

# COMING *of* AGE

LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR SENIORS

SUMMER 2025

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH  
**JUNE SQUIBB**

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# [FROM THE EDITOR]



## Emily Echevarria

Marketing  
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Happy Summer!

This issue is extra exciting to me personally for several reasons. First, it's the 20th anniversary of *Coming of Age* magazine. My very first office job years ago was on a quirky team at Ballinger Publishing, where I brainstormed, wrote articles and edited a variety of publications, including this one. Proofreading *Coming of Age* was how I first learned about Council on Aging and all the things this agency does to serve seniors. Now I have the privilege of serving as editor of this magazine in my role as marketing communications director for COA and to oversee its 20th year in publication. It's a full circle moment for me and truly a delight to continue working closely with my Ballinger Publishing colleagues!

The second thing I'm thrilled about in this issue is our exclusive interview with June Squibb. I saw *Thelma* last year – a film starring Squibb as the titular character who is targeted by a scam and goes on a wild adventure to get her money back from the scammers. It's both a comedic romp and a poignant exploration of challenges of aging like loss of independence and isolation. I can't wait to see *Eleanor the Great*, which debuted at Cannes last month. While June Squibb has been a working actor for many decades, she was in her 80s when she rose to greater prominence with starring film roles, and today we as viewers and readers get to enjoy what the internet has dubbed the "Squibbissance."

Also in this issue, we're recognizing May as Huntington's Disease Awareness Month by sharing stories of community and care within our HD support group. We've also got a rundown of Granny Get-Down—a food-focused fundraiser for our AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer programs—and a Q and A with one of our dedicated volunteers.

I hope you enjoy this issue and this look back on the past 20 years of readership. We're celebrating where we've been while also looking toward the future as we continue to grow and shift with the needs of older adults. If you need anything from us at Council on Aging—whether for senior resources or just a good movie recommendation—please don't hesitate to reach out to me at 850-266-2507 and I will do my best to help!

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Council on Aging of West Florida welcomes your letters and comments. Send letters to Council on Aging c/o Emily Echevarria at 875 Royce St., Pensacola, FL 32503, emails to [eechevarria@coawfla.org](mailto:eechevarria@coawfla.org) or contact editor Kelly Oden at Ballinger Publishing, P.O. Box 12665 Pensacola, FL 32591 or [kelly@ballingerpublishing.com](mailto:kelly@ballingerpublishing.com).

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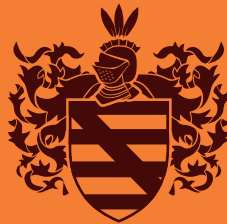
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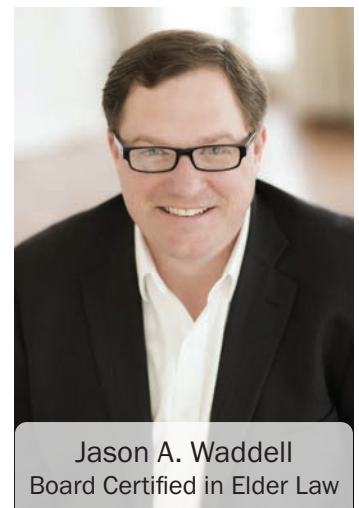
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**On the Cover: June Squibb**

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# The Luxury of Ignorance

By Josh Newby

**I**N MID-APRIL, OUR AGENCY RECEIVED WORD THAT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL AMERICORPS SENIORS (WHICH FUNDS OUR SENIOR COMPANION AND FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAMS) STAFF HAD BEEN SENT HOME BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY (DOGE). That short-sighted and potentially harmful decision has since been mostly reversed, but of course we didn't know that would be outcome at the time, and so we posted on Facebook asking for community support in the interim. Several comments regurgitated the same arguments you've heard before: "Grandma should've saved her money," "Cut out the fraud and abuse and use your money for what was intended," "We've gotta cut all the spending somehow." At around this same time, I was also making my way through a series of essays in *The New Atlantis* about the hidden mechanisms that support modern life.

