

# Young at Heart

## Secrets to a Long, Happy Life

By Glenn Plaskin



Spanish explorer Ponce de León spent 10 years searching for the mythical Fountain of Youth. The quest continues today as scientists doggedly seek the magic bullet that will extend life significantly beyond the American average of 76.9 years. Until they succeed, a healthful diet, exercise, stress reduction, regular checkups, a positive attitude, family support, and meaningful activities seem to be the best overall prescription for longevity.

FAMILY CIRCLE talked with three remarkable Americans, all of an age when many of their contemporaries are either ailing or retired. Renowned chef Julia Child, *60 Minutes* veteran Mike Wallace and *Titanic* actress Gloria Stuart are fully immersed in life, their energy and outlook proof positive that you don't have to be young to feel that way. What fountain are *they* drinking from? Here's what they told us.

### **Julia Child**, master chef

"Watching me on TV, I think people thought, *If she can cook, I certainly can!*"

**Age:** 89

**Born:** August 15, 1912

**Resides in:** Santa Barbara, California

**Bio:** The author of 11 cookbooks—most recently, *Julia's Kitchen Wisdom* (Knopf)—and trailblazing TV chef, Julia has just made a life transition. She moved from her Cambridge, Massachusetts, house to a retirement community in California—where she has no intention of retiring.

**Julia says:** "For me, the real secret of staying healthy is life itself—being interested in the people and things around you. What gives me the most pleasure is my work, family and friends. I've been lucky to be in a profession where everyone I know loves what they're doing. Very stimulating. People often ask me, 'What has all the success meant to you?' And I say, 'As long as I can get clothes that fit (I'm 6' 2", the shortest one in my family) and shoes (I have big feet), I'm happy!"

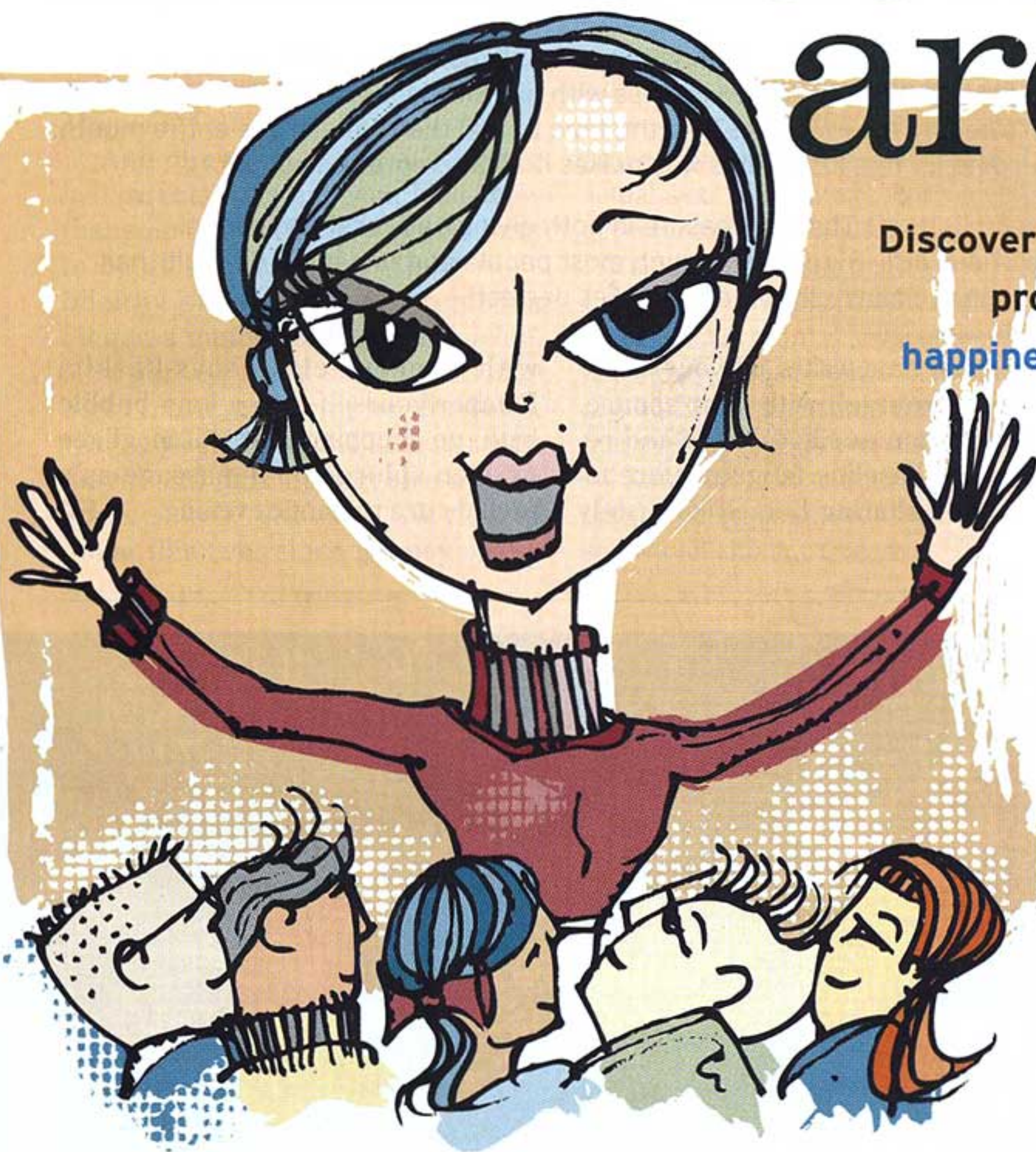
"Living a long life has a lot to do with having the right grandparents. My grandfather was 93 when he died; my

*Contributing editor Glenn Plaskin frequently reports on human interest and celebrity subjects.*



# how likeable are you?

Discover the personality secret that promises better **health, wealth and happiness.** BY GLENN PLASKIN



What exactly is this powerful ingredient that promises such a charmed, happy existence—and how can we get more of it? Likeability is the ability to produce positive attitudes in others by delivering emotional and physical benefits. “Someone who is likeable gives you a sense of joy, happiness, relaxation and rejuvenation,” says Sanders. “He or she can bring you relief from depression, anxiety or boredom.”

