible and educational content for healthcare organizations.

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The Legacy of a Hero

BY HEATH MORLOK

The Southern women of my mom's generation grew up in a very complex, confusing, and, sometimes combustible culture, specifically with regards to gender expectations and limitations. While slavery was abolished in 1865, the Civil Rights Movement didn't challenge "Separate but Equal" for 10 decades. When my mother was a child, women had won the right to vote a mere three decades prior, but much like the Civil Rights Movement, changing the law and changing the Southern norms were not affixed. There was still a ton of work to do.

FAMILY FOUNDATIONS

My mother grew up in a tiny North Carolina town of less than 3,000 people in an incredibly tumultuous time. For many daughters of that era, Cotillon wasn't just a dance. It was the most important curriculum of your education, next to the Bible, because *both* the Bible and Cotillon taught you how to live a "virtuous" life. Children, but particularly daughters, were raised upon tough love, relentless appraisal, and vigilant adherence to the Southern code of feminine conduct. Be seen, but not heard. Be present, but not seen. Be supportive, but not the supporter.

Compliance was nonnegotiable. To further aggravate these combustible circumstances, America was experiencing its first real introduction to significant hard drug abuse, integration riots plagued local schools, nuclear bomb drills were commonplace. And, the powerful stigma against mental health services led many adults and parents of my mother's generation to self-medicate through drink.

Most of the country was experiencing this, of course, but our Southern parents lived with yet an additional blanket of generational honor systems, superstition, and codes of conduct. This wasn't just, "Don't wear white after Labor Day." A family member once famously left a vacation several days early because she heard an owl hooting in the night, which signified impending death. This was an interwoven web of faith, superstition, and familial codes of conduct, and to be faithful or virtuous was to be adherent to all of them. All of these factors, and more, created a relentless tide of generational friction and trauma for many women of my mom's generation.

BREAKING OUT OF CONFORMITY

But my mother, Becky Davis Morlok, was a secret revolutionary. While still being the life of the party, the ultimate gift-giver, the world's greatest mom, and the spiritually faithful, she also rebelled against generational gender ceilings with silent acts of defiance. She got her first job at age 14 so she could have her own money, sent us to daycare so she could be a professional, allowed us to dress ourselves and express our quirky personalities, maintained a strong female friendship group, wrote about her unfortunate membership in the Me Too Mvmt, and ultimately spared my brother and me from the daily criticism that was so common in her childhood. Becky Morlok put in the work. While it wounded her (you can't shatter glass ceilings without sus-

taining lasting scars), she did not pass that trauma along to her kids, nor to mine. Like so many strong women born in the '50s and '60s, she broke the generational chain, enabling my two daughters the opportunity to breach societal ceilings, but with far less trauma and with far more confidence and support.

ENTER CANCER

But cancer doesn't spare heroes, nor can love confine it. After a short lifetime of toiling to create an amazing life for her family and herself, a vice president and consultant in the dawn of her retirement years, my mom was diagnosed with metastatic colon cancer at the young age of 63. It was a few days before Christmas. My daughters, the apple of her eye and she to theirs, were only 4 and 7. I quietly hid in the coat closet, weeping, praying, overhearing the girls unknowingly giggle as they watched *Peppa Pig*. I was consumed with a single annihilating thought: *If my mom dies now, my daughters will never remember her.*



Crisp Fall Carolina afternoon on the water with young Heath and Becky.



Mimi and the girls, light of their worlds.

(Continued on page 7)

Celebrating Life



Hero *(Continued from page 6)*

For perspective, I work in the oncology healthcare industry, for a manufacturer known for its innovative cancer treatments, so I knew what the diagnosis likely meant. I had been trained to read the treatment study designs, the anticipated side effects, and the statistically relevant treatment benefits of oncology drugs. When the treatment plan was set, and my father shared with me the treatment



Gwenie Bear and Mimi on a lunch date.

names, I immediately went to the clinical trials to inform my expectations. ~2 Years. The OS (Overall Survival) of a patient taking this leading medication was 2 years of life, about 4.5 months more than those who didn't receive treatment. With numbers that low, doing the math in my head was easy; 2 more Christmases (*maybe*), 2 more beach trips (*maybe*), 2 more granddaughter birthdays (*maybe*), 2 more recitals (*maybe*), 2 more wedding anniversaries (*maybe*). My girls would be 6 and 8; *Is that long enough for them to remember her? Do I remember my 7th birthday? What's the first memory I have of my grandmother?*

MORE THAN EXPECTED

Prayer, science, love, and the will to live – shame on me for thinking my mother would be amongst the average at anything! One more dance recital turned into 2, and then into 3, and then into 4; 4 more glorious family beach trips, 4 more years of birthday parties and graduations, 4 more anniversaries with my dad. And almost 4 more Christmases.

