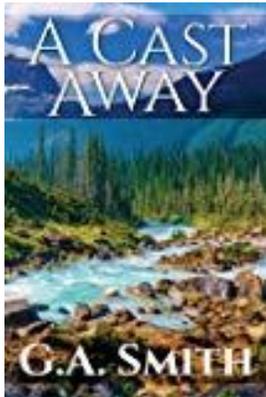


*50+Living our best lives now and in the future!*

## Author, Educator, Adventurer, Survivor

## An Educator on the Outside

**G**regg Smith's newly released book, *A Cast Away*, is a story that is both timely and personal. Smith introduces us to Al, a man who survived a mass shooting that took the life of his best friend. Al tries to cope with his trauma by escaping to a small town in Montana. Instead, he repeatedly faces death and is even "threatened by his own pickup truck." Eventually, Al learns that trauma is a universal part of our human experience, and he learns how to start reclaiming his life.



"Being a college professor most of my adult life has defined me on the outside." Currently, Smith is an English professor at Umpqua Community College (UCC), where he has taught since 2010. He holds a



Ph.D. in Comparative Medieval Literature and Languages from the University of Washington. "My concentration was in Old Norse, Old Irish, and Old English. I have always been fascinated by the oldest of stories, because they often present the most fundamental of conflicts and questions, and because they often represent our most basic needs as humans. I have found that when writing my own stories, these things bleed out at times onto my own pages. There's no helping it sometimes."

Smith is a masterful storyteller who invites us to wade with him into a reality that has become increasingly familiar in our culture. "I really just wanted to be able to express what so many of us have had to endure as the survivors of domestic terrorism. "I think we have all become much more aware in this past decade about PTSD and what our soldiers have to go through. However, I think it's past time for us to begin talking about what this ever-growing number of "survivors" are going through."

## Life Beyond the Classroom

“It’s what’s taken place elsewhere that makes me who I am: travel, living in new places, spending every spare moment in the mountains with the rivers, hiking, fishing, paddling. That’s the “real”



me. I have also become an avid gardener for some strange reason. I didn’t set out to be, it just sort of... grew.”

Smith confessed that in some ways, he’d led a risky life. “I’m 62 and never thought I

would be. I figured I’d do something really stupid long before now, and that would have been it.” With regard to aging, “Looking in the mirror doesn’t matter to me...doing what makes me happy; that’s everything.”

**October 1, 2015**

It happened on a Thursday. The first week of a fall term was more than half over. Gregg and his best friend Larry (who also taught English at UCC), had been planning a fly-fishing outing on the nearby Umpqua River after they finished teaching that day. At 10:38 a.m., a gunman entered a classroom and began firing. Once the shooting stopped, nine people were dead, including Larry.

### Writing as Therapy and Empowerment

“It has been somewhat interesting to me to discover that I could write fiction. For almost all of my adult

life, writing has been an academic exercise of one sort or another. However, after the shooting, I began writing things down, only to myself because I couldn’t say them out loud to anyone, and sometimes not even to myself. That’s when I began to fictionalize certain things –the things I didn’t really want to say openly. I discovered that writing was entirely therapeutic and allowed me a way of articulating something I really didn’t know how to articulate.”

Smith continued, “Words like “trauma” and “loss” and “grief” seem only like markers of some sort as if they stand for a thing that cannot really be said with any accuracy. Writing helped me fill in some of those gaps. Characters could say what I couldn’t, and the words through their voices could be a way for me to say things and yet protect myself in a sense.”

After Smith completed and published his first novel, he wrote a second book that follows the first. “It is very empowering; I believe to discover that you have a voice in a venue quite outside that place where you normally speak. It allows you to say what is most important.”

### Advice for Future Writers or Novelists

“I think probably a lot of us can write if we care to. I surprised myself in doing so, but as I went along, it got easier and easier. My advice: just get it down on paper and see what happens next. Just start talking about what matters most to you, in whatever way you find is comfortable. But first, get it written down. Larry, my best friend and an often-published writer, used to say: “The best stories are when you lie about the truth,” and so it has been for me, not being able to say directly what I mean, but I hope the truth is still there for anyone who can see it.”

*To order your copy of Gregg’s novel through Amazon, click here: [A Cast Away](#). To follow Gregg on Facebook, click [G.A. Smith](#).*

## Elevate Wealth Advisors Sponsors Free ‘Seminars



Each quarter this year, [Elevate Wealth Advisors](#) will be holding free educational seminars in Oregon City, Oregon.