Furthermore, likeable people may live longer. According to a 2001 study by researchers at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina, heart disease patients who had three or fewer people who were concerned for their well-being had a greater risk of dying than patients who had numerous caring relationships. Just one more reason why it’s important to expand your circle of friends.

## The four ways to boost your likeability factor

**Friendliness:** The key to likeability is friendliness—being agreeable and open while also conveying warmth, comfort and safety to others. “We’re like broadcast towers,” says

**Y**our success and fulfillment in life are the result of how likeable you are,” says Tim Sanders, leadership coach, motivational speaker and author of *The Likeability Factor: How to Boost Your L-Factor & Achieve Your Life’s Dreams* (Crown). “Your L-factor permeates virtually all aspects of your life.” In fact, according to Sanders, likeable people land better jobs, earn more money, have lower blood pressure and better relationships.

Illustration, © Peter Horjus/theisport.com.



By Glenn Plaskin



**HER SECRET:**

"Strawberry shortcake! One big piece every day."

# Hope, Health and Happiness

## Secrets of the Centenarians

When Helen Boardman was still a girlish 99, she fell in love again—with a younger man. "I robbed the cradle," says the trim centenarian, who married a man 20 years her junior for "companionship," she says slyly. "Bill was lonesome—I wasn't—but I enjoyed his company and we had the same interests. So we fell in love."

It didn't hurt that Bill Boardman and Helen had the same last name. "She kept getting my checks, and I got her bills," adds Bill, "so out of necessity, we got married!"

Helen is now 107 and Bill is 87. Is there still romance after eight years of marriage? "A little," says Helen, laughing, "when he's real nice to me, which is most of the time. He's a good guy."

"Helen doesn't seem twenty years older," notes Bill. "Last New Year's Eve, we stayed up until midnight dancing. I think she has maintained her youth quite well!"

Dancing isn't the only activity the two of them share. They also perform in plays at Friendship Village, the continuing care retirement community outside of Chicago where they have a one-bedroom apartment. Helen writes and directs the plays.

In addition, she's an avid reader, a book reviewer and world traveler, with 14 trips to Europe under her belt. She recites poetry, gardens, arranges flowers and lifts weights! "Just a pound or two each arm," she says of her biceps curls.

Decked out in pearls and a smart black-and-white checked dress, and nestled deeply into her living room couch, the woman born in June of 1896 says: "I feel young inside—like a teenager in an old folk's home! I guess I must be drinking from the Fountain of Youth."

### The Centenarian Jackpot

The remarkable Helen Boardman is not alone. There are more than 40,000

centenarians in the United States today; they're the nation's fastest-growing age group. Although the current life expectancy for the average American is 77.2 years, by the year 2050 there will be an estimated one million people living to the age of 100. That's progress! In 1900 the average life span extended to 47 years old.

"The secret to becoming a centenarian is a combination of genetics, lifestyle choices, mental acuity and just plain luck," notes Thomas T. Perls, M.D., associate professor of medicine at the Boston University School of Medicine and the author, together with Margery Hutter Silver, Ed.D., of *Living to 100: Lessons in Living to Your Maximum Potential at Any Age* (Basic Books).

This landmark book is based on the ongoing New England Centenarian Study, begun in 1994, which reveals that old age can be filled with lucidity, mobility and good health. "Of the 1,500 centenarians in our study," says Dr.

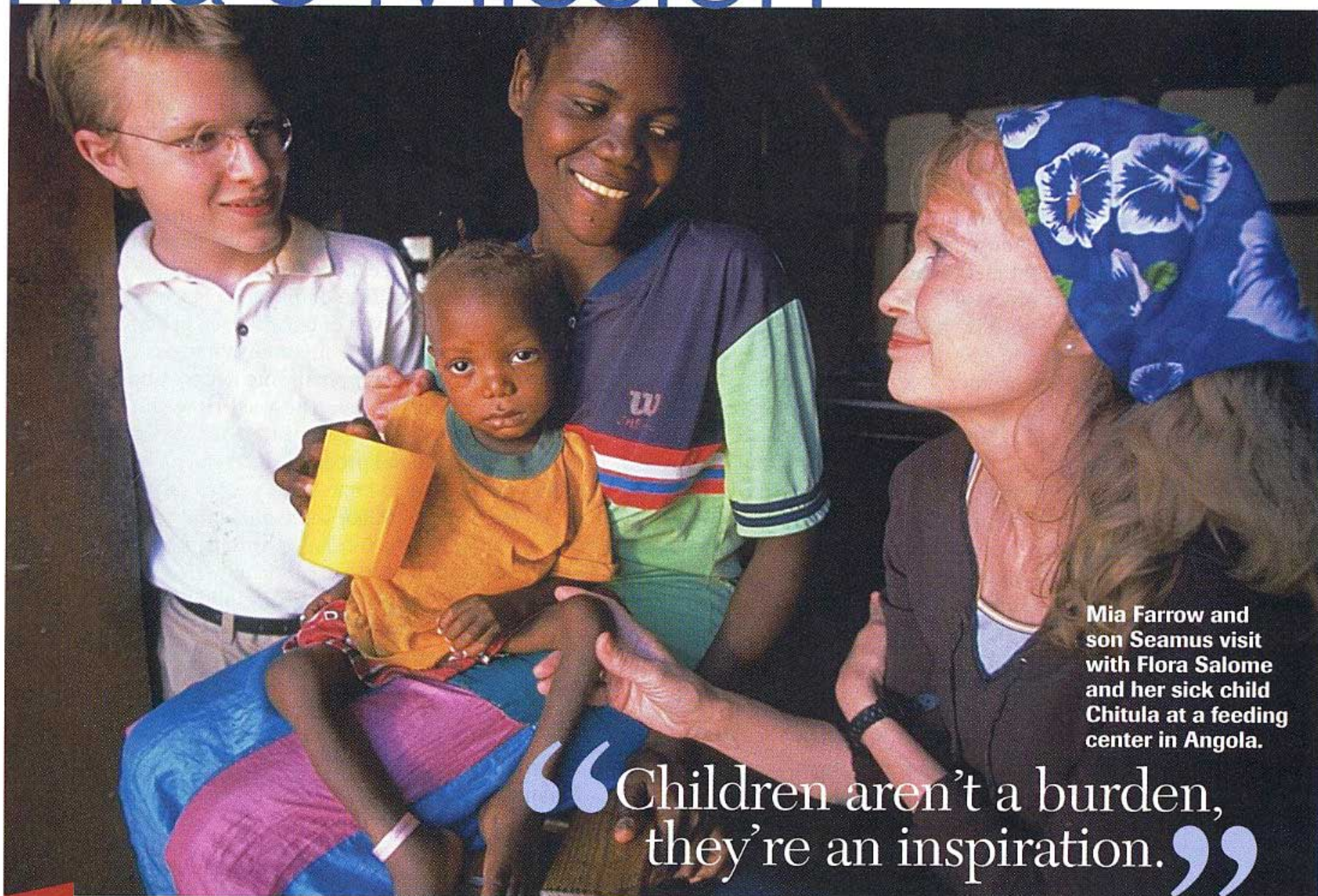
*Contributing editor Glenn Plaskin, who is based in New York, frequently writes articles on human interest subjects.*

