



Dr. Bill Thomas

Age: 54

Occupation: Activist Geriatrician. Author. Professor, Aging Studies and Distinguished Fellow, University of Maryland Baltimore County's Erickson School. Musician. Farmer. Entrepreneur. International authority, visionary and speaker on the future of aging and longevity. Impresario and Playwright. "Ambassador from Elderhood."

Education: B.S., Cortland SUNY; M.D., Harvard Medical School; Family Medicine Residency, Highland Hospital/University of Rochester. Board Certified, Geriatrics and Family medicine.

Family: Wife, Judith Meyer-Thomas; sons Zachary, Virgil and Caleb; daughters Hannah and Haleigh.

Residence:

Ithaca, New York. Prior 18 years, created and lived off-the-grid at Summer Hill, 250-acre sustainable farm, country inn and retreat center in Cayuga County, New York.

Photo by Jon Reis

Accomplishments Highlights (partial list):

Founded two models to revolutionize nursing home care:

1) 1994 Co-founded (with wife Judith) The Eden Alternative™ a global non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of elders, caregivers and de-institutionalizing nursing homes.

2) 2003 Founded The GREEN HOUSE® Project, a radically new approach to long term care.

Created and designed the nation's first elder-friendly Emergency Department at Holy Cross Hospital, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Created Rumpelstiltskin, a computer program for hospitals to immediately analyze data and improve ER's operations.

2014 publication of Second Wind and 25-city Second Wind Tour

Awards & Honors (partial list):

Wall Street Journal - A "top 12 innovator" changing aging and retirement in the 21st century

Kennedy School of Government – One of America's Best Leaders

Ashoka North American Fellowship – individual, unprecedented ideas for community change

Picker Award for Excellence® in the Advancement of Patient-Centered Care

"Giraffe Hero" Award for people who "stick their necks out" to advance the common good

America's Award (also know as 'Nobel Prize for Goodness')

Heinz Award for the Human Condition – for contributions to long term care

AARP Visiting Scholar and co-founder of AARP's Life Reimagined Institute



Dr. Bill Thomas serenading residents at the Leonard Florence Center for Living in Chelsea, MA. Photo by ChangingAging.org

"How Did We Arrive At This Moment?"

By Marsha Felton

Imagine what your future can be through culture-changing and vital perspectives from **Dr. Bill Thomas**. He brilliantly articulates the arrival of boomers into their next chapter. He reminds us: *"Every day we wake up, we're one day older."* **Dr. Thomas**, a prolific, multi-faceted international authority on aging, doesn't deny there are difficulties. However, as "elders in the making," he wants people to live and experience the profound impact, balance and joy that arises from finding a Second Wind in life.

MF: Welcome back to San Francisco! I watched your stirring and compelling TedxSF talk here in 2011, 'Elderhood Rising: The Dawn of a New World Age.' What are your hopes now for a 'New World Age' and its emergence?

BT: I am a big fan of aging and of life beyond adulthood. I have come to see it as my life calling, to help people outgrow adulthood. To help them develop in a way that in essence they are able to leave adulthood behind and become elders. And I think our society has a need for elders – for them to be part of us. The only way you can become an elder is to leave adulthood.

MF: At what age do adults transition to the 'Dawn of Elderhood'?

BT: I think in American society the year 50 is an important year. When people reach 50 years of age, they begin to think differently about themselves. And I want to help people 50 + truly embrace it and seize upon life after 50 as perhaps the richest, deepest, most meaningful phase of life.



Dr. Bill Thomas visiting residents. Photo by ChangingAging.org

MF: [Second Wind: Navigating the Passage to a Slower, Deeper and More Connected Life](#) is a 2014 *Publisher's Weekly* best non-fiction book choice. How did you come up with the title?

BT: Early on I started my practice in family and ER medicine but I found my true love in geriatric medicine. Over the years taking care of these people, I came to see how society was shortchanging them by presenting this notion of decline and loss as if that's what aging is all about. And I got really interested in this idea of a "second wind" that actually age brings a new season of growth.

MF: Why did you choose *Koyaanisqatsi* as a chapter in *Second Wind*? (*Koyaanisqatsi* is a Hopi term that means 'life out of balance and the need for a change.')

[The successful documentary blew me away.](#)

BT: It blew me away too. I've been fascinated for a long time by the film *Koyaanisqatsi*. It really opened a door for me to see the world in a different way. I was especially taken by this idea of life out of balance, living in a way that calls for another way of living. What we're really talking about in

Second Wind is finding a new balance, not restoring the old balance that maybe you felt during adulthood. Finding a new balance where you're being yourself, authentic and legitimate but different than the balance you had earlier in your life.

MF: In *Second Wind*, you articulate many boomers attitude adjustment about aging as either 'Denialists' (the majority), 'Realists' or the affirming 'Enthusiasts.' How do you feel about the media's ever-present focus on 'anti-aging'?

BT: There's a certain perpetual trend in our society. People feel they will defeat aging. However, in the history of all time, no one has ever grown young! One of the things I did while researching for this book, I looked at books about anti-aging from the 1960's, 'never age' books. Then I looked at what happened to the authors of those books. Every single one of them got old and died with their fantasy to reverse aging.

MF: What about *Second Wind* and the power of choice?

BT: I say we should make the most of the gift of Elderhood. "*Second Wind*" also means the big shift from have to

do to want to do. That's huge. This life phase that allows us to begin the process of moving away from basing our choices on necessity.

"Elders are the superglue of humanity... What we need is a radical reinterpretation of longevity that makes elders (and their needs) central to our collective pursuit of happiness and well-being."

MF: You talk about the fact that there are more nursing homes, 16,000, than Starbucks in America. What's the good news-bad news about this?