Do you know how electricity works? Not the complex system of power delivery or electrical wiring, but just how it is created? Or how a toilet works? Or how federal monies are reauthorized by a parliamentary technicality and appropriated by Congress via Continuing Resolution and then given to departments at the state level to distribute via Community Development Block Grants, and the related metrics, compliance, tracking, contracting and service delivery to simultaneously provide a stipend to historically impoverished minority people groups while also assisting other vulnerable populations to slow the growth of Medicaid, SNAP, DCF and DoE spending? Americans enjoy a luxurious lifestyle—the greatest in the history of humanity—while also not possessing even a rudimentary understanding of the systems we depend upon. Charles Mann, author of the above referenced piece, writes, "[Baby boomers] wanted a better world, but they didn't know how this one worked." Conspiracy theories rush to knowledge vacuums, and successful strongmen lend credence to those underinformed notions of how the world operates.

Faith in institutions—in the church, the government, the press, the academy—has been on the decline for decades, but it plummeted among everyone (admittedly, myself included) during COVID. And so we see podcasts, TV news, and social media commentary that thrive on the devaluation of institutional knowledge in favor of something misguided, an abstract intuition about the solutions, because simple answers are more attractive than difficult ones. And now that we have a far-reaching executive branch, the casualty of these efforts are often the essential services that historically have very little waste, fraud or abuse in the first place. This uncertainty and rudderless decision-making hurts those who always get hurt, while having very little impact on those with a buffer against the effects.

Ironically, it is often the least among us that know the most about the intricacies of these social safety nets precisely because their lives depend on navigating them, while those with the power to cast or hoard those nets understand the least. The privilege of ignorance is only found amongst those with the most privileges already. Our founding fathers believed that an

informed citizenry was necessary to democratic self-rule; the alternative is a technocracy. And so we have people who have never been on food stamps cutting food stamps and people whose parents can afford in-home assistance eliminating those same services for those without.

That is a nasty, dysfunctional, irrational system. But what is there really to do? We have our lives, our jobs, our children, our marriages, our hobbies, all held captive for the time being by an economy we've never really seen. Do I want to spend hours a day studying how complex systems work, or do I want to play with my son? Honestly, I'd rather just watch TV, but obviously playing with my son is the right choice. Part of becoming an adult is the realization that you can't save the world: you can't rescue every dog, rehabilitate every addict, do chores for every senior. But you can influence your sphere. You can call your representative or write to the paper in favor of the programs that undergird our society and are there for the most vulnerable when no one else is. And you can talk to people you disagree with; not self-righteously, not judgmentally, but with compassion and a genuine desire to understand. These are hard times for everyone, and our future is uncertain, but I have a thorough knowledge of this industry and I regularly converse with those who benefit from our services—and those who would like our services to cease to exist. In these downtrodden times, when those I'll never meet, intentionally or not, hurt those I do, I'm reminded of a poem by Maggie Smith, the great American essayist:

*Life is short, though I keep this from my children.*

*Life is short, and I've shortened mine*

*in a thousand delicious, ill-advised ways,*

*a thousand deliciously ill-advised ways*

*I'll keep from my children. The world is at least*

*fifty percent terrible, and that's a conservative*

*estimate, though I keep this from my children.*

*For every bird there is a stone thrown at a bird.*

*For every loved child, a child broken, bagged,*

*sunk in a lake. Life is short and the world*

*is at least half terrible, and for every kind*

*stranger, there is one who would break you,*

*though I keep this from my children. I am trying*

*to sell them the world. Any decent realtor,*

*walking you through a real shithole, chirps on*

*about good bones: This place could be beautiful,*

*right? You could make this place beautiful.*



# Volunteer Spotlight

**Name:** Sarah Gaies

**Volunteer Position:** Retreat  
Adult Day Center Volunteer

## 1. What made you decide to volunteer for the Council on Aging of West Florida?

One of my favorite populations is the elderly and aging population. I moved here with my husband to Pensacola last summer in July. I was taking a little break from work; I'm an occupational therapist and I was like, you know what? If I could just go somewhere—an assisted living facility, a daycare center, a rehab center—where there are a lot of elderly people and I can go and chat and smile and play games and help with activities and reminisce and all of that kind of stuff. If I could just go and do that and not have to write any documentation or notes or have any work associated with it, I would just be in heaven. I would love that so much. I did some Googling and I came across Council on Aging, came across The Retreat, and the website was awesome. There were smiling people on the website, and I just felt compelled to reach out and see what kind of opportunities there were for me there.

