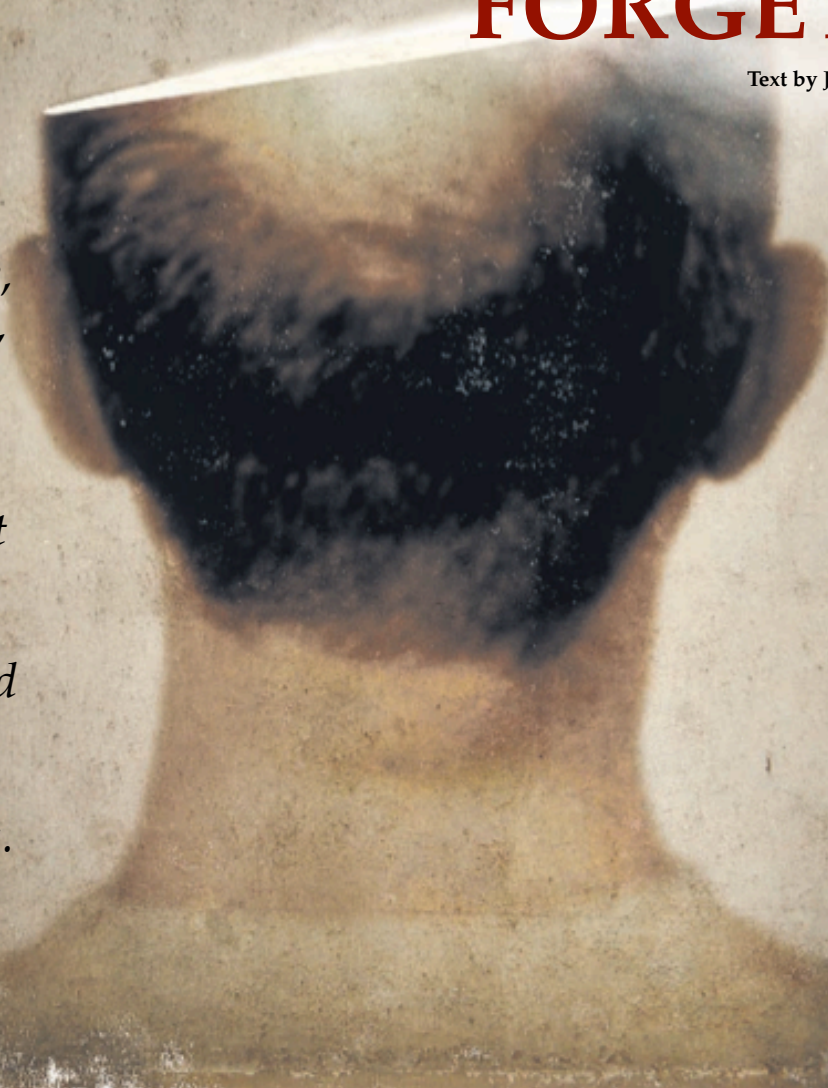


# IS THERE SOMETHING WE'RE FORGETTING?

Text by JULIE SULLIVAN | The Oregonian

*For every misplaced key and forgotten name that comes with age, research shows, our midlife brains are remarkably robust, efficient and better at making judgements and solving problems than younger brains.*



You pause in the gym parking lot, just a momentary hesitation really, when a wise guy quips, “Lose you car?”

“Ha ha, good one,” you say, which it would be if you hadn’t lost your water bottle already this week, twice. And the car keys, which after calls to the Cannon Beach Visitors Center and police turn up four days later in a coat you didn’t remember taking to the beach. (That *you* St. Anthony.) And then there was the appointment for the teenager’s sports physical, scheduled months in advance, pasted on the fridge, punched into the iPhone, which you are talking on the at work when she

calls, furious and alone at the aforementioned physical:

“Mother! Where are you?”

Alas, dear, at midlife.

It’s the era, starting in your 40s and 50s, of lost keys. It’s when the once-photographic memory turns into an old scrapbook with blank spaces where the perfectly apt word, or co-worker’s surname, used to be. Nouns, doctors say, are the first to go. Names of things you *know* you know; but just can’t access.

But is this a temporary glitch in your short-term memory or something truly scary, like Alzheimer’s?

The question increasingly drives the worried well into doctor’s offices to find out. The highest functioning professionals are often the most upset and afraid. There’s reason to wonder. The risk of Alzheimer’s rises sharply after 65, and up to one in every eight baby boomers can expect to develop the disorder in the next 20 years.

“A lot of people are just experiencing normal, age-related changes, but then they see something in the media or experience something and feel a lot of confusion and anxiety about what is happening,” says Dr. Amy Schultz, a clinical geropsychologist in Portland who is also affiliated with

the Providence Brain Institute’s Cognitive Assessment Clinic. Schultz is conducting a series of talks around the Portland area about what is probably normal midlife brain behavior and what might raise red flags.

Brandy Washington of Vancouver was in her early 50s when she realized she felt “spacey” and suddenly couldn’t remember how to spell the simplest words.

C O M P R E H E N S I O N

**1. List the advantages and disadvantages that younger people have? And older people?**

	YOUNGER PEOPLE	OLDER PEOPLE
ADVANTAGES		
DISADVANTAGES		

**2. Match the vocabulary column with the correct definitions.**

to quip  
 to turn up  
 to turn into  
 apt  
 glitch  
 to drive someone into  
 to find out  
 to wonder  
 disorder  
 baby boom  
 to feel “spacey”

to feel forgetful  
 to make a funny observation  
 a rise in birthrate in the USA after World War 2  
 to reappear  
 a medical condition  
 to change  
 to feel doubt  
 appropriate  
 to discover  
 failure  
 to motivate

3. At what age do people start forgetting things? What are the first things that we start forgetting?

4. Who are the people that are scared the most of these symptoms?

## D I S C U S S I O N

Are you afraid of these age-related changes? What do you think we can do in order to prevent them?

## G O I N G F U R T H E R

**Movie: "Friends with Benefits"**

Who in this movie struggles with memory related diseases? What is the disease?

How does his family cope with it?

Do you agree with the family's point of view when it comes to helping this person? Why (not)?