



## **Nonagenarians Fly High for Charity**

*The Wired Word* **for the Week of August 16, 2026**

### **In the News**

On August 4, a year after suffering a stroke and a fractured pelvis, 97-year-old Betty Bromage went wing walking, breaking her own Guinness World Record (GWR) as the oldest female wing walker. The British woman previously set the record at the age of 93 in 2022.

In 1991, Bromage was intrigued by a Crunchie chocolate bar advertisement that featured a woman standing on top of a plane. She imagined herself on the wing of a plane, but after suffering a paralyzing spinal injury, she had to learn to walk on land before she could ever walk on air. It would take her 25 years before she had her chance to try the extreme sport for the first time, when she was 87. The stunt this month was her sixth flight so far.

"I can't do so many things. I'm nearly blind, ... and I can't read. ... I can't drive, ... and I get a bit frustrated. So, I want to do the things I can do," the nonagenarian said. "Personally, to look forward to lying in the bed and not doing anything terrifies me. As long as I'm alive, I've got to do things."

Before climbing up 15 feet to the top of the AeroSuperBatics biplane where she would be strapped into a harness on a frame attached to the wing of the plane, Bromage was asked whether she was nervous. "No, never nervous. I'm not a nervous person. I can't [be]. Whatever is, whatever will be, will be. Do the best you can. Get around. Don't give in. The word 'can't' is not really in my vocabulary. I will if I can."

"At 97, what have you got to be afraid of?" she smiled.

The pensioner raised her arms, sending high fives and thumbs up to fans and supporters to signal that she was ready for her five minutes of aerial acrobatics, including Loop-the-loop, spins, somersaults, barrel roll, and flying upside down.

"The only problem is getting up on the wing because I'm quite short. Once you're up there, no problem. The fairground is a lot worse," the daredevil remarked, adding, "I know if somebody helps me up, I can get up there."

While working as a nurse, Bromage had once been inspired by a quote on the hospital wall: "We pass through this world but once. Any good we can do, any kindness we can show, do it now, do not defer or neglect it; you will not pass this way again." So she used this month's feat to raise money for Cheltenham General Hospital, where Bromage recovered from the stroke she suffered last year. After the flight, a GWR official presented the elder with a certificate, exclaiming that she was "Officially Amazing™!"

Reflecting on her experience, Bromage called the flight, "Great! A bit bumpy, but it was great."

In May, Harry Heasman, 98, a World War II British veteran, set the Guinness World Record for oldest male wing walker. Heasman's physiotherapist Reef Cowell said the nonagenarian could barely get out of a chair without help before starting an 11-month training regimen to prepare for the event.

As a boy, Heasman was fascinated by American flying circuses, dreaming that one day he might soar above the clouds. Decades later, when his care home manager, Carolyn Sisto, suggested he create a bucket list of things he wanted to do before he "kicked the bucket," he wrote that he wanted to wing walk for charity.

Heasman performed the stunt to raise about \$11,000 for the Lennox Children's Cancer Fund (LCCF) in memory of his wife and son. Lindsey Bidwell, of LCCF said, "Harry is proof that it is never too late to chase a dream."

"To finally live that dream at 98 years old and to be a Guinness World Records title holder is beyond anything I could have ever imagined," Heasman said.

"Betty is ... living proof that later life should be about new experiences, with age being no barrier to adventure." remarked Steve Banks, CEO of Pegasus Homes, the company which runs the assisted living facility where Bromage lives.

What's next for the spunky woman? She mused, "I'll have to think of something when I'm 100 -- something special. ... If I'm still here in a couple of years' time we might have another go."

More on this story can be found at these links:

[97-year-old Wing Walker Breaks Her Own World Record. UPI](#)

[Oldest Wing Walker \(Female\). Guinness World Records](#)

[Betty, 97, Breaks Record for Oldest Wing Walker. BBC](#)

[What This 97-Year-Old English Woman Just Accomplished Has People Talking. The Oregonian](#)

[98-Year-Old Made a Bucket List, Then Got Help Making Wing Walking Dream a Reality. He Broke a World Record in the Process. People](#)

### **Applying the News Story**

While loving and following after God is not a guarantee of a long and happy life, many Scriptures suggest a linkage between longevity and making wise choices ([Psalm 91:14-16](#); [Proverbs 3:1-2](#); [Proverbs 4:10](#); [Proverbs 9:10-11](#); [1 Kings 3:14](#); [Psalm 34:12-14](#)). Use the lesson to consider how to live life to the fullest for however many days God allows you.

