

Ten Films to Inspire Thinking about Aging and Retirement

Selected by **Ronald J. Manheimer, Ph.D.**
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About Schmidt (2002)

Jack Nicholson is Warren Schmidt, a doleful 65 year old retired insurance executive from Omaha who sets out on a desperate quest for meaning in an RV his recently deceased wife had bought for traveling in their golden years. Schmidt's encounters—with his daughter, his son-in-law and his mother (Kathy Bates)—require the tolerance and mental flexibility he's previously not possessed. This is the all time how-not-to-retire movie. 124 min Rated R (some language and brief nudity)

After Life (1999)

On a Monday, 22 dead people are invited into an old building enshrouded by fog. Over the course of the following week, they are to select one memory each, to be re-created on celluloid and carried with them forever in their "after lives." What memory would you choose? Directed by Hirokazu Kore-eda. 118 min (subtitles)

Babette's Feast (1987)

Beautifully made Danish film about a masterful French chef who flees the Paris Commune uprising of 1871 to take up residence among a pious congregation of humble villagers on a desolate sea coast in Denmark. Trouble is brewing among the aging believers who have grown querulous until Babette, with winnings from the lottery, puts on an sumptuous dinner party that redeems the losses of earlier life. Stars Stephane Audran, Brigitte Federspiel and Bibi Anderson. 102 min (subtitles)

Cocoon (1985)

A quasi-science fiction film, directed by Ron Howard, that centers on a group of elderly people living in a Florida retirement community who, in what is perhaps a parable about modern medicine and the quest for longevity, are inadvertently rejuvenated by kindly aliens from another galaxy. The Fountain of Youth themed movie stars vintage film greats Don Ameche, Wilford Brimley, Hume Cronyn, Jessica Tandy, Brian Dennehy, and Jack Gilford. 117 min

Innocence (2001)

Andreas and Claire, lovers in their twenties, meet fifty years later. He's a widower but she is still married though to a husband who seems to have lost interest in her and in life. They rekindle their love in spite of health challenges and the impact on Claire's husband. With Julia Blake, Bud Tingwell, and Terry Norris. 94 min. Rated R (some partial nudity)

Iris: A Memoir of Iris Murdoch (2001)

Iris Murdoch, the unconventional British author of numerous popular novels and several works of philosophy, descends into Alzheimer's Disease while her devoted husband, literary critic John Bayley, strives to sustain her. Their complex romance, told in flashbacks, is both poignant and provocative. Stars Judy Dench

as the elderly Iris and Kate Winslet as the youthful Murdoch. 115 min Rated R (some nudity, language)

The Straight Story (1999)

Director David Lynch chronicles a trip made by 73-year-old Alvin Straight from Laurens, Iowa, to Mt. Zion, Wisconsin in 1994 while riding a lawn mower (poor eyesight prevents him driving a car). His journey is to mend his relationship with his ill, estranged, 75-year-old brother. Richard Farnsworth's performance earned him Golden Globe and Oscar nominations for best actor. 112 min.

The World's Fastest Indian (2005)

The life story of New Zealander, Burt Munro (played by Anthony Hopkins) who, at age 68, risks everything, including his own life, by taking his vintage motorcycle to the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah to break the world speed record in 1965. 127 min.

Trip to Bountiful (1985)

Directed by Peter Masterson from a Horton Foote screenplay, the film concerns an aging woman, living in a small apartment with her son and his wife, who longs to return to Bountiful, her childhood home, even though the town no longer exists. The journey gives her "enough to last me for the rest of my life." Stars Geraldine Page, John Heard, and Rebecca DeMornay. 107 min

Wild Strawberries (1957)

Written and directed by Swedish director, Ingmar Bergman, the film centers on an aging professor of medicine traveling to accept an award for 50 years of service. Dr. Borg's unbidden dreams and memories trigger a life review that opens him to the lives of his family and new friends. Stars Victor Sjöström, Bibi Andersson, Max von Sydow. 90 min. (subtitles)