My mother passed away on Christmas Eve 2023 at the age of 67. We joined around her comfortable bed at home to say our goodbyes. My daughters gave her their Christmas gifts early and hugged her one last time.

We had been given twice the amount of time we had hoped for, had twice the amount of time to make lasting memories, and we mournfully thanked God for this. But when I tried to explain this small miracle to my daughters ("We're lucky, girls – with a team of incredible doctors, nurses, prayer circles, revolutionary treatments, and her deep well of strength, we got 4 more years with Mimi than some people do."), my girls were wholly UNIMPRESSED. They were gentle enough not to say it, but their eyes did all the communicating; *Four more years? Four?! We're supposed to be happy with that? I want Mimi at my graduation. I want her at my wedding. Is this the best you can do?*

A CALL TO DO BETTER

It was a stark reminder that my/our sense of progress in the healthcare community might be anchored more in how far we've come versus how far we still need to go. As a member of the healthcare industry and a citizen of our U.S. mixed economy, I strongly support the facilitation of a marketplace where U.S. pharma companies aggressively compete to develop the next great, novel, innovative cancer treatments, each one-upping the next, each redefining "success," and each compelling/driving/DARING the next competitor to reestablish what an acceptable "oncology treatment outcome" looks like.

I am so grateful to all the healthcare providers and treatments that have come before us, predecessors and inspirations for the standards of care we have now. But we mustn't pat ourselves on the back and revel in our brilliance or innovation. For many cancer patients currently receiving treatment, "standards of oncology care" feel far more *standard* than futuristic. So come on Merck, Bristol Myers Squibb, Pfizer, Sanofi, AstraZeneca, Roche, Celgene, and others...continue to put your best foot forward. Compete! Invest! Continue to imagine and innovate! Help us make our children proud and our grandchildren safe. You're providing more than profits for shareholders and time for patients; you are the extender of memories and legacies.

We grieve still. It has only been a few months. I personally grapple with the guilt of being unsatisfied with an outcome that many patients could not achieve. I cry for the memories that my mother will not get to make with her grandchildren, but I thank God and science abundantly for the memories that my daughters now have of her! This is the bitter duality of our current cancer healthcare: more time, but not enough; more memories, but not enough; more hope, but not enough. We can still do better, *and we must.*

In loving memory of the world's greatest wife, mom, and Mimi.



Young Iris and Mimi having tea on the lawn.



Heath Morlok is Associate Director, Marketing Communications/Channels ONC, Integrated Customer Engagement Team (ICE), Merck. He can be reached at heath.morlok@merck.com or 828-989-2186.

Celebrating Life: Embracing Milestones and Legacies Through Generations

BY LALITHA PRIYA CHANDRASHEKHAR

Life's milestones encapsulate joy, growth, and the essence of our journey, but they can also be bittersweet. From births to weddings, graduations, and passing – each carries the stories and spirits of those who have shaped us. I was incredibly fortunate for the opportunity to have many years with all four of my grandparents – both maternal and paternal. Last year, the loss of both of my maternal grandparents within a month-and-a-half of one another profoundly impacted my perspective on life's milestones. Reflecting on their lives, I've come to appreciate not just the moments we shared, but how their essence lives on through the family members they've left behind.

SHARED MILESTONES AND MIRRORED REFLECTIONS

Despite being based in India, over the years, my grandparents took a myriad of trips back and forth to visit us. They were more than just familial anchors. They were active participants in my most formative experiences. Their first trip to the States was when they came just following the birth of my sister. I'll never forget those summer days I spent with them. My grandfather would have daily plans of things we should accomplish and acted more like an eight-year-old peer. On most days, I'd be able to convince him that a trip to the library was a much better use of time than an afternoon nap. My grandmother and I would send my parents off to work and immediately get to work taking out every single toy and spending the day playing with them all.

Beyond that blissful summer, my grandparents managed to be present for all of the formative life moments

into adulthood – from the transition of coming home from college, to the milestones of getting engaged, getting married, starting my business, my pregnancy announcement, and welcoming my twins into the world. Each of these moments was heightened by their presence, their palpable joy and excitement. I am so thankful for these shared experiences, but beyond these shared celebrations, I see their reflections in the nuances of my daily life and in my children, a testament to their lasting influence.