“I feel young inside—like a teenager in an old folk's home!”



# Mia's Mission

By Glenn Plaskin



Mia Farrow and son Seamus visit with Flora Salome and her sick child Chitula at a feeding center in Angola.

“Children aren't a burden, they're an inspiration.”

**T**he insomnia, fatigue and occasional pain that a young Mia Farrow had been experiencing in 1954 was troubling, and it puzzled the doctors she visited. Finally, “At my ninth birthday party, my legs suddenly collapsed and I tumbled to the ground,” she says. “The next day I heard the doctor tell my mother, ‘Burn everything.’ After that I was taken out of the secure existence of my Beverly Hills house and found myself plunged into a world of uncertainty and pain—the public ward of L.A. General Hospital. Iron lungs lined the walls. I could only talk to my parents through a glass window.”

Mia was diagnosed with childhood polio.

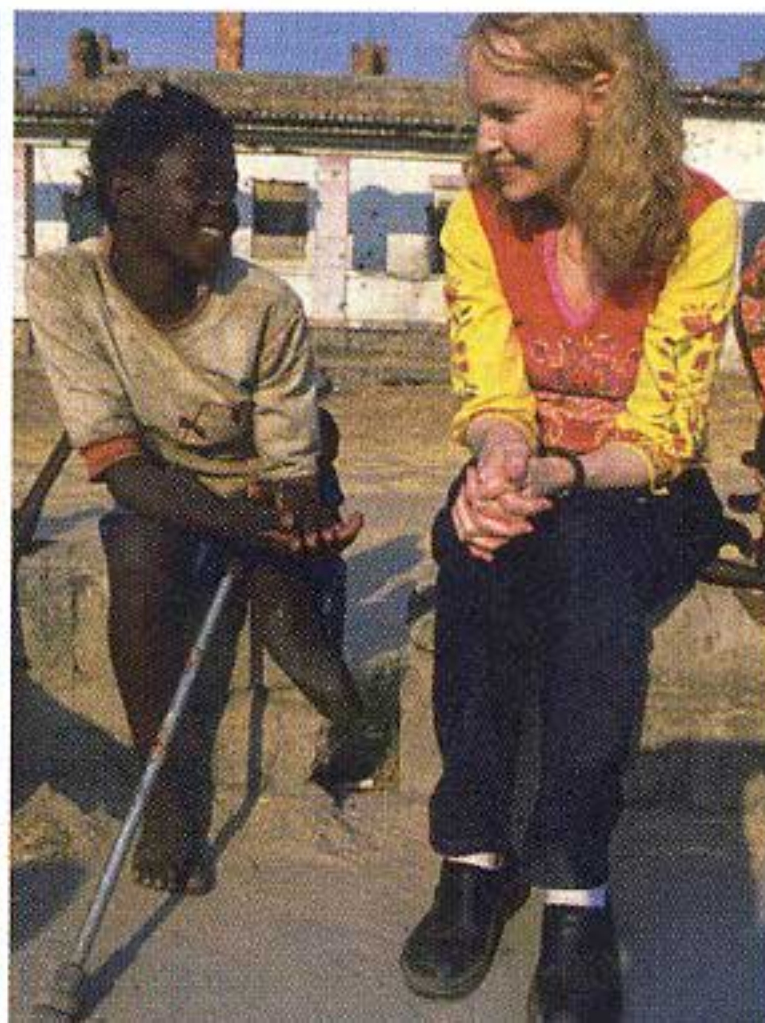
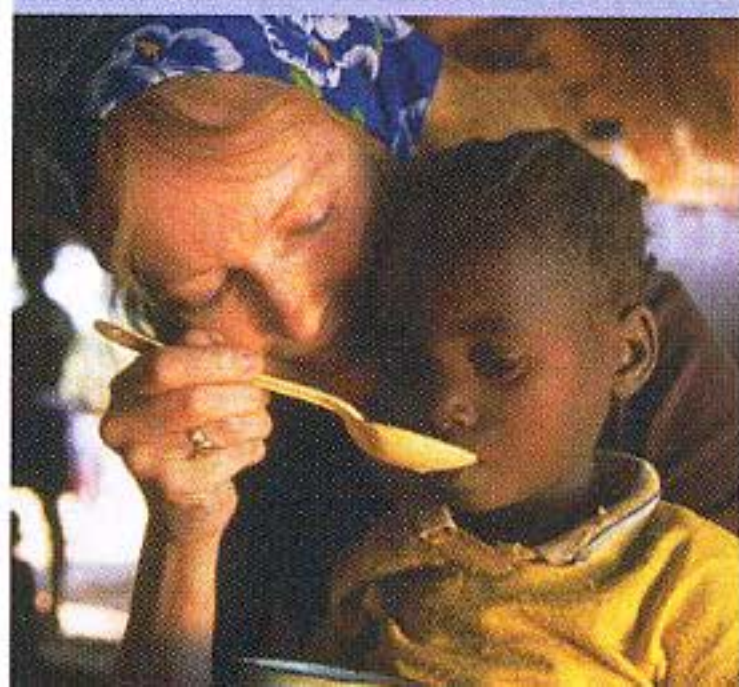
Although the now 57-year-old actress recovered completely with no physical disability, her childhood was irrevocably scarred.