BT: The bad news is America's system for taking care of older people is very heavily reliant on institutions. The good news is that every year there are fewer and fewer nursing homes. I'd like to take some credit for that. Eventually, that number will reach -0-. Hospitals, ERs and care centers will be different. How we do home care, including using technology, will be different. There will be better alternatives than there are today.

MF: How can *ActiveOver50* help further growth for your unique Eden Alternative and The Green House Project?

BT: Right now, people don't believe long term care can be better. They have low expectations; there is no push on long term care to force improvement. I would love for Northern Californians to bang on doors and ask, 'do you do realize it can be better? There are alternatives.' That would change things.

MF: What's happened since you led the development of the country's first hospital Emergency Room for seniors in Silver Spring, Maryland?

BT: There are now 24 around the country. None in Northern California. Everyone in the culture of emergency

medicine understands ER's for children requires specialization. It's equally true that good emergency care for older people requires specialty skills and it's really just ageism that stops hospitals from embracing the senior ER concept. But the culture of emergency medicine isn't set up to take care of frail people with lots of medications and complex histories. As a result, a lot of older people get worse care in ERs. This culture says older people's needs aren't as important as traumas. They are important and so is specialization for seniors.

MF: Why did you create the website ChangingAging.org?

BT: We've known for quite a while that mass media isn't really interested in this story. If we want our story to be told, we have to tell it. Changingaging.org is a multi-blog platform. You go there and get a different perspective on aging from me and lots of interesting people. Very different than what you see in mass media. And very authentic. So our experience with the blog is that it opens a door to a new vision in the making.



MF: How did you become interested in creating an extraordinary 25-city theatrical performance *Second Wind Tour, 'This Changes Everything.'* <http://secondwindtour.org>.

BT: I'm interested in changing our culture. And there's really only one tool that's powerful enough to change culture and that's Art. Even though my training and background is in medicine, I felt very compelled to create 'non-fiction' theatre and multi-media art to create an experience for people to see that there are possibilities in their lives.

MF: How is AARP's 'Life Reimagined' helping you with your extraordinary *Second Wind Tour*?

BT: I wasn't willing to go on this tour unless I could point people to where they could find tools to reinvent or explore in their own lives after we left town. AARP's Life Reimagined.org is a great resource.

MF: What are you most proud of so far in your remarkable career?

BT: In terms of career, I would say that my most precious achievement is obtaining influence. For a person of my training and my background, I have very little power. However, I have a great deal of influence.

MF: Please share with *ActiveOver50* readers what you do about staying healthy.

BT: I'm a big fan of exercise as part of daily life. In all good weather, my wife and I ride our bikes wherever we go. We enjoy walking. I'm not a 'gym rat' kind of guy. Diet is based on common sense and healthy foods.

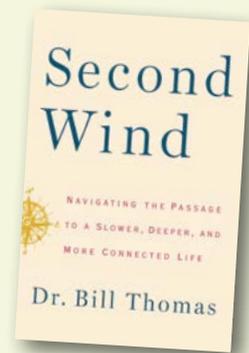
*"One of America's best leaders!"
...startling common-sense ideas
and ability to persuade others
to take a risk" - "this creative
and wildly exuberant country
doctor has become something of
a culture changer—reimagining
how Americans will approach
aging in the 21st century."
(06) U.S. News & World Report*



**ABOUT
MARSHA FELTON**

"I'm on the 'inspiring and motivating' beat. I cover exciting people and uplifting endeavors."
Marsha Felton

is an accomplished marketing consultant, freelance journalist and entrepreneur based in San Francisco. Email: marshabf@gmail.com



Second Wind Book

"In Second Wind, Bill Thomas goes deep inside our culture. Like the best kind of doctor, he evaluates the toll our hurried, quantified, and driven lives have taken on us before he suggests a new way forward. He'll challenge the way you think about your future. And you'll want to make the journey with him." –
Jane Pauley, author of *Your Life Calling*.

Second Wind Tour

"This Changes Everything"

<http://secondwindtour.org/>

New Schedule
of Performances
Coming soon!

Created by Dr. Bill Thomas. Exploration of growth, aging, identity and memory. Inspiring and exhilarating. *"Alive Inside"* remarkable documentary (Bay Area August 8). Catch a "second wind" in one's life and work.

Nine years and counting

So Far, So Good

From day one...nine years ago...the mission of ActiveOver50 was to publish a professional, quality print magazine for boomers and seniors in the San Francisco Bay Area. ■ Thanks to our readers and advertisers, ActiveOver50 today is the #1 consumer 50+ publication in the Bay Area with the largest readership – over 200,000 in print and online. And rapidly growing. ■ Our mission is to double readership to 400,000 by expanding our print and online presence. If you haven't seen our revamped website with more content and stories (ActiveOver50.Com), check it out today.

What does this mean for you as a reader?

You'll continue to discover useful, interesting stories that inspire and encourage you to stay active and fully engaged in life. You'll learn about the latest in healthcare, finance, retirement, technology, estate planning, housing, nutrition, fitness, travel and more.

What does this mean for you as an advertiser?

Your advertising gets seen in a quality magazine in more places by more people in over 40 Bay Area cities including San Jose, San Francisco, Oakland, Los Gatos, Campbell, Cupertino, Los Altos, Mountain View, Santa Clara, Concord, Morgan Hill, Gilroy, Walnut Creek and Palo Alto. ■ You work directly as a partner with ActiveOver50. Not a franchise, we are local and family owned. We help grow your business with a host of diverse products including print and digital magazines, TV "Spotlight" segments with NBC Bay Area, e-Newsletters, EXPOs and social media programs. ■ We look forward to helping you navigate through the natural progress of aging by providing information, products and services so you can enjoy a healthier, longer and more active lifestyle.

So far, so good.



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