LESSONS EMBODIED AND PASSED ON

My grandparents' lives were rich tapestries of lessons and values, many of which I find mirrored both in my own pursuits and in the budding personalities of my twins.

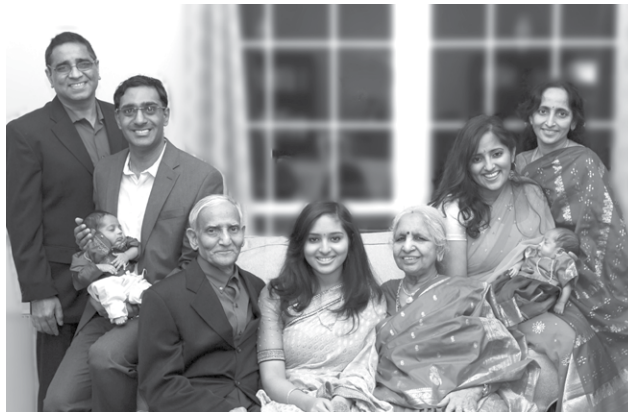
Being Multi-Passionate: My grandfather's diverse interests, ranging from engineering to classical arts and homeopathy, taught me the value of nurturing multiple passions. I see his eclectic spirit in myself as I juggle various roles and interests, and in my children's curiosity and eagerness to explore the world. His legacy inspires us to embrace all facets of our identities with open hearts.

Lifelong Learning: The principle that learning knows no age was exemplified by my grandfather. His quest for knowledge, whether in arts or technology, highlighted the joy of perpetual growth. So, whether it is reaching a 150-day Duolingo streak, or testing out the newest AI tools, this lesson is one I hold dear and strive to instill in my children. In our home, we view every day as an opportunity to learn something new.

The Delight of Laughter: My grandmother's infectious laughter and capacity for joy have left a lasting imprint on my approach to life. Her ability to find humor and happiness in the simplest of moments is a trait I see reflected in my own parenting. I cherish and cultivate moments of laughter and lightness with my children, ensuring her joyful legacy continues.

The Power of Storytelling: The art of storytelling, so beautifully wielded by my grandmother, has become a cornerstone of my communication, both personally and professionally. I endeavor to keep her tradition alive by

(Continued on page 9)



Family photo shoot with my newborn twins, Adithya and Divya.



My maternal grandparents in India, with me around the age of one.



A FABULOUS NIGHT AT THE SPHERE

BY JOE LOFTUS

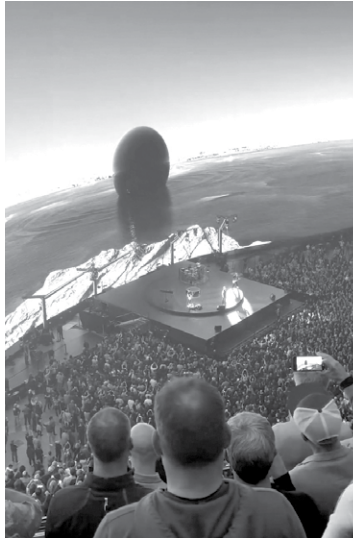


Both my wife Nanette and I are big music fans, but my wife is a bigger U2 fan than I. As soon as she heard they were back in concert in the U.S. for the first time since 2018, she had been asking to go see them. So, we decided as a combination Christmas and wedding celebration (31 years) to head to Las Vegas, Nevada, to see U2's first live show of 2024 at the Sphere.

A little bit of history – U2 started playing in Dublin in 1976, so that makes them one of the longest bands out there. They dropped their first album in 1980 that included the major hit “A Day Without Me,” and have since had 15 studio albums, one live, and one compilation album. Their latest album was *Songs of Surrender*, released in 2023.

U2 did not disappoint and neither did the venue. They put on a spectacular audio-visual show with numbers that spanned the band's long history of award-winning music. Songs included “So Cruel,” “Tryin’ to Throw Your Arms Around the World,” and “Love Is Blindness.” They played their latest single, “Atomic City,” and their greatest hits like “Beautiful Day” and “Where the Streets Have No Name,” among many others.