“When I returned home, I found that my six brothers and sisters had been moved to another house, and I didn't see them for months. The house

had been repainted, the carpets torn up, the furniture replaced, the swimming pool drained—even my dog had been given away. Everyone was frightened of me—the kids at school, even my mother. In my book [*What Falls Away*] I wrote that my childhood ended that year. After that I was only pretending to be a child.” Almost immediately, she says, “My social conscience was born. I realized there was a whole world of people in pain.”

Since then, Mia has committed her life to children,

**Right:** Mia meets Madalena, a 13-year-old who lost part of her leg. **Below:** She feeds Esperanca, a malnourished six-year-old.



Glenn Plaskin is a FAMILY CIRCLE contributing editor.



She won't pay back her loan...  
they ruined our wedding reception

# When to Talk and When to Sue

By Glenn Plaskin

In a joint interview with FAMILY CIRCLE, the charismatic Judith Sheindlin, who reigns over *Judge Judy*, the number-one-rated daytime syndicated TV show in America, and her husband, Jerry Sheindlin, a former New York State Supreme Court judge now retiring after two seasons on *The People's Court*, maintained that many litigated disputes can be resolved without judicial intervention, just by using common sense and diplomacy. Holding court out of court, Judges Judy and Jerry ruled with aplomb on eight commonplace disputes.

## The Case That Should Never Go to Court

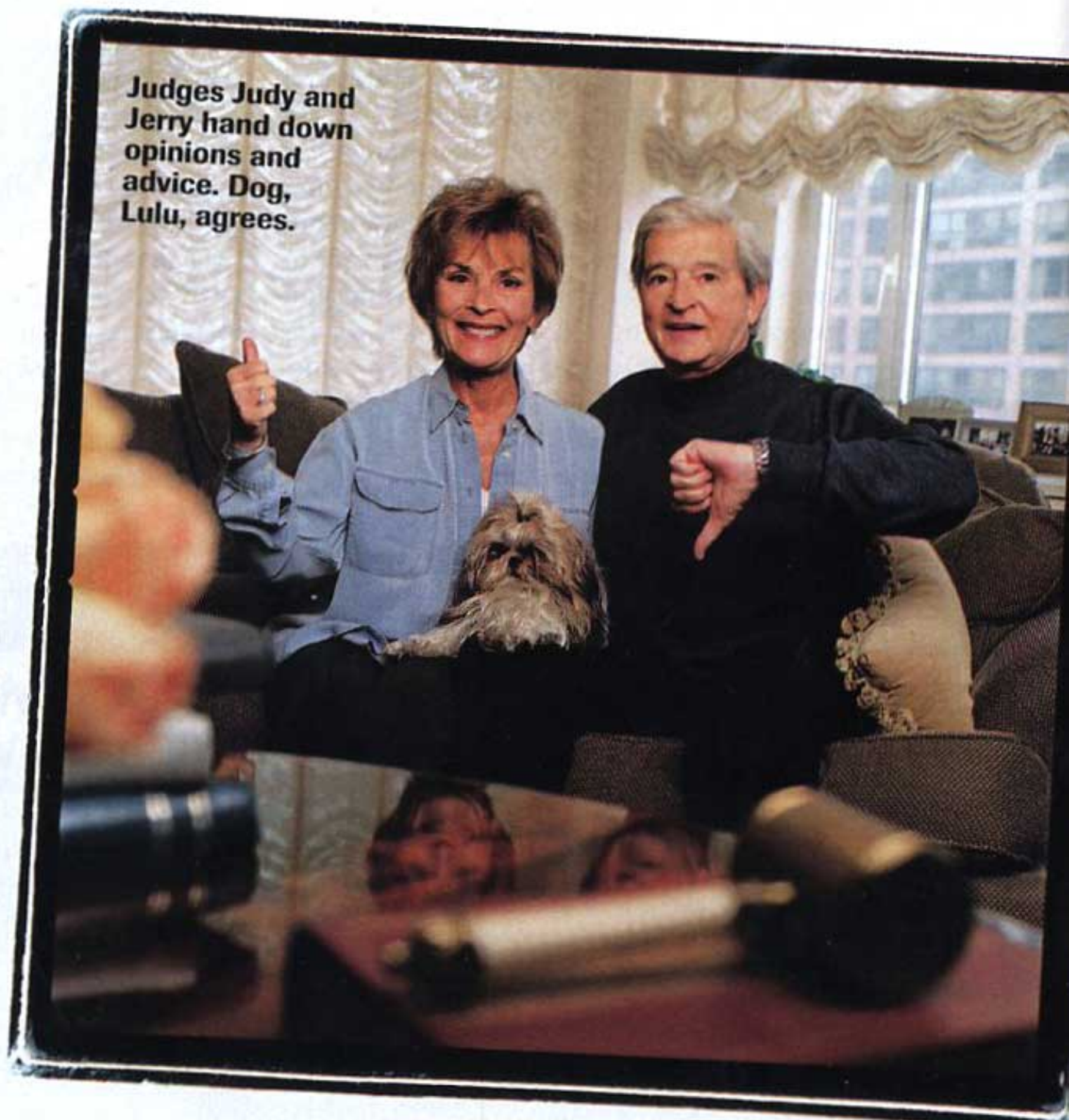
**FC:** A mother is suing her adult daughter for \$1,000 she says she lent her to help with bills. The daughter used the money for a vacation and now won't pay it back. The daughter says the money was a gift, not a loan. How do you rule?

**Judy:** If it was a loan, it has to be paid back. Period. I'd have to question both parties about the circumstances under which the money was given.

**Jerry:** Look at the emotional impact. The mother is so irritated with her daughter that she feels she has to sue to validate the oral agreement. She may get satisfaction in court, but the relationship may be destroyed.

**Judy:** I think there's much more going on here than the \$1,000. These kinds of disputes are often a catalyst for an underlying dysfunction in the relation-

*Contributing editor Glenn Plaskin frequently reports on celebrities.*



Judges Judy and Jerry hand down opinions and advice. Dog, Lulu, agrees.

ship. Probably the mother was angry when she found out her daughter went to Hawaii instead of paying bills. Then maybe the daughter said, "You've controlled my life all these years; you can't control me anymore." Those kinds of things go into the mix of why a case ends up in court.

