

## New friendships are bonus of 'Over the Hill' activities

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In the 1985 sci-fi classic film "Cocoon," a group of senior citizens take a dip in an alien pool and emerge feeling young and frisky again. One rejuvenated couple, played by Wilfred Brimley and Maureen Stapleton, discuss the miraculous results: "So you think we're cheating nature?" "Yes." "Well, I'll tell ya, with the way nature's been cheating us, I don't mind cheating her a little."

Since time immemorial, people have been searching for a fountain of eternal youth— be it magical, chemical, surgical or extraterrestrial. But here in our own backyard, a group of local Angelinos seem to have found the secret to feeling young by going back to basics: staying active and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

They call themselves, with tongue firmly in cheek, the "Over the Hill Gang Los Angeles" (OHGLA), a mix of active singles and couples 50 years of age and older. (Not surprisingly, most of the members are somewhat north of 50: the average age is 70. But if "50 is the new 30," then 70 must be the new 50!)

Nobody represents the OHGLA spirit better than its current president (all positions are voluntary), longtime Windsor Square resident Al Mizrahi. A retired dentist with a bright smile and a twinkle in his eye who still teaches two days a week at the USC School of Dentistry, Al looks much younger than his actual age (76 next month). He and wife Patti credit their overall fitness and vitality to healthy living and a positive outlook.

Ten years ago, Al read an article in the Los Angeles Times about a ski club for persons 50 and older called the Over the Hill Gang L.A. He was 65 at the time, and still a very avid skier, but the passing years had left him with fewer buddies his age willing or able to tackle the slopes. So he joined for the skiing, and discovered much more: a wide variety of activities nurturing not only the body, but the soul. Along the way he became a board member, then vice-president, and now president of OHGLA. But for him the most important aspect was connecting with like-minded men and women at a personal level: "These people have become friends I can count on," Al says warmly.



**OVER THE HILL GANG** bicycled around Playa del Rey and on to Imperial Hwy. to visit vintage air museum tour of a DC-3.

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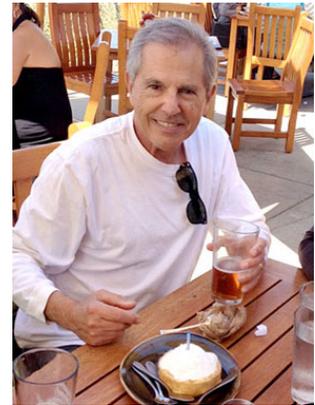
"As the years go by, the group has become even more important." To promote friendship, camaraderie and shared activities, OHGLA and its sister club, Ventura County Over the Hill Gang (VCOTHG) are now opening participation in all events to the membership of both clubs. Approximately 130 members take part in a variety of outdoor activities, including skiing, sailing, hiking, biking and kayaking.

They also enjoy dinners and picnics, art and cultural activities (such as an evening at the Hollywood Bowl coming up on July 10), and travel to interesting destinations (everywhere from Catalina to Costa Rica to China). You can find information on these and many other activities at [www.ohgla.org](http://www.ohgla.org). In L.A., activities are usually moderate in intensity, although they have members who can stay with the heartier types who want more speed or steeper slopes.

But nobody has to participate if the outing holds little interest, and no member is ever left behind. Al emphasizes that if you're a senior seeking people in your age group with whom to enjoy outdoor and social activities, you'll find these folks to be a positive and fun-loving bunch. So what's next for Dr. Al and his OHGLA comrades? Ski season may be over, but how about a hike around Mammoth Lakes? Whitewater rafting in Oregon? Exploring the Channel Island via kayak?

Whatever they might choose to do, two things are clear: 1) Age, like the saying goes, is only a state of mind; and 2) the only thing "Over the Hill" about this gang is where they'll be looking for their next adventure.

***By Melanie Mulligan Guest columnist***



**RETIRED DENTIST**  
Al Mizrahi expanded  
ski group activities.