And the Sphere – the largest spherical structure in the world at 366-feet tall and 516-feet wide – made for a total-



U2's Jaw-dropping Audio and Visual Concert.

ly immersive experience. Did you ever go to one of those planetariums where you lean your head back and take in the awesome view of the stars, constellations, and planets? Add to this experience 18,000 seats, the beer and food you get at a really good sports stadium, and thousands of 45- to 70-year-olds singing along to their favorite songs – that's what U2 at the Sphere was like.

U2 is the first band to have a run at the Sphere, beginning a residency in September 2023 that ran through early March 2024. There were a couple of things that made this show a little different from their typical concert. Though this was still a live concert, U2 couldn't really go off-script because of the necessary audio and visual synchronization. Three of the band's original members were playing, but the drummer who actually started U2, Larry Mullen, Jr., had undergone recent neck surgery and had to sit this one out.

Regardless, it was quite a show. We're really glad we went and we would go again!



Joe Loftus is Vice President, Global Marketing, Novartis Gene Therapies. He can be reached at 908-400-9940 or Joseph.loftus@novartis.com.

Embracing Milestones (Continued from page 8)

sharing stories with my children, teaching them the power of narrative to connect, educate, and inspire.

A LIVING TRIBUTE

As I navigate life's milestones, I am constantly reminded of my grandparents' influence. I see their wisdom in my decisions, their joy in my children's laughter, and their curiosity in our collective quest for knowledge. Celebrating life's milestones is now an act of honoring their memory, ensuring their legacies are woven into the fabric of our family's future.



My grandparents with my twins – I am so thankful for the time they had together.

Life's milestones go beyond the passage of

time. They are a reflection of the values, lessons, and love passed down through generations. My grandparents' legacies are not confined to the past. They are alive and thriving in the way I live my life and in the way my children view the world.

Celebrating life, in all its complexity, becomes a tribute to those who have shaped us. It's a commitment to carrying forward their wisdom, joy, and curiosity, enriching not only our own lives but also those of the generations that follow. In this continuous cycle, we honor our past, cherish our present, and lay the foundation for a future that remains true to the lessons of those who came before us.



Lalitha Priya Chandrashekar is the Founder and CEO of PFG MedComm. She can be reached at 908-866-1224 or priya@pfgmed.com.

100 Days on a Ship: First Stop, Cuba!

BY Linsey Rosenthal

It was the second semester of 2003, and I was a junior in college about to embark on a trip of a lifetime. I would be travelling abroad for 100 days with 600 other students living on an old ship nicknamed The Great White Mother. Semester at Sea was a floating school that would take students from all over the country to four continents and over eight countries.

CUBAN CULTURAL IMMERSION

Our first stop was Havana, Cuba, and I was pumped. Cuba was not a place many Americans were able to travel to at the time due to the restrictions, but we were lucky enough to go. We were briefed about the country before we docked, learning everything from the history to politics, and what to expect when we arrived. I couldn't contain my excitement to walk the streets and see the culture firsthand. The first thing we did when we stepped foot on land was go meet the local students at the University of Havana. We sat in on a class. Then the students taught us how to dance in one of the squares with hundreds of people watching. The Cubans were very warm and welcoming.

LOCAL FLAIR

After visiting the University, a small group of us took off to wander the streets and see what we could discover. Of course, being the college kids we were, we found a local bar and grabbed some beers and mojitos. While at the bar, we met a few nice locals who were curious about where we came from and what we were doing in Cuba. We told them about the ship and that Cuba was our first stop. They offered to show us

around the town where the tourists don't usually go to which we of course said, "Yes!" We thought, *How nice are these people to show us around their exciting town.* We walked the streets and Havana looks like you are stuck in time. Due to the trade embargo, the cars were from the 1950s – it was a sight to see. The buildings were run down and colorful with clothing hanging out of the windows to dry and Cuban flags flying high. The mojitos were kicking in, our group was having a blast hanging with our new friends, what could go wrong?

CIGARS, ANYONE?

A few hours after walking around, our "friends" mentioned they had cigars we could buy if interested. At the

time, they were very nonchalant about this, just casually mentioning they had the best Cuban cigars at a much cheaper price than the official stores where most tourists buy them. Mind you, we were warned about this type of thing by the program leaders. We were told not to buy these cigars as they wouldn't be allowed back on the ship. And you definitely could not bring them back to the States with you.

It was getting late and we all wanted to go back to the boat to get ready for our speaking event with Fidel Castro (no joke) when the locals told us we were going back to their house for a few minutes. We said fine and walked into

their tiny, crumbling cement apartment. This place was very bare bones with a couch, a crooked picture hanging on the wall, and not much else. There were a handful of other people in the apartment when we entered. I was the only woman there.