## 2. Tell me about the volunteer activities you have been involved with.

The first thing I do is just come in with a smile and see if there's anything right off the bat that's needed. Sometimes, I can just show up and there's stuff going on that they need extra hands with—like crafts, snack time, setting up for the next activity,

bingo and things like that. A lot of what I like to do is to kind of jump from person to person and just say hello, ask them how their day is going, see if there's anything I can do to help them engage in whatever activity is going on a little bit more, help them participate a little bit more, just kind of seeing what needs there are and filling in those needs. Maybe an activity has already been set up, but I see that somebody's not really fully engaged in it or is struggling to participate. How can I modify this or step in so that the person can participate? Or if there are lulls, because a lot of times there are lulls in the day where we're focused a little bit more on the cleanup of the activity or bathroom breaks or things like that. If I see that people are maybe looking for something to do or some kind of stimulation or engagement, I can get something going just out of my back pocket, ask some questions, toss a balloon around or something like that just to keep people occupied.

## 3. What brings you joy as a volunteer for the Council on Aging of West Florida?

There are so many things, but I would say walking into the room when I get here, a lot of eyes turn towards me. There are people here that remember me and know me. And so we have that rapport going. And then, there are the people who have seen me many times, but don't register who



I am, but still smile at me or I go over and talk with them and we connect right away because I have gotten to know them over time. So the joy that I find the most is in the simple conversations, the simple interactions that just come from connecting with people.

**4. From your perspective, what is the greatest impact that COA has in your community?**

So I am not only involved here at The Retreat, but I also help out at one of the dining sites. Every Thursday morning I go to Westwood. I help out Carol over there, so I've seen two programs that exist, but I know there are many more. I think there is such a population of aging folks that often go unnoticed, especially people who don't really have someone to care for them or don't have a place to go during the day, or are just kind of struggling to get by. I think from a food security perspective, from a respite care perspective, from a perspective of social participation and connectedness, Council on Aging really checks a lot of boxes for people.

I think there's such a need and not enough people out there that are filling those needs and Council on Aging is coming in from multiple approaches and doing the best that we can with the resources that we have to make a positive difference in the lives of people in the aging community.

**5. What would you share with others considering volunteering for the agency?**

Stop thinking and just do it. If you have even a small part of your heart or a little bit of an interest in connecting with this population, I think you'll come and you'll get involved and you'll feel so much joy and you'll feel so rewarded for just being a part of this community. There are so many amazing folks here and a really great community of people who just want to make a difference and be a friend and make somebody's day a little better, and make someone's life a little bit better. Anybody who's thinking about doing it and getting involved just do it, you won't regret it.



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# *Granny Get-Down*

## for a Greater Good

By Emily Echevarria

The seventh annual Granny Get-Down food fest fundraiser took place Saturday, May 3 at Sanders Beach Resource Center, and it was the biggest edition of the cook-off benefit yet. The festive celebration has the atmosphere of a block party with music, dancing, door prizes, and at the center of the action – home cooked specialties made by the volunteers at the heart of the programs the event supports.

Granny Get-Down is a benefit for Council on Aging's two AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer programs, which engage adults ages 55 and over in service roles as either Senior Companions who assist other older adults in living independently, or as Foster Grandparents who mentor children in schools and child development centers.

The program not only serves children and older adults in need, but it helps the volunteers themselves remain active and connected to their community.

"I just wanted to stay busy, and this was perfect," said Foster Grandparent volunteer Shirley Valentine, who serves at Global Learning Academy. "It's keeping my mind sharp. These kids are really amazing."

Senior Companion Ralph Caiazza has formed a deep friendship with his client Mary after being paired together for two years. Mary is 83 and no longer drives, so Ralph takes her to appointments, errands, and to simply socialize over lunch.





"That has helped me so much," Mary says. "I don't know what I'd do without him."

Volunteers also receive benefits like monthly educational training relevant to their roles, annual physical exams, and a small, hourly stipend for their service. They share their wisdom, experience and unique skills with those they serve, whether to older adults at risk of isolation or facility placement, or children in need of a little extra love and attention in the classroom.

Each year at Granny Get-Down, those same volunteers employ another skill: cooking or baking. Each makes 200 tasting servings of their specialty dish for attendees to sample and vote for their favorites. From collard greens and juicy pork to red velvet cake and sweet potato pie, the variety of dishes and cooking styles take center stage as the home chefs compete for Granny Get-Down glory, and local celebrity judges also taste and rank the offerings. New to this year's event were local chefs who displayed cooking demonstrations and shared samples of their creations.