If you're making a loan to a relative, put it in writing. If you're the parent, tell yourself: "I'm making this as a loan, but if she doesn't pay it

back, I'll let it go—but I won't do this again. If she comes to me for money, I'll say, 'I can't give it to you.'"

## The Case of the Antique Tablecloth

**FC:** A woman is suing her daughter-in-law for damage to an antique linen tablecloth that she lent to her for a party. The plaintiff says that although it was returned to her laundered and pressed, it had sev-



# The Positive Power of Friendship



Valerie Harper with Iva March Rifkin (left), and Nicole Barth (right).

There are few more comforting ways to end a hard day than in the company of a best friend. Perhaps over dinner you tell a funny story about your boss, mate or child, and your friend, listening intently, exclaims, "I know just what you mean!" That moment of understanding and connection can be magical.

What defines a best friend? What makes women's relationships so precious? FAMILY CIRCLE posed these questions to four notable women: actress Valerie Harper, 62; businesswoman Ivana Trump, 53; television journalist Meredith Vieira, 49; and model Niki Taylor, 27. Their thoughts on friendship and its rewards will make you smile.

## Valerie Harper: Four Times Blessed

First introduced to TV audiences as Rhoda Morgenstern on the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*, Valerie Harper later starred in *Rhoda*. A true-blue friend on TV, she depends in real life on a "quartet" of best friends: dancer-choreographer Nicole Barth, former dancer Iva March Rifkin, actress and acting coach Arlene Golonka and former dancer Penny Almog.

"It's impossible to name one best friend," she says, laughing, "because I've known all four for more than forty years." Now touring in *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*, Harper is also the author of *Today I Am a Ma'am* (Cliff Street). "It's a book about friendship and my girlfriends who are no longer girls, though we're still best friends."

Harper and Nicole Barth, for example, have been friends for 43 years. "A bunch of adjectives jump into my mind when I think of Valerie," says Barth, "but number one is that she's reliable. She's there no matter what—a very steady, very humorous force. When you're with her, you're in a safe comfort zone. You're standing with a rock."

**Valerie:** "I think there has always been a profound natural bond between women—a sisterhood from the cave days when we picked berries together to the quilting bees of to-

*Glenn Plaskin, a contributing editor to FAMILY CIRCLE, is the author of two books and writes about human-interest issues.*

“There’s always been a natural bond between women.”



# The Sound of Stories

By Glenn Plaskin

**O**n many mornings nowadays, instead of reporting to a movie set, Julie Andrews relates that she has quite a different routine.

"First thing," she says, "after stretching and working out, I head upstairs to an attic I've converted into a little office where I feel protected and undisturbed.

"Then there's a great deal of sharpening pencils," she says, laughing. "Finally, I sit down with my notes and outline—and set to work." By work, Andrews is referring to her burgeoning career as a best-selling author of children's books. The woman who enchanted a whole generation with her unforgettable performances in *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music* is now touching a new generation with a steady stream of books for kids.

"Who knew?" says the Oscar-winning actress and singer, who has written five books, most recently *Dumpy the Dump Truck* and *Dumpy at School* (Hyperion), both featuring a lovable old dump truck with special gifts.

"I get a lot of pleasure out of writing," said Andrews in a recent interview. "It's something I can do completely on my own, and once I get into it, I find that time just flies unbelievably. Still, I never thought of it as something I would do professionally, but I am taking it a lot more seriously now." In recent years the singer hit a sad note—the tragic loss of her singing voice after disastrous throat surgery in 1997. The operation was meant to remove noncancerous nodules that were triggering recurrent sore throats and laryngitis, but instead it left her unable to sing at all.

"Unfortunately, a great deal went wrong that should not have," says the 65-year-old, who continues to vocalize for about half an hour in the morning and again each night, though her voice tires easily and gets raspy. She remains optimistic about a cure: "You never know, I'm

not giving up. There are lots of discoveries still to be made about what could be done."

In the meantime Andrews has taken speaking roles in movies—most recently a live TV performance of *On Golden Pond* and a Disney feature, *The Princess Diaries*—while also maintaining a daily writing schedule. "How grateful I am to have something to fall back on. Writing,

Contributing editor Glenn Plaskin frequently reports on celebrity and human interest issues.

“ Writing is therapeutic—keeping a diary, writing to friends and family—anytime you have strong feelings. ”

**The “Dumpy” books were inspired by Emma’s 4½-year-old son, Sam, a dump truck lover.**



Writing together brings Julie Andrews and daughter Emma closer.

Photos: David Rodgers/Disney Publishing (top); Michael Kraus (bottom).