TROUBLE TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

Once we were inside, the mood quickly changed – you could feel the tension between us. The Cubans told us to buy some cigars and while we kept saying no, they really didn't want to hear it. I thought I was a cool, savvy traveler until that moment. Our palm-sweaty group looked at each other and knew we weren't going to be able to leave until we bought some cigars. Our one brave friend stepped up and said he would buy a few. Luckily, that appeased the men enough to let us leave. When we exited the apartment, you could hear the sighs of relief from my friends. We couldn't believe what we had gotten ourselves into on the very first day of our 100 days abroad.

Since that day, I have been a much smarter traveler and vowed never to get into a sketchy situation again! Of course, I was only 20 at the time and we did in fact get into some other trouble during our three months away ☺.



Happy-go-lucky tourists with our new Cuban friends.



Streets of Havana.



Local street performers.



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Savoring and Celebrating

BY JEANNE M. JENNINGS

In August 2021, I wrote an article for Healthcare Marketer's Exchange: *The Battles I Couldn't Pick – From COVID to Cancer*. In that piece, I shared my story about a serious case of COVID that ended up revealing lung cancer and possibly saving my life.

This year, I am happy to share that I have not one but two big events and causes for celebration.

BIG BIRTHDAY

First, I hit a milestone birthday in the beginning of 2024. It was a great birthday (and birth month) spent with family and loved ones!

On my actual birthday, January 9, I took the day off work and ate cake for breakfast. I took time to relax and read and I did video-chats with family and friends from around the world. In the evening, my family and I had Champagne at Le Pavillon at One Vanderbilt and then we went to a lovely dinner at Buddakan in Chelsea, New York City.

Then one Saturday a few weeks later, some of my best friends came to celebrate with me in NYC. They traveled all the way from California, Chicago, IL, Indiana, Miami, FL, New Jersey, and Brooklyn, NY, to join me in an immersive experience at the Summit One Vanderbilt,



Jeanne at Joshua Tree, post-op, May 2021.

followed by dinner, drinks, and more Champagne at Elea on the Upper West Side in New York. I had such a blast – some of these great friendships go way back to my kindergarten and school days!

CANCER-FREE FOR THREE

The other milestone I am very happy to share is that on April 12, 2024, I will be cancer-free for three years straight! I go through testing

Jeanne during cancer pre-op testing, April 2021.



Jeanne (with her mom) on her first birthday, January 9.

and screening every few months and although they are *routine*, I never take them for granted. I have a huge appreciation for every moment when my doctor says, "Everything looks good! See you in six months!"

I plan on celebrating this milestone by traveling to Chile and then to Argentina, where my daughter is currently spending her school semester. I look forward to spending time with our family, as we visit spectacular places such as Buenos Aires, Patagonia, Iguazu Falls, the Atacama Desert, and more.

I recently read in *The New York Times* about a man who used to complain about the weather growing up in New York City. And then he became an astronaut and went to outer space. Of course, in space there is no atmosphere, no weather, no seasons – and he missed all of it very much! Now, whatever the weather, rain or shine, sleet or snow, he enjoys it greatly and is reminded that he is lucky to be alive and to be on this planet.

The Times calls this act savoring. "Savoring is the process of bringing mindful attention and awareness to the positive things in life..." and it can bring many wonderful benefits to one's life and health.

I certainly don't have to go to outer space to appreciate the good – and even the not-so-good – parts of life. I am savoring the moments – all of them, big or small, significant or routine. And I am fortunate enough to be here to keep celebrating them!



Jeanne at Arches National Park, Utah, July 2023.



Jeanne M. Jennings is Senior Vice President, Group Director, Media, McCann Health Engagement. She can be reached at 646-865-2645 or jeanne.jennings@mccann.com.

Passing Down Roots: Embracing Family Traditions With Max

BY FABRIZIO GAMBINO

As parents from two strong and similar cultures, Italian and Brazilian, Tess and I believe in letting our son Max find his own path in life. We never wanted to force traditions, hobbies, or interests onto him. Yet, we couldn't help but wonder if Max would inherit some of our cherished traditions, like our love for soccer (aka futebol/ Calcio), beach, and music.