In addition to providing an entertaining afternoon and a delectable sampling of tasty goods to hundreds in attendance, the event raised more than \$11,000 for the combined Senior Volunteer programs. Through sponsorships, tickets, prize items, and donations, the event raised funds that will go directly back to the senior volunteer programs, allowing dedicated volunteers to continue to serve and for the older adults and children they serve to continue to benefit.







# The Dinosaur in the Room

## Facing Huntington's Disease Together

By Emily Echevarria

**W**es Delaware met his late wife Lori when they were both serving and working in the U.S. Navy in Maine in 1987. Their first date was to a John Denver concert at a baseball field that summer, and they were married by November the following year. The pair moved around with their jobs to the Azores, Norfolk, Philadelphia and Jacksonville before settling in Pensacola, but their love story took a difficult turn when Lori started to experience some concerning symptoms. The trials that unfolded for them led them on a journey through challenges and pain, but also to education, advocacy and community.

After taking a blood test, Lori was diagnosed with Huntington's Disease (HD), a rare genetic condition that progresses over time with increasing symptoms characterized by involuntary movements and dementia. The symptoms eventually affected her ability to work, and she was forced to medically retire after 29 years in civil service. Lori had Wes by her side as not only a partner, but as a fierce advocate and eventually, as her caregiver, a role he says he was blessed to fill for his beloved wife in the latter stages of her condition.

"We say Huntington's is like ALS, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's all rolled into one in its most advanced stages," Delaware said. "It's a journey because it's a progressively degenerative disease."

While there is currently no cure for HD, there are treatments to help manage the symptoms, which progress over a 10- to 30-year period. Individuals in advanced stages of HD require full-time caregiving. Because of its rarity – HD occurs in about one out of every 10,000 to 20,000 people – those with the disease and their loved ones often travel for specialized medical care from regional centers for excellence like the one at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where Lori and Wes traveled for care.

Those with this disease also seek out community with those who understand the unique struggles of HD, which Wes and Lori did after her diagnosis when she was in the early stages of symptoms. The pair had been longtime friends with Council on Aging Community Programs Specialist Margaret Jerauld, who coordinates several caregiver support groups. The Delwares talked to Jerauld about starting a support group specific to those with HD, and the group had its first meeting in early 2018. The group now meets at Council on Aging on a Saturday every other month February, April, June, August, October and December.

"We emphasize that getting together with other families dealing with HD is a great benefit in that they know they are not alone and can get suggestions from tried and true caregivers as to how to handle the day-to-day stresses of their lives," Jerauld said.





The support group has since served as a resource of support, education, and fellowship for anyone affected by Huntington's Disease (HD) or Juvenile Huntington's Disease (JHD). This includes anyone from the HD/JHD family/community, including gene-positive, at-risk, symptomatic, friends, relatives, other loved ones and healthcare professionals.

"Support groups form their own personality of a sort of familial unit where you get involved in some of the most personal things in people's lives," Delaware said.

Ashley Vannoy is another participant in the HD support group. Vannoy was diagnosed with HD in 2013 and joined the Delwares and Jerauld in establishing the support group. She said she's received validation from the other members, and it provides a space for participants to express feelings, frustrations and challenges that come along with the condition.

The group also connects members with organizations like Huntington's Disease Society of America, which can give them access nation-wide resources. Vannoy also recently traveled to Birmingham to attend a HIPE - Highly Interactive Participant Education event – hosted by Help 4 HD, a nonprofit whose mission is to provide education and resources for families living with HD. These larger organizations help connect members with even more support, the latest scientific research, and drug trial and procedure opportunities for those with HD.

Vannoy is in the early stages of experiencing HD symptoms, with some minor chorea, or involuntary movement. She said the group has made her feel empowered to advocate with her medical team and be proactive in her treatment as she plans for the challenges she knows will come.



Because HD is a genetic condition, children of those who have it have a 50 percent chance of having the positive gene. Many of those children, like Wes and Lori's three adult children, choose not to have the test done. Delaware said many don't want the ramifications of the knowledge of the impending degenerative disease, and he said he understands this qualm. He said that the vast majority of people deal with health issues that come with age like heart disease or cancer, and a positive HD test is simply more specific information about one's future health challenges.

