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Life review projects also provide away to fix the flaws in one's life, to deal with the things that don't go according to plan, that keep life from being as one imagines it should have been. In his retirement, John Hartter, a Brooklyn plumber, humorously gave form to the indignities he suffered during his long career as a plumber, steamfitter and meter reader. In one of his detailed papier-mache tableaux, Hartter portrays the unjust distribution of labor he saw among journeymen and their apprentices. "It always seemed like the little guys had to do all the hard work," he says, "while the big, burly journeymen just took it easy oiling the threads."

Older Americans also have a chance to show how the world itself has changed. These efforts make the ephemeral lasting. "The Grand Generation" organizers say. Rod Rosebrook, an 88-year-old retired rancher from Redmond, Ore., established a "home museum" in his barn after spending years gathering tools connected with his way of life: barbed wire, brands for sheep and cattle, horseshoes, bits, bridles, pipes, wrenches, stove tops and much more. Such collections really do double duty, one folklorist notes, in making the past "simultaneously and enduringly present."

After years of practice and refinement, many older artists achieve mastery of their craft. Mrs. T.A. "Mamoo" Lewis of Knoxville, Tenn., set the standard for "soggy coconut" cake in her family, and try as they might, no one could duplicate it. Like the master boatbuilder who shuns blueprints and builds all his boats by eye, Mamoo never used a recipe. She was "a taster and a tester," according to her children. "A recipe and a dress pattern, she lived above them!" But Mamoo gave the family a scare not long ago, suffering what one member called "a little setback."



Smithsonian News Service Photo courtesy of Modern Maturity

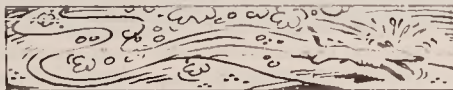
From the license plates and empty road to the two figures, "What's He Doing?" a photo by Bob Buchanan, born in 1921, provides a wealth of human interest.

Knowing that a recipe could never replicate the cake, the family decided to capture on tape and film Mamoo's talk and gestures involved in making the dessert. Future Lewises should now be able to have a slice of Mamoo's creativity.

Unfortunately, there are many older people all over America eager to transmit their personal histories and accumulated knowledge to others, waiting to be asked about their stories and art. Yet they have no audience, Barbara Myerhoff once noted. "Their memories are stored in boxes in cellars, in trunks, in attics needing only a witness to bring them to light, a recipient to complete the interchange that is requisite to all cultural transmission."



The President with the most children was Tyler, who had 15.



The fastest breed of dog in the world is the greyhound. It has been clocked at 41.7 miles per hour.

Americans 65 years or older numbered 29.2 million in 1986—a population increase of 14 percent since 1980 compared to 5 percent for those under 65. This and other statistics prepared in 1987 by the American Association of Retired Persons and the Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, present a profile of an aging America.

*Since 1900, the percentage of Americans 65 and older has tripled, from 4.1 percent of the population to 12.1 percent in 1986.

*In 1986, there were 147 older women for every 100 men.

*The older population is itself getting older. The age group 85 and older is 22 times larger than it was in 1900.

*By the year 2030, older Americans are expected to represent 21.2 percent of the population. The only age group expected to grow in the next century, assuming current fertility and immigration levels, will be that over age 55.

*In 1986, older men were twice as likely to be married as older women, and there were over five times as many widows as widowers.

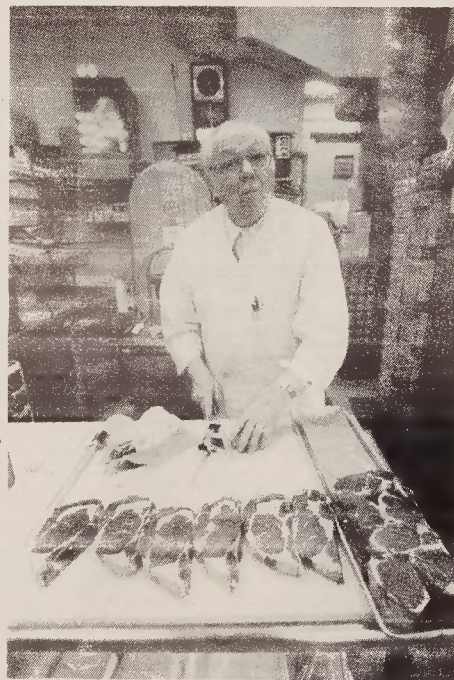
*About 90 percent of older Americans in 1986 were white, 8 percent were black and about 2 percent were other races including American Indian and Asian.

*Almost half of all persons 65 and older lived in eight states three years ago—over 2 million each in California, New York and Florida, and more than 1 million each in Pennsylvania, Texas, Illinois, Ohio and Michigan.

*The median income of older persons in 1986 was \$11,544 for males and \$6,425 for females. The major source of income for older Americans was Social Security (35 percent), followed by asset income (25 percent), earnings (23 percent), pensions (14 percent) and other income such as veterans' benefits (2 percent).

*Older Americans made up 2.6 percent of the U.S. labor force in 1986.

*The most frequently occurring health conditions for the elderly were arthritis (48 percent), hypertension (39 percent), hearing impairments (29 percent) and heart disease (30 percent).



Smithsonian News Service Photo courtesy of Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

Albert Weisfeld has been cutting meat ever since he was "big enough to reach the meat block"—about 75 years at his count.



The largest fish ever caught by rod and reel was a white shark that weighed over 2,500 pounds!