

7 GREATEST U.S. SPOTS
TO CAMP AND BACKPACK

PLAN YOUR HEALTHY
HAWAIIAN GETAWAY

HOW TO PICK YOUR
PREMIER LEAGUE TEAM

AMERICAN WAY

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

**Jada Pinkett
Smith is**

**TOUGH
AS
NAILS**

The dynamic
actress on
surviving
the streets
and thriving
in Hollywood

AUGUST 2015

"Hollywood scrutiny
has nothing on what
I've survived
just to be here."





Wicked Wisdom

Let me know if this scenario seems familiar:

There was someone in your past who left an indelible mark on you. Perhaps an old fling; maybe an old friend. Maybe it was your frenemy, long before that was a word. You can remember that person with uncanny clarity — how they looked, how they smelled, how they made you feel (for better or for worse) — no matter how many grains of sand have slipped through the hourglass, day after day, year after year, decades later. Then one day you see that person. What you see is curious.

I'm no psychologist, but please allow me to publish my own wicked wisdom on what happens when people and time collide in a most cerebral manner.

In my opinion, our emotional connection to a person from our past cryogenically freezes their image in our minds, so even though you haven't seen Abby or Aaron — or John — in 20 years, there's a subconscious expectation that they'll look exactly how they did 20 years ago. And then you see them. It's at that moment when real beauty — and not the fairy-tale kind — presents itself.

Let's start with the visceral appearance and our reaction.

I was at an American Airlines Marketing Department happy hour the other day at Dave & Buster's. Before I held court on the Pop-A-Shot game, I caught a glimpse of the bar's TV. Although it is 2015, one of the competitors' names at the bottom of the screen made me do a double take, and it made me question whether the Eules, Texas, restaurant had one of those fancy way-back machines.

Roddick/McEnroe.

I looked closer and realized that the names were accurate, but I couldn't understand why 32-year-old Andy Roddick was playing 56-year-old John McEnroe. What's more, since I hadn't watched tennis in a while, I couldn't believe what a 56-year-old Johnny Mac looked like.

"He got old," a very polite, very demure lady in our department quipped as we watched the athletic circus on the screen.

But ol' John was aging well. He was playing a pro 24 years his junior, and he only lost 6-4. Why, then, would the lady make that comment, which, truthfully, in a Vulcan mind meld, I said at the exact same time as she?

You might want to recline your chair for this thesis:

If someone had a — shall we say, disagreeable — personality in our memory, then it doesn't matter if the person was physically good-looking in the past. We'll take that negative image and age him like vinegar 20 years later.

The flip side is if someone was tried-and-true in the past, he'll age like wine.

Take my friend Chris, for instance. We waited tables together at the Hard Rock Cafe in Hollywood in the late '90s. Everybody loved Chris. He was pleasant, affable — a true California free spirit (even though he was originally from the rural South ... his mama raised him right). Time marched on and I moved away. Chris stayed. Almost 15 years passed since we hung out, and when I saw him again for the first time, he looked better at 40-something than he did in his 20s. Not because of clean living, but because he was such a great guy that although the face changed, my perception of him

didn't. I saw what I wanted to see.

Perhaps the best and most apropos example of my theory pertains to our cover subject, Jada Pinkett Smith (page 46). Her backstory, coupled with her career trajectory, will absolutely amaze you. I have a personal story about her.

I was a reporter for *People* magazine back in the day, and I was assigned to cover the *Collateral* movie premiere at the Magic Johnson Theatre in Harlem. It was August 2004. Some of the celebrities on the red carpet were robotic with their answers and couldn't wait to get away from me. Jada, however, looking resplendent in her white dress, planted her feet and affectionately thought out the answers to all my questions.

That was 11 years ago this month.

Eleven years later, Jada remains just as lovable, just as approachable, and just as beautiful as she was that night in New York City. Physical beauty, yes, but it's her oversoul that is overtly pretty, as you'll see by reading Ed Leibowitz's interview.

This month is my 20-year reunion at Orange High School in Cleveland. In true class-of-'95 fashion, the event is being held at the Cleveland Exotic Dance academy. I'm looking forward to putting my theory to the test with the high school friends and frenemies, none of whom I've seen since 1995.

To be continued ...

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