"This is the disease that nobody wants to know about. It's the elephant in the room, or maybe the dinosaur because it's bigger than an elephant," Delaware said. "One of the things I learned and I started saying early in Lori's diagnosis is that in life, we all have something, and if you don't think that you're kidding yourself."

For this reason, Delaware said he and Lori didn't live their lives much differently in the years following her diagnosis than he believes they would have otherwise. They traveled extensively, including a 21-day, seven-country Europe trip with their son in 2019, and adapted to Lori's abilities as her condition progressed. Lori passed in 2023, and Wes has continued to be a pillar of the support group, sharing his experience as an advocate and caregiver, as well as his friendship with those who are finding their own way on a long path he knows well.

"We have an unpleasant connection but it's a beautiful connection because we know the journey," Delaware said.

Pensacola Magazine's 1<sup>st</sup> Annual

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# Celebrating 20 Years

By Emily Echevarria

This year marks 20 years of *Coming of Age* Magazine – 20 years of advocacy and articles spotlighting local issues and opportunities for our region's older adults and caregivers. Looking back at the foundation built by former Council on Aging Vice President of Communications and Development, Jeff Nall, it's clear that not only has the agency greatly evolved to meet the needs of area seniors, but the media landscape has also changed immensely in the past two decades.

Before taking the form of a glossy magazine, information was disseminated about Council on Aging's programs and services via a newsletter called *Branches*. The primary readers of this newsletter were agency clients and a relatively small group of donors. In partnership with Ballinger Publishing, the newsletter became a magazine providing not only agency updates and information, but also caregiver resources and lifestyle articles focused on this ever-growing demographic.





Twenty years ago, when Council on Aging launched *Coming of Age* Magazine, 36.8 million Americans (12.4 percent of the population) were 65 and older according to the Administration on Aging (AoA). By 2022, the 65+ set numbered 57.8 million, representing 17.3 percent of the population, more than one in every six Americans, according to the Administration for Community Living (ACL). Florida has one of the highest percentages of older adults in its population, constituting 22 percent of the total U.S. population of those age 65 and over.

Also according to the ACL report, a relatively small number of people (1.3 million) 65

and older lived in nursing homes in 2022, reflecting a trend toward older adults maintaining independence through in-home services and care and increasing the need for organizations like Council on Aging. Our purpose is to empower individuals in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties to live healthy, safe and independent lives in their own familiar surroundings where they are most comfortable through programs like Meals on Wheels, adult day health care and case management.

Both *Coming of Age* magazine and *Coming of Age* TV on Blab have become informational and entertaining sources of updates on the agency's programs as





well as other topics relevant to the lives of older adults and caregivers. With the aim to inform and advocate for older adults and caregivers, we strive to include articles and input from a diverse array of topics from local interest stories and celebrity interviews to information on the latest dementia research. As the community of older adults has shifted over the years, the topics covered have shifted alongside it, including changes in laws and regulations regarding important programs like Medicare and Medicaid to updates in information on changing technology and scams committed against seniors.

We hope to continue to grow and change along with the older adults served by Council on Aging and those who enjoy living in the northwest Florida community. Our agency strives to best meet the needs of those aging in place in their homes for as long as it's safe to do so, but also to advocate and support all older adults in the region. This publication is an extension of that support and advocacy, and we plan to continue using it to amplify the relevant topics and address the greatest challenges faced by this demographic. We look forward to doing just that for another 20 years with you, our readers!









# JUNE SQUIBB

## An Exclusive Interview

By Kelly Oden

**There's never been a time when June Squibb wasn't an actress.** Ask her when she first knew she wanted to act, and she'll say, "Coming out of the womb." Her first performance? First grade, playing Goldilocks in *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.

She got her start on stage, first at the Cleveland Play House, then in New York. She worked on Broadway, off-Broadway, off-off-Broadway, in regional theaters, on cruise ships and even performed in USO tours around the world. Her Broadway debut came in 1960 in the original production of *Gypsy*, starring Ethel Merman. Squibb played Electra, the wisecracking stripper who sings *You Gotta Get a Gimmick*. Her most recent Broadway appearance was in *Waitress* in 2018.