This summer marked a significant milestone for us as a family. It was Max's first year joining us at the beach. We eagerly anticipated whether he'd share our enthusiasm for the sand, sun, and ocean. To our delight, it turned out that the tradition of beach vacations would continue with our little guy. Max adores the feeling of sand between his tiny toes, the soothing sounds of the ocean, and endless hours of play on the beach with his toys. It's heartwarming to see how this tradition has naturally been passed down to Max.

We are super excited for the next adventures and explorations with Max, nurturing his interests and letting him grow into the unique blend of cultures that make up his heritage.



All smiles with Captain Max!



Fabrizio Gambino is President and Chief Commercial Officer at RPM Healthcare. He can be reached at FabrizioG@rpmhealthcare.com.

87 Years and Still Moving

BY TOM MCGILL

I've just turned 87. One of the ways I've kept going strong is to make riding my bike part of my daily routine.

About 15 years ago, I was diagnosed with arthritic knees so I gave up walking exercise and moved to cycling. Now, I am an avid bicycle rider. Weather permitting, I'm on the road on my bike, going about eight to ten miles. My usual route on Long Beach Island is south from my home toward Holgate. It's flat with no hills. If the weather is inclement or the wind strong, I use a stationary bike inside my home for about 45 minutes. Either way, it's a daily routine I prioritize.



Cycling around LBI.

In July 2020, I fell from my bike and fractured my humerus in my left arm. I couldn't let that stop me. After treatment, I spent three weeks in a sling. Now, when I'm on my stationary bike, I've added arm exercises too.



Tom McGill was formerly Chairman, President, and CEO of Medical Economics Company, Inc. He can be reached at boyomcgill@gmail.com or 609-492-0062.

Two Mishaps and a Wedding

BY DICK BARNETT

When I was an Assistant Editor at *Outdoor Life* magazine many moons ago – my first journalism job out of Long Island University – a colleague and close friend invited me to her partner's brother's wedding. Sounded like a fun idea, no? I drove to her house and parked in her parking space in the complex at which she lived. In turn, she drove to the wedding.

At the reception, all of a sudden, a ruckus ensued, with a male guest at the next table having a rough-and-tumble with one of the waiters. Nice way to enjoy a post-wedding dinner. Of course, this put a pall over the festivities.

At evening's end – somewhat late – my buddy drove me back to her place and I went to my car. Gripping one of the tires was a gigantic lock, preventing me from moving my car out of my friend's designated spot. After at least

an hour before finding the super for the complex, considering the hour, we were able to have the mega-lock extricated and I was on my way home.

Never again have I had an experience like that at a wedding, making it a rather unhappy event.

As I haven't been in touch with my friend in decades, I don't know if the couple is still married, but at the time they did have my very best wishes.



My own bride and me.



Dick Barnett has over 30 years of freelance med-pharma copyediting-proofreading experience with dozens of firms in the field. He can be reached at barnettia10@hotmail.com.



A WEDDING I'LL NEVER FORGET

BY GINA BENNICASA

In September 2014, I went to my dear friend's daughter's wedding at The Washington at Historic Yellow Springs in Pennsylvania. The building itself has a lot of history. It was built around 1750, starting as a colonial inn and tavern in what was a spa town. During the American Revolution, George Washington slept there (hence the name)!

This wedding was so memorable, I am still talking about it 10 years later! Here are some of the highlights.

THE FUNDAMENTALS – BRIDE, GROOM, AND AN IMPRESSIVE MUSICAL GUEST LIST

Here's a little something about the bride and groom. The bride and her sisters are in a band together. They sing and write their own music. The groom is a music producer and also a photographer. As a result they had some well-known guests who are amazingly talented, among them Lisa Loeb, Nora Jones, John Oats, Chris Stills (his dad is Stephen Stills of Crosby, Stills, and Nash fame).

The ceremony took place outdoors on a beautiful day. The bride was absolutely stunning, wearing a beautiful, traditional white gown and veil. The groom wore a classy top hat and tails. The wedding officiant was a total character. He was dressed up in a long black velvet cape and made the ceremony extra entertaining!

SPECIAL DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS...

There were just so many specific personal touches. They made for an unforgettable day.

When it came time to go into the main room for the reception, the scene was so romantic. Long rectangular tables filled the room, decked out in lots of flickering candles and gorgeous flowers.

There was a table with pictures of every single wedding guest set in individual picture frames. You picked up your

picture and there was a tag attached guiding you to your table assignment. I have never seen this done before. It was so amazing – such a unique and intentional way to welcome every person.