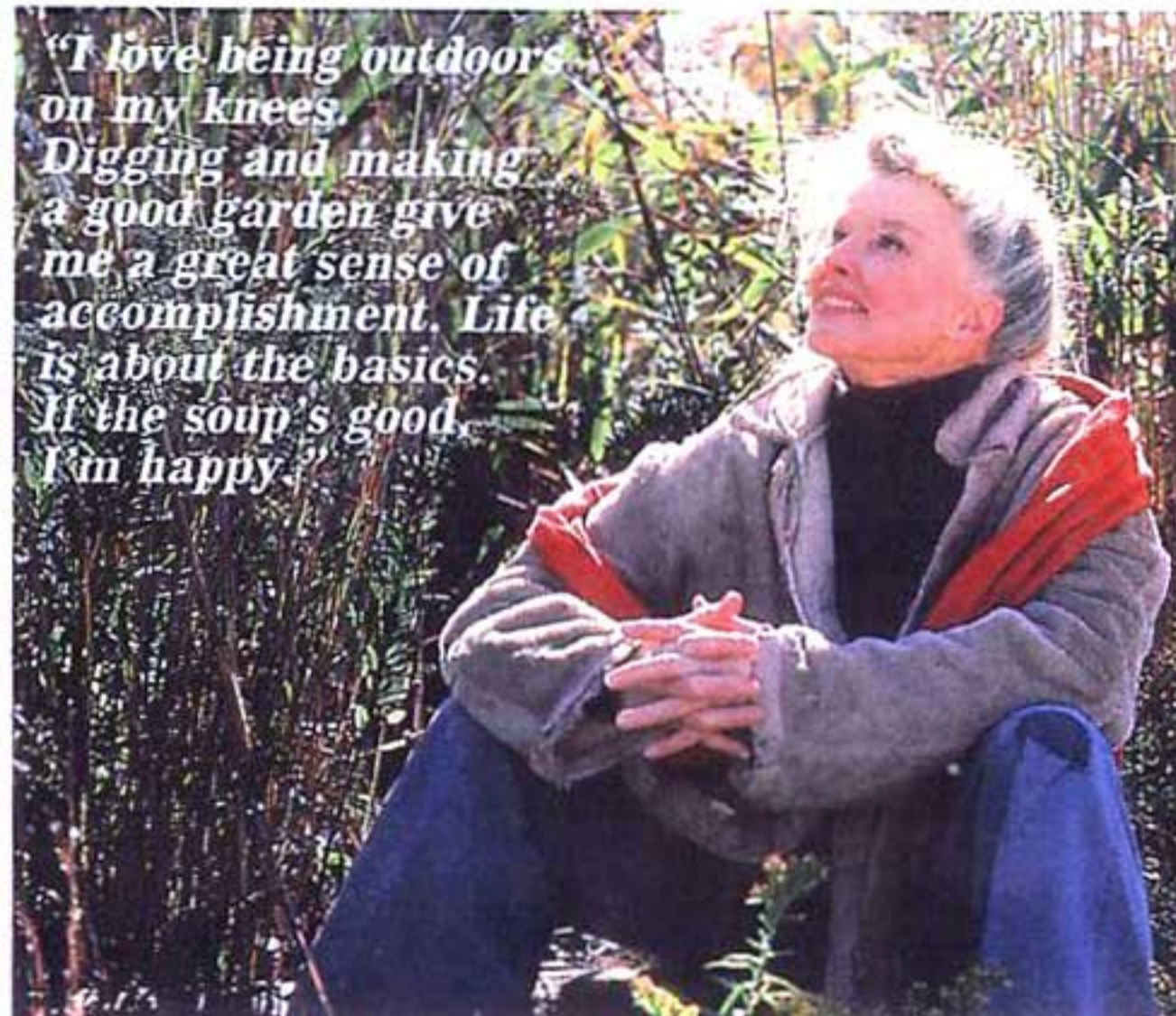




# "I'M BORED WITH THE GREAT KATHARINE HEPBURN!"



*"I never get lonely. You're always going to be lonely and depressed if you think only about how you're feeling, how you look, how to color your hair. That's because the self is a dead end, ultimately boring. If you concentrate on that, God help you."*



*"I love being outdoors on my knees. Digging and making a good garden give me a great sense of accomplishment. Life is about the basics. If the soup's good, I'm happy."*

**T**he fire in the sitting room is crackling, because "Madame," as she is nicknamed by one lifelong friend, has just gotten down on her hands and knees to stoke it herself. With granny glasses perched on the tip of her nose and her hair wound into a frazzled bun, Katharine Hepburn now sits in her favorite chair, a black leather recliner. On her lap she balances a tray that contains a hearty lunch: a melted ham-and-cheese sandwich, zucchini soup (homemade from her own recipe; see page 116) and a giant wedge of chocolate cake.

The telephone beside her rings. "Can't talk," she barks into the receiver and hangs up mischievously, never having asked who the caller was. Clearly, age hasn't tamed Hepburn's notorious sassiness. At 77, she is as audacious and opinionated as ever. "Silence," she muses, pausing for dramatic effect, "is *the* great joy."

Content to live a quiet life, Hepburn has been settled in the same grayish-white town house on

*Freelance writer Glenn Plaskin frequently interviews celebrities. His last article for FAMILY CIRCLE was on Lena Horne.*

Manhattan's East Side for the past 55 years. For company "Madame" has her driver, her housekeeper and Phyllis Wilbourn, her secretary of 32 years.

The actress rules her roost with absolute authority. "There's no greater luxury," she declares, "than doing what you want, when you want to do it."

*So you could recommend living alone—"as the most perfect state imaginable," she finishes my sentence with delight. "I'm one of six children, and it was my ambition as a young girl to find a moment to be alone—which usually wound up at 5 o'clock in the morning. So all my life I've made the terrible sacrifice of going to bed at 8 and getting up at 5."*

*But surely the independent Hepburn must feel lonely at times?*

"Nope," she insists, shaking her head. "The human animal naturally likes company. And I think I would be lonely if I were forced to be alone all the time. But I have quite a number of friends over for tea, and my phone doesn't stop ringing. And I live alone in the greatest luxury. I've got a driver, delicious food, you name it. So

*(Please turn to page 112)*



By Glenn Plaskin

# Inner Harmony

**W**hen Shirley MacLaine feels angry, discouraged or stressed out, she always does exactly the same thing.

"I go into a quiet room, close my eyes, and say, 'Thank you.'"

Thank you? For being stressed out?

"Yes, that's exactly right," notes the actress, who believes that "going within" through a daily routine of meditation, Eastern exercises and breathing techniques is the key to stress reduction and inner harmony.

"I have learned to say thank you for whatever it is I'm feeling angry or upset about because what I'm feeling is based on something that's unresolved in me," she says, explaining her strategy for turning every problem into a gift.

"I'm not thanking someone for hurting my feelings or ruining my day," she says, "but rather for making me clearly look at something and understand what brought up my anger. It's not that easy to do, but it really works. I find that if I go a little deeper beyond the stress, and probe the reasons behind it, the anger I'm feeling actually disappears. It turns out the person or event that caused me to feel upset—the catalyst—is really a teacher.

"For instance, if your boss gives you too much work and you're feeling stressed out by it, it's only your opinion he gave you too much to do, not your boss's. You may feel pushed beyond what you think your limits are, but you can actually do anything. I'd say: 'The boss just told me I'm limitless. Sure I am. Thank you!'

"So what we're really talking about is a change in *attitude* toward everything that happens to you. We're so driven by

expectations, money, time constraints, ambition and vanity that we forget that nothing is a problem, depending on your perception. I can't overemphasize the power of perception."