Squibb made her film debut at age 61 in Woody Allen's *Alice* in 1990. She went on to appear in *Scent of a Woman* (Martin Brest), *The Age of Innocence* (Martin Scorsese), *In & Out* (Frank Oz) and *Meet Joe Black* (also directed by Brest). In *About Schmidt*, she played Jack Nicholson's wife, Helen, in her first collaboration with director Alexander Payne. The second came years later with *Nebraska*, a black-and-white road dramedy where Squibb stole the screen as Kate Grant, the foul-mouthed, no-nonsense wife and mother. That role earned her an

Academy Award nomination for best supporting actress, along with Golden Globe and SAG nominations.

She moved to Los Angeles and kept working steadily in both film and TV. Most recently, she starred in *Thelma*, an action-comedy from Magnolia Pictures, and voiced Nostalgia in *Inside Out 2*, the highest-grossing animated movie of all time. This fall she will star in *Eleanor the Great*, the feature directorial debut from Scarlett Johansson.

Other film credits include *Palm Springs*, *Toy Story 4*, *Soul*, *Hubie Halloween*, *Table 19*, *The Humans*, *Palmer*, *Family Squares*, *Godmothered*, *Blow the Man Down*, *Lost & Found in Cleveland* and the remake of *Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead*.

Her television work includes *Little America*, *Life and Beth*, *Little Ellen*, *Room 104*, *Good Girls*, *The Good Doctor*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Shameless*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *Modern Family*, *Getting On*, *Mom*, *Glee*, *Girls*, *Mike & Molly*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Judging Amy* and *ER*.

*Coming of Age* had the pleasure of speaking with June Squibb about her life, her career and her perspective on aging.



**COA: You've mentioned that your desire to act began when you came out of the womb. Could you share more about your early inspirations and what drew you to the performing arts?**

**JS:** My mother played piano for silent movies before I was born, and I had an aunt who could tap dance and whistle through her teeth. Other than that, I have no idea where it came from. But I've just always been drawn to it. It's in my blood. This is who I am. It never occurred to me that I should be anything else.

**COA: Your career started at the Cleveland Playhouse before moving to New York. Tell me about those early years in regional theater?**

**JS:** The Cleveland Playhouse was truly an immersive learning experience. It was a working theatre and I learned a lot in my time there. A large group of us moved on to New York from

Cleveland at the same time. So I had an immediate network of resources and support to begin my early work in New York. Having done musical theatre work at the Cleveland Playhouse in the 1950s, my first 20 years in New York was all in musical theater.

**COA: You moved to New York and eventually landed the role of Electra in *Gypsy* on Broadway. Do you see that as your big break?**

**JS:** I think that was one. I think before that I had a break doing *Boyfriend* off Broadway, which was a musical. I think that got people in New York to know the name June Squibb. I think *Gypsy* was another big push, because after that everybody knew I had been on Broadway. *Gypsy* was big, too. I mean we were playing to full houses constantly. Then I did the road tour because Ethel Merman was going to do the road tour, and that was big.

**COA: Did you always plan to make a transition to screen?**

**JS:** No. I never thought about that much. I always thought I would end up in New York on stage and stay there until I was as old as I wanted to be or got to be. I never dreamt that my career would flip like it did. What happened was in the 70s or 80s we were getting all kinds of film work in New York. It was the first big surge of film work. I knew friends of mine who were actors, who were doing films all of a sudden in New York City. So I went to my agent and I said, 'You know, this new film thing, I know a lot of actors are doing it, and I think I should be doing something too.' The next week he had an audition for me with Woody Allen. And truly, I had never said a word to them about this before, but all I did was say it, and poof, I had an audition. I got that role in *Alice* and then I got two other films right away. I got Martin Brest's *Scent of a Woman* and then I got Martin Scorsese's *Age of Innocence*. So all at once, I had three major films.



I didn't have big roles. Although it was pretty big in *Scent of a Woman*. I had a nice part in that, but the other two roles were very small. Then I did *In and Out* and other films in New York. All at once, I was a film actress.

**COA: It seems like once you started acting in film, you did less theater. Is that true?**

**JS:** I hardly did any theater. I still did some, but not that much, to be honest with you. Once I started doing film, that just really sort of did it. I just didn't do that much stage work. I did *Waitress* in 2019 and I loved it. It was great fun. It's just much harder than film work. I think now it would be hard for me to do stage work, but I can still do film.