The bride and groom asked their grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, and cousins to share their wedding pictures. Then they used those pictures as part of the décor, displaying them all around the room. SO sweet – another distinctive touch!



The bride and groom exchanging vows.

THE MUSIC PLAYED

Once the reception was in full swing, it was like I was at this incredible, once-in-a-lifetime concert. One by one, these talented and gifted singers sang and played their music. I was in total awe. I felt like I was seeing a concert in my living room!

I was very excited because I got to speak to John Oats and congratulate him on Hall & Oats being inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame (this

had just happened months before). I grew up listening to Hall & Oats. And since John Oats is 5'4" and I am 4'11", it made it easy to speak with him. The other celeb run-in of the night? I put lipstick on right next to Nora Jones in the Ladies Room.

The couple will be celebrating their 10th wedding anniversary this year. They now have one daughter and live in Manhattan.



Gina Bennicasa is National Account Manager, Pharmaceutical Media, Inc. She can be reached at gbennicasa@pminy.com or 917-414-5038 (c).



My Journey With True Beauty Lashes *Redefining Beauty Standards Through Beauty Positivity*

BY LISA WESTHAFFER

Embarking on the journey of True Beauty Lashes was a decision deeply rooted in my own personal experiences and a fervent desire to challenge the norms of the beauty industry.

My deep connection to this brand is intertwined with the struggles many women face regarding body image and mental health, which I have experienced myself. Growing up in Southern California, I was constantly criticized about my weight, from which I ultimately developed an eating disorder in college. Now healed from that challenging time in my life, I have a heartfelt passion for reminding women that their true beauty doesn't come from what they look like; it starts with celebrating who they are.

A BEAUTY-POSITIVE FOCUS

The cosmetic industry and social media are both meaningful drivers of negative self-talk many women experience about their own beauty, especially as they age. So I felt a compelling need to create a brand with a beauty-positive focus that connects with women on a deeper level, using social media as a platform to spread this message. True Beauty Lashes is not just a brand; it's a manifestation of inclusivity and the evolution of beauty across all life stages.

LASHES AND LASTING BEAUTY

Lashes became the avenue through which I could express the belief that there's no age limit on feeling beautiful. As someone who has worn lashes myself for over 25 years, when I reached the age of 40, I realized there was a need to create lashes that align with the eye changes women experience as they age. While Millennials and Gen Z are primary audiences for lashes, most lash brands are not addressing the unmet needs of women of all ages, especially the older generations who are also still buying lashes (my own mother and aunt in their 60s included).

LASHES FOR EVERYONE

So, I decided to do something about this. I worked with a lash design company to source lashes that are right for specific eye shapes and sizes, for customers of every age, and provide a lash quiz to help customers find those lashes quickly and easily. Our lash styles are also named as a reflection of the character traits or descriptions of a woman who is truly beautiful. They're all inspired by women I've known in my family or my closest girlfriends. For example, "Perfectly Imperfect" was inspired by my niece as a reminder to her to be willing to accept herself in every way and remember that her beauty comes from who she is, not what anyone thinks about her looks.

CRUELTY-FREE

It was also important to me that our lashes deliver beauty through ethically sourced materials. The brand utilizes what we call FAUXREAL™ lash technology – a revolutionary material that is as soft as real fur. I founded the company with a commitment to cruelty-free standards. We became both PETA and Leaping Bunny certified with 100% vegan products that have never and will never be tested on animals. This, I believe, is an extension of beauty beginning with where your heart is and communicating a consistent message of an outward focus on the impact you make on the world around you.



Celebrating individuality through a variety of True Beauty Lashes.

COMMITTED TO MENTAL HEALTH

A connection to mental health is a fundamental aspect of True Beauty Lashes. Through our work in the beauty industry, we've watched the impact of social media and unrealistic beauty comparisons that significantly affect the mental health of our friends, family, and customers. And through the COVID-19 pandemic, this reached new devastating heights. As a part of our focus on our community's well-being, we've pledged to donate a portion of our sales to the Mental Health Coalition founded in 2020 by designer Kenneth Cole.

CELEBRATING EVERY BEAUTY

Through True Beauty Lashes, I'm grateful to have personally witnessed the impact on women's lives as they embrace a beauty-positive mindset. Our social media platforms serve as communities where women celebrate their unique beauty. The influencers we've worked with have shared a level of authenticity with their own mental health struggles as they compete on a daily basis with other women in the world of social media attention.

