

FOREWORD

By Sarah Lenz Lock

Herb Weiss's collection of 72 essays portrays how we can all age boldly. His book provides a refreshingly positive portrait of living longer. What is striking as you read each of his stories is that despite our culture's general worship of youth, Herb's "age beat" is a place that celebrates the increasing wisdom and experience that comes with longer lives. His writings offer the most human and best way of giving you the advice you need in a way you want: storytelling.

Through *Taking Charge*, Herb intriguingly shows us that aging is an ongoing process, and that it is never too late to move in a better direction. Take his Commencement tips to seniors graduating high school or college. They remind us that every day you wake up is another chance to commence, again. And he provides these insights like a wise friend, suggesting a different approach that might make your life better, richer and just perhaps help avoid some of the pitfalls that may otherwise trip you up.

Herb weaves a story conveying the advice you need to know to age boldly in a way you want to read about it. I lead a distinguished group of neurologists, geriatricians, and psychiatrists from all over the world called the Global Council on Brain Health (GCBH). The GCBH lets people know what works and what doesn't to improve your brain health as you age. After much study over several months these experts produce treatises of helpful information. I am inordinately proud the GCBH distills the science on relevant topics into short, easy to understand, white papers for people to use in their lives. By short, I mean about 25 pages. Long before COVID hit, the GCBH completed our report on how social isolation can harm your brain health. The 2017 Social Engagement report https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/health/brain_health/2017/02/gcbh-social-engagement-report-english-aarp.doi.10.26419%252F-pia.00015.001.pdf was only 24 pages long! Herb covered that report, but instead of a dry white paper, he proffers all its wisdom in a delightful one-page story. He shares the charming tale of Nancy and Mark Shorrocks coming to a place in Pawtucket called Spumoni's for more than 20 years.

In a piece called, "Where Everybody Knows Your Name," Herb instantly conjures up a place for us we can all recognize and where we all want to be. He

feeds us the lessons of how vital social engagement is to our brain health, without us ever having to chew through 24 pages of a white paper, and provides a road map about how to implement it in our own lives with fun. His portrait of community stays with us, and we only have to think of the Shor-rocks to know how to live.

I have never met Herb Weiss, but I want to. I have never been to Pawtucket, but I want to do that too. Any place that can inspire a writer like Herb to craft beautiful stories and that provide such a positive perspective on aging must be a nice place to be. So even though you may not be able to go to Pawtucket, or share a meal at Spumoni's right now, you can curl up with this good book. Reading it will help you feel as if you are part of a community of people who choose to take charge of their living, follow their wise friend Herb's advice, and age boldly.

Sarah Lenz Lock is senior vice president for Policy and Brain Health at AARP. Ms. Lock leads AARP's policy initiatives to spark a lifetime of healthier brains and to disrupt dementia. Sarah serves as the executive director of the Global Council on Brain Health, an independent collaborative of scientists, doctors, and policy experts to provide trusted information on brain health.

PREFACE

A growing number of aging baby boomers and senior readers turn to newspapers, electronic media and the internet to investigate issues and identify resources to help them age gracefully.

Over the years, while journalists have made improvements in their reporting, age bias still exists in writing and reporting by reporters immersed in economics or political writing but not familiar with related issues in aging, warns San Francisco-based journalist Paul Kleyman, editor of the e-newsletter, Generations Beat Online (GBONews.org), the Journalists Network on Generations, founded in 1993. The e-newsletter is a great resource for those covering aging. It is distributed to more than 1,000 journalists and authors on aging. Kleyman, a seasoned journalist, covers a wide spectrum of issues the media must spotlight in an aging American society.

Kleyman says: “*The New York Times* has terrific stories, such as Paula Span’s “New Old Age” column, or knowledgeable personal finance stories by contributors like Kerry Hannon and Mark Miller in their “Retiring” columns. But then the *Times* will run stories by staff or contributing writers, who fall back into the old conventional folly (no wisdom there) that the aging of the population necessarily will create a burden of illness and weigh down the GDP.”

“Illness will always be there with advanced age, but they fail to stop and think at all about the continued contributions of many more who age with greater health and capability,” says Kleyman. “Those reporters and their editors somehow fail to consider the substantial gerontological research that for years has contested their underlying assumptions, such as that the only answer to declining birth rates is to incentivize the young to have more babies, not to, for example, look toward today’s more educated, healthier older adults for more productivity. That’s already the case,” he adds.

Kleyman added, “There’s always a lag with reporting from conventional and, yes, often distinguished reporters never updating disproven social or scientific views. And that reporting can, unfortunately, reinforce retro policymaking and political decisions.”

“The more accurate facts and analyses eventually will lead to smarter understanding and better identification of where to look for the fixes, such as improving policies to combat age discrimination that cuts off older people from being able to contribute to their communities, including through more tax paying,” Kleyman says.

He went on, “A positive change, though, has been the influx of very knowledgeable journalists seeding the news media across the web and throughout the country. Herb Weiss has long helped lead the way with richly informed columns.”

Through my writings I strive to stand among the more well-informed journalists covering the age beat, who know and write better, and are better able to inform the public about the Longevity Revolution, with all of its challenges and implications, both positive and challenging.

For more than 40 years, with more than 790 published articles (written or co-authored) in newspapers, news blogs and trade publications, this writer has reported on the latest studies and reports on a myriad of aging, medical or health-care issues. Many of these timely articles covered cutting-edge studies and reports released by the Washington, DC-based AARP and other sources, bringing pertinent information to seniors to help their readers better plan for their later years.

The 16 chapters in Vol. 2 of *Taking Charge: More Collected Stories on Aging Boldly*, 75 articles published from 2016 to 2021 were compiled. Each article lists the date and newspaper it was published in.

Like the previous volume, this collection of articles gives the reader insights and practical information about how people in their later years can take charge and enjoy a full and satisfying quality of life, unparalleled in our nation’s history. Even if the article was written years ago, and the person quoted is no longer in his or her position, or even deceased, the insight is still factual and valuable to the reader.

While most of my articles cover national research and public policy issues, I localize them by quoting Rhode Islanders. However, their stories are universal and their insights applicable anywhere in the nation.

These articles bring together the expertise and knowledge of experts along with comments of people over age 50 sharing their observations and insights

about caregiving, travel, surviving COVID-19, improving health and finances, relationships, retirement and leisure, to their thoughts about mental health, spirituality and death.

Yes, each one of us can tell our own personal stories or even share an experience that just might help others age boldly, live better, and longer.

I will continue to use my weekly columns in the *Pawtucket Times*, *Woonsocket Call*, *RINewsToday* and the monthly newspaper, *Senior Digest*, to bring a bully pulpit to advocate for seniors to enhance their quality of life and to bring to them the most informative coverage of aging, medical and health-care issues they need to know.

—Herb Weiss, LRI'12

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