### **The Big Questions**

1. What's the difference, if any, between living a long life and living for as long as you live?
2. What should we try to accomplish as we advance in age?

3. What drives us to seek to do more in later seasons of life? Are we trying to earn brownie points from God, or is there something biological or mental that induces us to keep on keeping on until we drop?

4. Does God demand action as well as devotion until the very end? Is there a point when we should drop out and just cruise or coast along the rest of our days? What might motivate us to do less in later seasons of life?

5. What guidance does our faith provide for deciding what to do with the remaining time God has given us on Earth?

### **Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope**

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

#### **Isaiah 40:28-31**

*Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted, but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. (For context, read [Isaiah 40:27-31](#).)*

In the context of Babylon's conquest of Israel and destruction of the temple, the exiles felt there was no hope for relief from oppression. But in Isaiah 40, God's message turns from judgment and punishment to mercy and restoration. Israel's failure to keep covenant with God could not change God's faithfulness. God's eternal nature stands in contrast to human mortality. As the children sing in the chorus, "Jesus Loves Me": "They are weak, but God is strong." God is able to strengthen the powerless, and renew the energy of the faint, weary and exhausted.

**Questions:** What does it mean to "wait for the LORD"? When have you found your strength renewed, enabling you to "mount up with wings like eagles ... run and not be weary ... walk and not faint"? Is Isaiah speaking literally or metaphorically here, or both?

### **John 10:1, 8-11**

*[Jesus said,] "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. ... All who came before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."* (For context, read [John 10:1-15](#).)

Jesus uses the metaphor of shepherding to characterize his relationship with his followers. The disciples would have connected the dots to references in the Hebrew Scriptures describing God as a shepherd ([Genesis 48:15](#); [Genesis 49:24](#); [Psalm 80:1](#); [Isaiah 40:11](#); [Ezekiel 34:15](#); [Micah 5:2-5](#)). In John's text, Jesus picks up the Old Testament theme contrasting God, the Shepherd who tenderly cares for his sheep, with unfaithful shepherds who exploit and ravage the flock for their own benefit. He came to provide abundant life for his sheep, contrary to thieves and bandits whose only goal is "to steal and kill and destroy."

**Questions:** What do you make of Jesus' reference to himself as the Good Shepherd, in light of the Old Testament Scriptures identifying God as the Shepherd of his people? What would likely happen to sheep who listen to the call of thieves and bandits? What happens to sheep who listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd? What is the abundant life that the Good Shepherd came to provide?

### **Psalm 23:6**

*Surely [or Only] goodness and mercy [or kindness] shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long [Hebrew for length of days].* (For context, read [Psalm 23:1-6](#).)

This psalm is often heard or recited at memorial or graveside services. We may think the final verse applies especially to the goodness and mercy God will bestow on his sheep at the end of life and in heaven, especially if we are familiar with the way translators render the meaning in the King James or New International versions: "I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

But what if the psalmist means that as sheep follow the Lord, their Good Shepherd, and experience his goodness and mercy, they are inspired to offer goodness and mercy to others all the days of their lives here on Earth? We don't know whether the nonagenarians in the news were motivated by faith to perform acts to benefit charity. But what if the psalmist wants us to understand that good, merciful and kind deeds should flow out of the loving relationship we enjoy with the divine Shepherd?

**Questions:** When has the goodness and mercy God has shown to you inspired you to extend goodness and mercy to others? What might hinder people from responding to God's kindness that way? How can we be sure that goodness and mercy follow us wherever we go in life?