The topic for February 26<sup>th</sup> is “The Present and Future of Social Security” and will be held at the Oregon City Pioneer Center from 1:00-2:15 pm.

The discussion will cover Social Security’s possible longevity, the financial health of the current system, and possible changes in the future. Ben James, CFA, CFP, is the presenter. Ben is the president and founder of Elevate Wealth Advisors.

Space is limited. Please call Pioneer Center at 503-657-8287 to RSVP or [click here](#).

## How Skilled Are You at Detecting Fake Media When You See it?



Using a variety of sophisticated techniques and persuasion strategies, it is easier than ever for various groups and causes to lure us into biting on a juicy chunk of fake news.

Maeve Dooley, a graduate student at Northwestern

Arizona University, is doing some research on fake news. She needs boomer participants for her study. And all of us need to make sure we are able to identify fakes when we see them.

If you are willing to spend as little as 15 minutes over four days to learn and to gain new insights, [click here](#).

## Recommended Reading for Retirement Planning

Marianne Oehser’s 2019 practical guide for the nonfinancial aspects of retirement, [Your Happiness Portfolio for Retirement](#), will be a valuable resource for anyone starting to consider life ever after.



Well researched and comprehensive, Oehser covers everything from some new realities for today’s retirees, the importance of mindset, various aspects of a satisfying life beyond work, and how to really flourish in retirement. She also provides numerous useful exercises and resources.

Trust me; you don’t want to wait until you officially retire or are pushed out of your job to read this book; you owe it to yourself to start planning for your “third act” now!

Oeshser’s book is available on Amazon and through other various bookstores. I’ve purchased my copy. I’d encourage you to get yours too!

## An Inspirational Flick

Last week, I watched a 1979 movie, *Aunt Mary*, free on Amazon Prime. The story is based on the life of Mary Dobkin (played by Jean Stapleton).



Dobkin had suffered numerous hardships throughout her life. Yet, in 1954 she became determined to help some street kids in her community by forming and coaching a baseball team. As an amateur coach and advocate for children, Dobkin’s efforts eventually helped thousands of kids. If you want a little inspiration, grab some popcorn and check it out.

## Opportunity to Help Hold Employers Accountable for Ageism



[The Old School Work Alliance](#) is an organization of people with a wide range of skills who are working together to hold employers accountable for ageist practices.

The group is looking for people with diverse skills—everything from leadership to fundraising, research, data analytics, and communication. Members represent a wide range of ages.

I've personally joined the alliance and am part of a team working on training and certification. If you are interested in joining the effort, click [here](#).

### Sixty-Three to Sixty-Seven

In a May 30, 2017 [article](#), Assistant Professor of Medicine at Washington University in St. Louis wrote that the average healthspan today is 63.1 years old. (Healthspan refers to the years that we live in relative good health.)

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated the average healthspan was approximately 67.3 years old. Either way, WHO reports the average life expectancy in the U.S. is 79.3 years old. This means that the average person will likely spend more than a dozen years with chronic illnesses and general declining health and well-being. Unfortunately, the average person doesn't make the effort to develop healthy habits until it is too late.

Fortunately, if we make the right choices today, then we have a better chance of increasing our healthspan and decreasing the number of years we'll be in major decline.

Most of us know what we *should* be doing—eating right, getting exercise, getting routine check-ups, keeping mentally engaged, keeping socially engaged, and maintaining a positive attitude toward aging. One of our bigger challenges is to embrace the fact that we are all aging – and that we need to treat our future selves with the respect that we'll want and deserve. The habits we develop today do matter for all of our tomorrows.



### Moving Forward Together

[Boomer Best U](#) was started a year ago to help promote positive aging in the workplace, in communities, and in our personal lives.

Through the process, I have had an opportunity to learn, grow, and meet some great people. My hope is that you are also enjoying our shared journey. If so, please consider subscribing to our monthly newsletter and, perhaps, consider being a [guest writer](#) for the Boomer Best U website and/or newsletter.



Within the next couple of weeks, I will also start offering some positive aging (not anti-aging) products and books on my website through affiliate marketing. Anyone who makes a purchase will not pay anything additional; however, Boomer Best U will get a percentage of the sale to help support our work.

**To subscribe/unsubscribe to this newsletter, click [here](#).**