**COA: You've worked with so many renowned directors—Martin Scorsese, Alexander Payne, Woody Allen. Did you learn something from each of them that you take with you still?**

**JS:** I think I did. Those first three directors, Woody Allen, I adore. I just would have laid down on the floor for him. I just thought he was great. It was a really great experience. It was like, I don't know, sort of learning how to fly in a way. I had never been around a set. I had done *Law and Order*, but I think those were on location. So, I had never been around a set that much. I used to laugh, because I was like, 'Oh my God, all these wires. What do you do with all these wires?' But it was a great experience. Martin Brest took time with my role and

really directed me. I felt very much a part of the big guys in that. Like one of the actors that had things to do. And Scorsese amazed me, because we were on location, and he wanted a painting behind each actor as they did their scene. My character came in and introduced the fact that there was someone there to see somebody. I think I was a maid. Well, he didn't like the painting behind me, so he said, we're going to do this in the studio. Now, I had hardly any lines and he was worried about the painting. And I thought, well, he'll send an assistant director or somebody like that to do it. But he was there himself in the studio and directed me. I've never gotten over that. I think my line was something like, 'So and so is waiting to see you,' or something like that.





**COA: Your portrayal of Kate Grant in *Nebraska* earned you an Academy Award nomination. Were you hesitant to play her because she comes across as not so likable?**

**JS:** No, not at all. I wanted to play her the minute I read the script. I wanted to do it. It was something I really wanted to do. I was interested in her because she surprised you. This is gold to an actor and gold to a script. She wasn't the usual, and that's wonderful. That's fun to play.

**COA: You recently starred as Thelma in the action-comedy *Thelma* at the age of 94. What attracted you to this role? I understand you performed some of your own stunts?**

**JS:** I really liked Thelma's determination and the portrayal of an older person being able to take care of business and get her money back. I was drawn to her determination and spirit.

Yes, I did almost all of my own stunts. They didn't even want me

to ride the scooter, but I said let me try. I'd do fine and they would want to bring in the stunt actress for the next scene, and I would say let me try and it just kept going like that. It was an adventure!

**COA: What do you believe has contributed to your enduring presence in the industry?**

**JS:** The majority of my work has been as a character actress, not a leading lady. I was never an ingenue, even when I was young — and I am still able to do it and I still enjoy it.

**COA: As someone who has embraced roles that defy age stereotypes, how do you view the representation of seniors in today's entertainment industry?**

**JS:** It's definitely changed. There seems to be a lot more interest in the experience of aging than there used to be, so there are a lot more roles for people my age, and the roles are getting better.

**COA: You're set to star in Scarlett Johansson's directorial debut, *Eleanor the Great*. What can you tell us about your role and the story?**

**JS:** I was attached to that role three or four years ago with another director. We had already worked out a lot of the script when I found out that the director was let go. They brought in Scarlett and she is just amazing. So smart. I can't say enough good things about her. She's already a great actress but she has a great career as a director if that's what she chooses.

In *Eleanor the Great*, I play a 90-year-old woman who, after the loss of her best friend, decides to rebuild her life by moving back to New York City after decades in Florida. The character of Eleanor is a formidable force to be reckoned with. She's not particularly likeable. It's an interesting journey for her.



**COA: What are your secrets to staying physically, mentally and emotionally fit as you age?**

**JS:** I danced for many years in musicals and other performances. I truly believe that has helped tremendously with my physical health. I also went to a therapist for seven years, and I highly recommend it. It was very helpful in dealing with a lot of life's issues.

**COA: I understand you are good friends with Margo Martindale. How did you become friends?**

**JS:** We are! We moved into an apartment on West 80th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam, and she lived next door. Her and her husband had just moved in not very long before we did. We lived there and were neighbors for 30 years.

