



Altenheim Resource Services

Timely Resources DEEPER DIVE



Longevity and the 250th Celebration
With Volunteer Editor: Jeanette Wojcik
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What were you doing in [1976](#)? You might have been in college or a recent graduate. Maybe you were in love and beginning a life with your spouse. Did you go to the movies to see the first Rocky film? Perhaps you were watching the first episodes of *Charlie's Angels* or *Welcome Back Kotter* or (one of my favorites) *The Muppet Show* on television. Were you listening to *Bohemian Rhapsody* or the music of ABBA and the Bay City Rollers? Did you dance to disco tunes? You probably had a couple pairs of bell bottoms and wore a mood ring. Doing anything on a computer was practically unheard of – Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak were just rolling out the Apple I that year. So much has happened in the past fifty years!

[Life expectancy in 1976](#) (at birth) was 69.1 years for men and 76.8 years for women. A baby born in [2026 is expected](#) to live to 76.5 years for men and 81.4 years for women. Keep in mind that [life expectancy in 1776](#) was only between 35 and 40 years if you survived childhood. With that in mind, a baby born this year has a good chance of being around for our nation's 300th birthday. What kind of legacy will we leave for that generation? In an article for *Forbes*, [Joseph Coughlin](#) writes that building "a more perfect Union" is about ensuring that every generation inherits both the achievements of the last and the responsibility to build upon them.

Longevity isn't just about living longer (or surviving to celebrate 250 years of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"). It's about what we do with those years as we approach old age. We have a responsibility to share the story, not only about the founding of our nation, but also how our own lives have added to that story over the years. Here are some recommendations to help you share the story with the younger generations who will be around to celebrate the 300th anniversary:

- Watch the Ken Burns series on [The American Revolution](#) that aired on PBS.
- Listen to the recording of [John F. Kennedy](#) reading the Declaration of Independence.
- Do some of the activities recommended by the American Legion in their [USA 250 Challenge](#).
- [Share your story](#) with other generations in your family.
- [Record your story](#). Every life has lessons to pass on to others. Don't let those lessons die with you.
- Visit your [local or state museums](#) or [historic sites](#) with your grandchildren.
- [Explore and record](#) your family history.
- Read some of our historic documents together with your family and friends. I recommend *A Patriot's Handbook* compiled by Carolyn Kennedy. Look for it online or ask your local library for a copy.

In our later years we often have time to reflect on our life and our world. It is easy to become pessimistic about our nation in 2026. Don't lose sight of the good. In the Introduction to *A Patriot's Handbook*, Carolyn Kennedy wrote, "In order for our democracy to thrive, each of us must give something back." Give back by learning about our country's history. Give back by understanding that our country has had many difficult years and that we have survived. Give back by sharing those stories of survival with younger generations, especially how you and your ancestors played a part in that survival. Give back by promoting all that is good about our nation. Celebrating isn't for just one day. Celebrate the founding of our nation every day!