

The Twilight Years

Producer Keith Famié's trilogy on aging, filmed both here and around the world, couldn't come at a better time.

Starting in 2014, some 30 million uninsured Americans will be eligible for subsidized health care as part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. As a result, medical-related expenses will go up. It also will take longer to schedule a doctor's visit or a surgical procedure.

Famié's first film in the series, called *The Embrace of Aging: The Male Perspective of Growing Old*, explores why some men live longer than others. The journey includes interviews with heart surgeons, scientists, philosophers, and business leaders. From luxury mall founder A. Alfred Taubman to New York restaurateur Drew Nieporent to the Italian island of Sardinia, where the highest number of centenarians reside, Famié and his team offer an engaging — and, at times, tragic — portrayal of life, with its physical and emotional challenges.

Among the topics explored are the incidence of prostate cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and dementia among men. In one segment, Dr. Kim Eagle, a former cardiologist and now professor of internal medicine at the University of Michigan Cardiovascular Center, describes how legendary U-M football coach Bo Schembechler survived two heart attacks (the first when he was 39 years old) and two quadruple heart bypass operations. Through better dieting and exercise, Schembechler lived to be 77 years old.

In another segment, Famié interviews a 102-year-old man in Tampa, Fla., who is as rambunctious as any teenager. "He lives by himself, he tinkers in his garage, and he stays active," says Famié, who spent nearly two years researching, interviewing, and producing more than 100 hours of film for the series.

"Women embrace social bonding, but some men in their 50s and 60s continue with their blinders on as they seek to stay on top in the business world," he adds. "If you don't deal with the stress, there will be problems down

the road. As we see in the film, one way to do that is to bond more with the guys."

Famié, a food prodigy who first gained fame as chef and owner of Les Auteurs in downtown Royal Oak, which debuted in 1988 and closed in 1995, has written three books and produced and appeared in dozens of cooking shows. His company, Visionalist Entertainment Productions in Wixom, also has filmed close to a dozen documentaries.

While his biggest moment came in 2001 when he came in third on CBS's *Survivor: The Australian Outback*, Famié says the series on aging has been his most gratifying work. As the first film plays out in theaters and on

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television, the rest of the series will debut next year: *The Embrace of Aging: The Female Perspective of Growing Old*, followed by *The Embrace of Dying: How We Deal With the End of Life*.

The takeaway is straightforward: Men and women can extend their lives considerably if they eat healthy foods, exercise daily (walking 10,000 steps a day is recommended), reduce stress levels, avoid smoking, and bond more with friends. "You can't escape dying, but you have a good chance of living into your 80s if you take better care of yourself," Famié says. **db**

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VOLUME EIGHT • ISSUE TWO

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *DBusiness*,
117 W. Third St., Royal Oak, Michigan 48067
SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: \$9.95 for 6 issues,
\$17.95 for 12 issues, \$22.95 for 18 issues
FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES: 248-691-1800, ext. 126
FOR REPRINTS: Paisley Printing, 248-625-1372
TO SELL *DBUSINESS* MAGAZINE: 248-588-1851
FOR SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES: 248-588-1851

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