The Oscar-winning actress (*Terms of Endearment*), who has appeared in 51 films over a 46-year career, has increasingly focused her creative energies on writing, lecturing, offering guided meditations, and operating a recently launched Web site ([www.shirleymaclaine.com](http://www.shirleymaclaine.com)). Why all these new ventures?

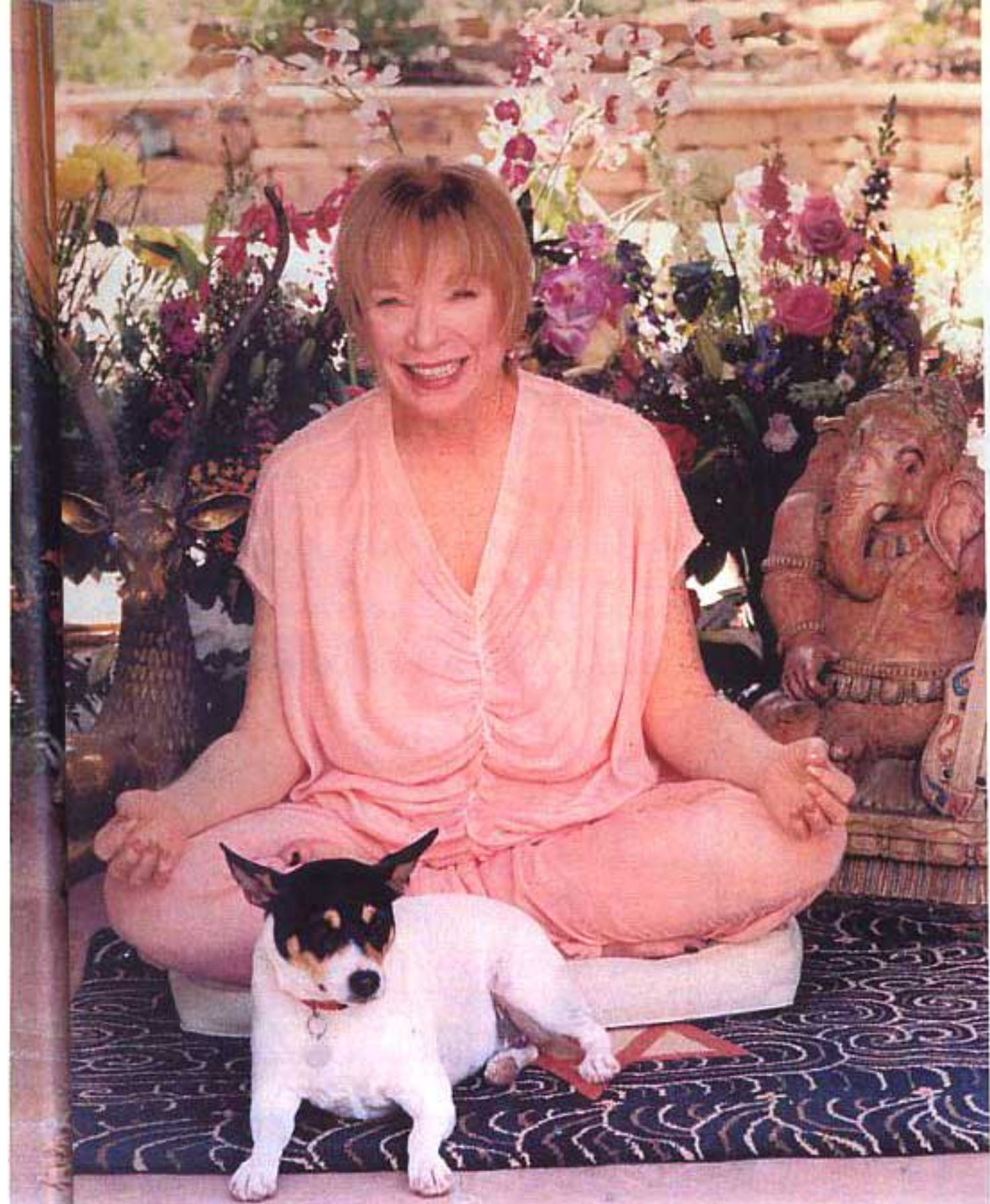
"When you get to be my age in a youth-oriented culture, the leading parts that come your way are sensational when they come, but they're few and far between. Let's just say I turn down an awful lot of junk. Through writing and the Web site I can still communicate with people in reality—not through the fiction of acting. It's so rewarding."

The key message MacLaine delivers, no matter what the medium, is the rejuvenating power of looking inward.

"Going within through meditation," she notes, "is a panacea for healing depression, worry, fear—you name it. Reducing stress is really all about calming the spirit."

And so, after saying, "Thank you," the second step in MacLaine's approach to reducing stress is learning how to meditate and breathe properly. Anyone can do it, she says.

"While prayer is talking to God, meditation is *listening* to God," she begins. "It requires faith in yourself, faith in your capacity to hear your higher power. So, when you wake up in the morning, go into a room and sit quietly in a comfortable lotus position with your back straight. It's better not to lie down, because you could fall asleep. You can close your eyes or not. Then, take in a deep, slow breath and exhale slowly. Clear your mind by concentrating on the breathing. When you take in a deep breath, you're breathing in the divine intelligence—the chi, as the



“Happiness humming feeds real contentment.”

starts leading me spontaneously. Sometimes, it looks a little like an African tribal dance. It's always different, never boring. I'm meditating, I'm moving.

"I've also just started using weights in each hand. My arm moves in spiral or circular motions. Some stretching is also involved. Again, it's my body's intelligence that tells me when to stop and stretch. I use music—though you can't force it. I don't want my pace to be dictated by anything outside myself. It's done, after about 40 minutes, I feel monious—balanced in body. It's not aerobic, but very calming.

MacLaine says that this exercise, combined with meditation, helps her to "curb the dessert craving." Her preferred method of losing weight is gradually rather than doing strenuous aerobic workouts

Chinese say. Breathing in deeply calms you down. People spend thousands on therapy and anti-anxiety medications and you can get the same results for free with breathing! If stray thoughts distract you, just remember the breath. When you become the breath, you shut everything else out.