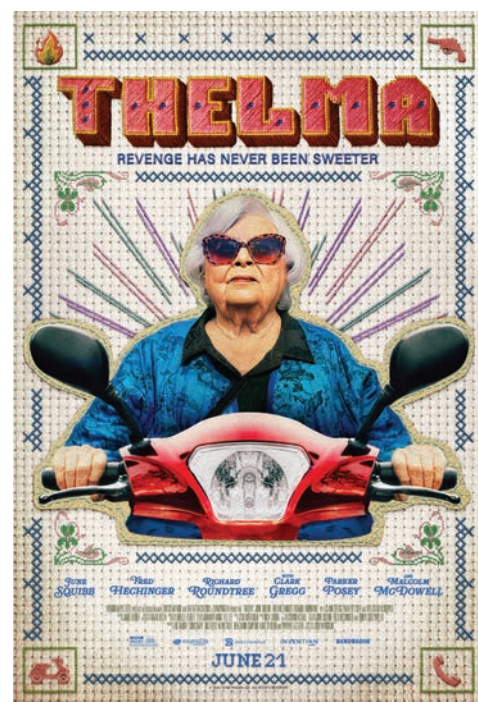
That's how we got to know each other. And now, she moderated a screening for me for *Thelma* in New York not very long ago. We try to see each other when we can. We don't always get it done, but we try.

**COA: What's coming up besides *Eleanor the Great*?**

**JS:** I always do voiceovers. I'm doing one for Disney, and I'm doing a voiceover book. I said yes to a voiceover job that would be a regular on a cartoon, but I don't know what's happening with that. I've also just been approached about a sitcom.

**COA: No plans to retire?**

**JS:** No, I don't. People keep asking me to take roles, so I keep taking them.



# PENSACOLA OPERA

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## What's The News?



### Spring Cleaning at The Retreat Courtyard Thanks to Ascend Performance Materials

A team from longtime partner Ascend Performance Materials came armed with clippers, blowers and sprayers to give some much-needed attention to The Retreat's courtyard! Volunteers got their hands dirty while planting flowers, weeding, trimming, and refreshing the outdoor space where adult day care participants can now enjoy the garden, walking trail and pergola.



### AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteers Receive President's Volunteer Service Awards

Two AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Volunteers received recognition with President's Volunteer Service Awards. This award recognizes the valuable contributions volunteers make in our communities and encourages more people to serve. Two local Foster Grandparent volunteers were recognized with a special President's Call to Service Award for lifetime achievement of more than 4,000 hours of service throughout their lifetime.

#### Mary C. Murphy (Two Tours) – 4,000 Hours

Ms. Murphy is on her second tour in the program and has served for a total of 11 years. She has that nurturing spirit that is irresistible to both her teacher and the students at Montclair Elementary where she serves.

#### Mary M. Quarells (Two Tours) – 4,000 Hours

Ms. Quarells is on her second tour in the program and has served a total of seven years. She feels it's an absolute joy to be able to serve the needs of the children. Quarells has served Montclair Elementary, First Presbyterian Child Development Center and is now at O.J. Semmes Elementary.

### Pete Moore Automotive Team Senior Chill Out Receives Outpouring of Donations to Keep Seniors Cool and Safe this Summer

Council on Aging of West Florida's annual Pete Moore Automotive Team Senior Chill Out on June 6 received an outpouring of community donations, collecting a total of 316 fans, 295 window air conditioner units, and \$48,441 on the day of the event. The donated items are distributed to seniors in need to help them stay cool and safe through the summer heat. The daylong donation drive in support of area elders was hosted by five area Lowe's Home Improvement stores in partnership with WEAR ABC 3, Cat Country 98.7, and NewsRadio 92.3.

Council on Aging has received hundreds of calls from seniors requesting air conditioners and fans and is currently coordinating distribution to those eligible to receive items. By Monday, June 9, all donations had been allocated to recipients.

Council on Aging is grateful for particularly generous donations from title sponsor Pete Moore Automotive Team, as well as from Ascend Performance Materials, Argo HVAC, Avalon HR, Baptist Hospital Volunteer Services, Stacy Brown, Gilmore, Richard Grey, Bill Trushel, Zeta Phi Beta, and all the additional donors and supporters.

"We know that families are facing financial uncertainty right now and we were expecting a possible dip in donations this year," said Emily Echevarria, Marketing Communications Director of Council on Aging. "While we did receive less funds than last year, we had more AC and fan donations, and we saw so many people giving whatever they could to put toward the cause. Each and every dollar helps."

Council on Aging is no longer taking calls for air conditioner requests at this time. Applications might resume pending additional donations to the office or at [seniorchillout.org](http://seniorchillout.org).





# Thank You.

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