True Beauty Lashes is not merely about selling a product. It's a mission to change the narrative surrounding beauty. We've initiated a movement that challenges outdated beauty standards and promotes authenticity, inclusivity, and mental well-being. As I witness the impact of True Beauty Lashes on women's lives, it reaffirms my belief that true beauty is a lifestyle – a celebration of life that empowers women to take on anything, for every occasion, and at any stage of their lives.



Lisa Westhafer is Founder, True Beauty Lashes, Inc. (formerly Senior Vice President, Engagement Strategy Director, ConcentricLife). She can be reached at Lisa.Westhafer@truebeautyincorporate.com and 619-203-6249.

Debbie Kenney

Birthplace: Brooklyn, NY

Marital Status: Married

Children: Not Yet

Job Title: Director, Video Investment

Years in Industry: 20

College: St. John's University

*As my dad always says,
"This too shall pass."*



WHO IS YOUR MENTOR AND HOW DID HE/SHE IMPACT YOU?

My mentor is my sister, Kimberly Kenney. We've always been close and she's always been teaching me since we were little (she taught me how to tie my shoes and how to read so I'd be "smarter than kids in my class" ha!). She constantly gives me advice and guidance and I wouldn't be the person I am today without her. Thanks Kim!

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?

Waitress at Friendly's.

IF YOU COULD HAVE LUNCH WITH ANY PERSON, LIVING OR DEAD (OTHER THAN A RELATIVE), WHO WOULD IT BE?

Lucille Ball – It would probably be one of the funniest lunches I'd ever have.

WHAT WOULD BE THE TITLE OF YOUR LIFE?

"TV and Ice Cream – My Guide to Life."

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE INDUSTRY?

I started my career through St. John's University career center. There was a listing for a Media Coordinator position at a boutique agency called Tangible Media. The job description listed buying ad time on TV networks. Since I love TV, I thought it would be the perfect job for me! It was at Tangible where I learned what impressions and GRPs were and how to calculate a CPM. When I left to become a media buyer at KD&E, Toby Katcher (who I'm reunited with at CMI Media Group) was the one who taught me how to hone my negotiation skills.

WHAT THREE ADJECTIVES BEST DESCRIBE YOU?

Humorous, Inquisitive, Personable.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE WEBSITE AND/OR APP?

My favorite site would be Synopsis Media. It's where I get my daily update on what's going on in the media world including TV, digital, and sports.

IF YOUR LIFE HAD A THEME SONG WHAT WOULD IT BE?

"Living on a Prayer" by Bon Jovi.

DO YOU HAVE ANY HOBBIES?

Watching TV, going to concerts, and watching the Yankees (2024 will be a better year for them!).

WHO WAS YOUR FAVORITE TEACHER?

My high school business teacher Debra Stein. I loved her advertising classes, which is what inspired me to go into advertising

as a career. Presenting different assignments in her class helped me to squash any fears of public speaking. She was also the adviser of the Future Business Leaders of America, which I was President of, and she helped to guide me when giving speeches to big rooms and get me over the "nervous laugh" I had. I still make sure all of my presentations are "jazzed up," as she instilled this in me!

WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?

Looking back, I wish I wouldn't have been so afraid to change jobs. I knew I was ready for a change, but I was nervous about the unknown of starting a new job. When I did take the plunge, it was the best thing I ever did. I loved the education that came along with my new positions, and I met some amazing people.

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL YOUR YOUNGER SELF?

Change is scary, do it anyway.

IF YOU COULD SEE ANYONE IN CONCERT, WHO WOULD IT BE?

I would have loved to see Queen with Freddie Mercury.

WHAT WAS THE BEST PRESENT YOU EVER RECEIVED?

My engagement ring. I'm blessed to have the greatest husband in the world!

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT?

Ice cream.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SERIES TO BINGE-WATCH?

This is a tough one, I LOVE TV! I watch anything and everything, but I guess my favorite to binge would be any of "The Real Housewives."

WHAT DO YOU KNOW FOR SURE?

We make plans and God laughs at us.

IF YOU COULD DO A GUEST ROLE ON A TV SHOW, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

"General Hospital." I've been watching it since I was a kid (who didn't watch soaps on sick days from school?) and it's still my favorite show. I want to be in a scene with Carly, Jason, and Sonny!



Debbie and her husband Alex, who were recently married on September 30, 2023.

Debbie Kenney is Director, Video Investment, CMI Media Group. She can be reached at dkenney@cmimediagroup.com or 215-568-5944.

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