"There's no time limit on morning meditation," she says, "because there's no such thing as time when you're in this state. Let it happen and let it unhappen. When you're ready to end, it will end itself." And when you stop? "You feel like you've had three good night sleeps."

For those who have difficulty meditating alone, MacLaine recommends listening to the recorded meditations on her Web site, finding a partner, or attending live, guided meditations, which are available in many cities through health clubs, community centers and meditation schools.

In her own daily practice, MacLaine combines meditation with an original exercise routine that includes light weight-training and an Eastern exercise called qigong, "a variation of tai chi," she says, "but more spontaneous.

"I stand in the middle of the floor," she explains, "and wait for my body's intelligence to move me. When I set aside my consciousness, my body begins to relax and then

weights for muscle development. "I had to get rid of that harshness. Extreme weight lifting or running miles on a treadmill leaves tension in the joints, elbows and knees.

"My qigong master told me that if you do any strenuous breathing through your mouth, or panting, doing it too hard. I've stopped going to the gym because I think all that pounding against the body takes away your life."

Trained in ballet as a youngster, the 67-year-old actress remains limber in mind and spirit: "I never had an artificial limit. Surrendering to what the body wants to do is the key. Cause I trusted my body to tell me when I had reached my limit.

When MacLaine finishes her spiritual and physical practice each day, she says she has attained a state of harmony: "I don't ever feel depressed, and I don't feel ecstatic. I'm right in the middle—in a calm place.

"Maybe we women have to redefine words like 'happiness.' It isn't over-the-moon joy, necessarily. It's a ming feeling of real contentment.

"It's empowering to know that, through meditation, a change in attitude, you can create your own reality."

Photo: David Weininger, Illustrations: Sharon Watts

## Shirley's Daily Survival Kit

You can carry Shirley MacLaine's "necessary objects" in your purse or pocket—or in your imagination. They consist of the following everyday items, which serve as reminders of spiritual principles. "These are things we use all the time," says MacLaine, "and thinking of them this way can both reduce stress and help us change our attitudes."

- **A Toothpick**, to remind you to pick out the good qualities in other people.
- **A Rubber Band**, to remind you to be flexible; things may not always go the way you want, but they always work out.

- **A Band-Aid**, to remind you to heal hurt feelings, yours or someone else's.
- **A Pencil**, to remind you to list your blessings.
- **An Eraser**, to remind you that everyone makes mistakes, and it's O.K.
- **Glue**, to remind you to stick with it: if you do, you can accomplish anything.
- **A Mint**, to remind you you're worth a mint.
- **A Candy Kiss** to remind you that everyone needs a kiss or a hug every day, especially children.
- **A Tea Bag** to remind you to take time for yourself; you've earned it.





# A Fragile Lifeline

## Lessons I Learned Answering the AIDS Hotline

By Glenn Plaskin

**E**very Monday and Wednesday I volunteer as an AIDS Hotline counselor at New York City's Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), the nation's largest social service agency for AIDS. Between 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. my co-volunteers and I sit in front of a bank of constantly ringing telephones talking to men, women and teens who call us at 800-AIDSNYC from across the nation with their urgent questions.

After almost 20 years, a whole generation, families are still facing the heartache of tending the sick, while scientists continue to be confounded by this stubborn, ravaging virus.

Although the Federal Government currently spends in excess of two billion dollars annually on AIDS research, there is no cure in sight for the disease and no vaccine available. Small wonder that the GMHC AIDS Hotline, the nation's first, is flooded with about 40,000 calls each year.

### A Morning in May

This is the way it began: "Good morning, GMHC AIDS Hotline, may I help you?"

"Yes...I have a question...[hesitantly] My son...he's 21...and he just found out...he's HIV-positive [voice breaking] I'm...alone, divorced, and I need some help... someone to talk to..."

of her child is in jeopardy, and she feels helpless and afraid. I can't imagine anything worse.

During the call, I do my best to use the hotline protocol of "active listening," which involves using silence, empathy and gentle probing with open-ended questions. I'm also having my own emotional reaction to the panic in her voice, and I'm worried about whether I'm doing enough.

Toward the end of the call, when she exclaims, "I don't want my baby to die!" my heart plummets. "I know," I say, "but there is hope." I find myself on the verge of tears.

### The Bad News

This mother's story is all too common. According to the Centers for Disease Control, an estimated 40,000 Americans (half of them under 25) are newly infected with HIV each year. Unprotected sex and intravenous drug use remain the principal modes of transmission. "Teenagers," notes AIDS activist Elizabeth Taylor, "are being hard hit." She refers to the three million adolescents who contract a sexually transmitted disease annually. "Teens are ignorant and feel invincible," says the 68-year-old actress, who has raised \$150 million for AIDS research. "They believe they're protected by an invisible shield, when actually the virus is aimed right at them."

Although a new generation of medications is prolonging the lives of thousands, nearly half of the 900,000 people infected with HIV in the United States can't afford the drugs. Since the virus was discovered in 1981, 420,201 Americans have died from AIDS-related complications, and the disease has left 16.3 million dead worldwide.

### Who Calls a Hotline?

Not long ago I took a call from a 15-year-old boy living in a small town who said he feels guilty about his sexual attraction to other boys and is scared to discuss this with his parents. I asked him if there were a school counselor or relative he might talk to; he said no.

Being a teenager is hard enough, I thought, without the pressure of keeping this kind of secret. I encouraged him to call a gay community center youth program in a nearby city. In the meantime, I assured him that he could call our hotline anytime, that we'd be there for him.

This call was typical of the many we get from teenagers,

*Glenn Plaskin, a contributor to FAMILY CIRCLE, is the author of two books, most recently "Turning Points" (Birch Lane Press).*



**"My son...he's 21...and he just found out...he's HIV-positive."**

"Of course...it sounds as if this has been devastating for you."

"It's terrible. He's...he's so young...my only child. I don't want him to die." [crying]

Her son admitted to her he hadn't used condoms, convinced he wouldn't contract HIV (the AIDS virus) from his female partners. "How could he be so stupid?" she asks, angry now. "Why didn't he protect himself? What can I do?"

We talk for 35 minutes, and by the end of the conversation, I notice I'm barely breathing. The woman's anguish is palpable, her situation every mother's nightmare. The life