### **2 Corinthians 8:1-4, 9**

*We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia, for during a severe ordeal of affliction their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the favor of partnering in this ministry to the saints, ... For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. (For context, read [2 Corinthians 8:1-15](#).)*

After Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus and began to be converted, he grew in maturity and ministry in Antioch, where he learned of a famine. "The disciples determined that, according to their ability, each would send relief to the brothers and sisters living in Judea; this they did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul" ([Acts 11:27-30](#)). The giving of alms for the poor was deeply woven into the Judaic tradition, and Saul (also known as Paul) practiced giving throughout his life ([Galatians 2:9-10](#); [Acts 24:17](#); [Romans 15:22-29](#); [1 Corinthians 16:1-4](#)).

It made perfect sense, then, for Paul to devote a significant portion of his time to raising funds for famine relief, which also flowed naturally from the gospel of Jesus Christ which he preached. Since Jesus had so generously given of himself,

becoming poor to enrich others, we now have his example to inspire and empower us to give cheerfully and "sow bountifully" into the lives of others, confident that "God is able to provide [us] with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, [we] may share abundantly in every good work" and "be enriched in every way for [our] great generosity, which will produce ... many thanksgivings to God [and] glorify God" ([2 Corinthians 9:5-13](#)).

**Questions:** How does the wealth of generosity and abundant joy flowing out of the Macedonians' extreme poverty during a severe ordeal of affliction tie in to the abundant life Jesus said he came to give in John 10:10-11 (mentioned above)? What makes voluntary giving to the saints a "favor" they begged Paul for? What happens when we view giving as a partnership in ministry rather than as a charity?

### **For Further Discussion**

1. "A great friend of mine just passed away around eight months after his 100th birthday," wrote TWW Team Member Frank Ramirez. "In one of his most recent texts he sent me a photo of him waving, standing next to a photoshopped R2-D2 and C3PO in front of a landscape at Death Valley from the movie, *Return of the Jedi*. Kenney was always travelling with his 60-year-old son to national parks and other sites of natural beauty. When people would learn his age they wanted to talk to him (he was hale and hearty until just a few weeks before his passing). He took that as an opportunity to gently evangelize -- just say something about his church, and what an important part it played in his life. None of us can tell what sort of health we'll have or not have, but being active is an important ingredient in being well."

TWW Team Member Stan Purdum commented: "As one old guy to another, the main thing is that you have to keep moving, and I mean that both literally and metaphorically, even if it hurts (I turn 81 this month. Never wing walked but still cycling)."

TWW Team Member Bill Tammeus chimed in: "This morning I played nine holes of 'ready' golf (that's fast golf) because we had a semi-illegal fivesome instead of just a foursome. Now I'm heading to the fitness center, to my

dermatologist and to finishing tomorrow's blog post before a Costco run and dinner. That's my version of wing-walking on a Saturday. Oh, and preparing to lead a church class tomorrow about last week's sermon (which I didn't deliver)."

What steps do you take to protect and nourish body, mind, and spirit as you age? What might be your version of "wing walking"?

2. "The desire to reach for the stars is ambitious. The desire to reach hearts is wise," wrote poet Maya Angelou. How might either or both of these desires square with your understanding of what God requires of us?

3. [The often quoted poem by Mary Oliver](#) (which is worth reading in its entirety) ends with: "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" How would you answer that question?

### **Responding to the News**

You may enjoy the four-part series on [Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones](#), about places in the world where people routinely live over 100 years. TWW Team Member Mary Sells commented, "There is no 'magic bullet' common to all areas, yet a combination of things that -- to me -- boiled down to community and purpose. God built us to be with others and to find meaningfulness no matter our circumstances. Following faith traditions can serve both of those areas."

**Prayer** suggested by [Psalm 57:2](#); [Psalm 71:9](#); [1 Corinthians 10:31](#); [Romans 11:33, 36](#); [Psalm 119:105](#); [2 Timothy 1:8-10](#); [Colossians 1:15-16](#); [1 Peter 4:10-11](#)

All-wise God, who by your grace created us to fulfill your purpose, from whom and through whom and to whom are all things, to you be glory forever! Shine the light of your word as a lamp to guide our feet in the right path, from childhood through old age, so that whatever we do, everything will be for your glory, through Jesus Christ and the power of the Spirit. Amen!