

WFWP USA: I Asked and Received a Wish of A Lifetime!

Shirley Chimes
November 2, 2022



Shirley with her son in London

The greatest relationship in the universe is the parent/child relationship and beyond that is the grandparent/grandchild relationship. Parents represent the present and the children the future. The grandparents represent the past.

"Grandma, I like the way you brush my hair. Grandma, I don't want you to leave. I want you to stay here forever. Mom, you helped relieve a lot of stress for us." I heard these words from my two granddaughters, son and daughter-in-law, when I visited England recently.

My dream to visit my family was arranged by [Wish of a Lifetime](#), - an organization that grants wishes for older adults.

When I initially read the WOL flier in 2020, I told myself that they must have so many requests; they will never pay any attention to mine - to visit my family in England.

Two years later, a friend reminded me I could submit a wish. I did so immediately. The next day I got a call from Wish of a Lifetime, and they interviewed me for an hour. I told them about my life's work on the local, national and international levels and especially about my ladies' organization, the Women's Federation for World Peace, and their projects I have worked with. Several weeks later, they called me again, and the interview continued for another hour.

I was told a committee would review my request. To my delight, a few weeks later, I received a call from Wish of a Lifetime in which they said: "They are so, so happy and excited to work with me."

Through the weeks and months that followed, I learned WOL was founded in 2008 by two-time Olympic skier, World Cup gold medalist, entrepreneur, and former NFL player, Jeremy Bloom as a tribute to his grandmother.

To date, WOL has granted over 2,000 wishes all across America. The wishes are varied and highly unique, but can often be categorized as those that: renew and celebrate passions, reconnect loved ones, commemorate service, or fulfill lifelong dreams.

Wish of a Lifetime is changing how we age, one wish at a time. They grant life-changing wishes to older adults and elevate their stories to inspire people of all ages to redefine how we view aging.

They composed the following short bio of me. I was surprised and happy at the same time:

"Shirley, 74, of Lakewood, Colorado, is the type of person who has dedicated her life to making the world a better place. Having been involved with the Women's Federation for 30 years, Shirley has traveled the world to visit conferences and meet with women from different cultures, backgrounds, ethnicities, and religions to discuss issues that affect women globally and brainstorm solutions. Meeting so many diverse individuals has helped shape Shirley's commitment to fostering growth and change for all. One of Shirley's favorite projects was getting to raise funds to build schools for underserved girls in Africa. Shirley is still volunteering to this day, whether it be a meeting for the Women's Federation, supporting her local art scene, or making Valentine cards for those in her community. Shirley remains an incredibly caring and deserving individual.

In addition to her love for helping people, one of Shirley's proudest titles is that of a grandmother. Shirley deeply cherishes her two granddaughters, who live across the pond in England with her son and daughter-in-law. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Shirley's family has been unable to make the trip to the United States to visit her for over three years. Shirley has longed to reconnect with her loved ones and to travel to England for the first time, somewhere she has never been before. 'Being a grandparent and being separated from your grandkids is heartbreaking. I think of them all the time.'

This September 2022, Wish of a Lifetime from AARP will grant Shirley's wish by sending her to London to stay with her family and spend time with her beloved granddaughters. She most looks forward to seeing London and exploring the beautiful English countryside with her family by her side."

I signed a few release forms and waited patiently for further responses from the WOL team.

On September 13th, the day I left, WOL arranged a ride to the airport. I was greeted by several WOL personnel at the curbside and treated royally by the Denver International Airport staff. Although I did not need a wheelchair, I got one and was whisked off through the various stops to my gate. A WOL volunteer bought me a meal before my flight. I thought I might be anxious to fly after so many years, but I was calm and looking forward to it.



Shirley on her way to the airport

Somehow, British Airways learned about my wish, and ten minutes into my overnight flight, an attendant came to me to say I had an upgrade. Then, I was escorted to first class, where I enjoyed a warm roast beef dinner with generous English compliments. I slept well and arrived at Heathrow refreshed and full of energy. My back did not hurt, and my legs were not swollen. My son met me at Heathrow, and we drove to Birmingham, stopping at Burger King along the way.

Coming from Denver, which is a mile above sea level and has 300 sunny days a year, and arriving at sea level with cold and damp

weather was an adjustment for me. To my delight, the sun came out almost every day, and there was very little rain - only a few sprinkles.

While there, many people asked me about WOL, and they were surprised to know such an organization exists. I told each person how I found them and all the arrangements they made and paid for to make this trip a reality:

- Ride to and from the airport
- Checking my main bag
- Support at the airports
- Flight to and from England
- Money for food
- Two-night stay in Central London
- Photographer
- Commemorative album

Each day was full of activities - to and from school, swimming, kickboxing, playgrounds, birthday parties, visiting two English manors, eating English food and desserts, and especially enjoying my first experience with black tea, milk and sugar with scones, clotted cream, and jam. My first experience eating fish'n chips was a delight.

Queen Elizabeth passed away a few days before I arrived. On the day of her funeral, schools and businesses were closed. Heathrow would not allow flights to arrive or leave during the burial proceedings. We watched her funeral all day. Many pictures of the Queen and tributes to her were everywhere in the city - in business windows, classrooms, etc.

I was able to ride with my son on the top of a London, red, double-decker bus - fulfilling a wish I had long hoped for. As we walked to Buckingham Palace, we passed through a huge park. There were thousands of flower arrangements laying around trees and in other creative ways in the Queen's honor.

I want to thank Wish of a Lifetime (an affiliate of AARP). The experience has been life-changing. It really was a gift and has been a miracle in every way that I will never forget. Thanks again, and thank you for the beautiful commemorative album.

You may wonder - how did this all happen? I made a request and it was granted.

Author's note about making your request: Applicants must be 65 years of age or older and a legal US citizen or resident. Applications can be submitted online at WishofaLifetime.org or by calling 303-954-9144 to request a mailed application.



ABOUT US

Wish of a Lifetime and AARP Join Forces

Stronger Together

In August 2020, Wish of a Lifetime joined forces with AARP, becoming one of its charitable affiliates.



"We've joined forces with the best organization possible to help address the health needs of older people — AARP, with 38 million members. There's a lot that AARP is doing to give dignity to everyone, and to make sure that our older adults are respected, cherished, and supported."

— Jeremy Bloom, Wish of a Lifetime Founder

"By bringing Wish of a Lifetime into the AARP family, AARP believes that its important work can reach more people - both those who want to give help and wish applicants - and ultimately combat the negative effects of isolation, strengthen social ties and intergenerational connections and help wish recipients achieve a lifelong dream."

— Scott Frisch, AARP Executive VP & COO

What does this mean for Wish of a Lifetime?



Harnessing the power of AARP's channels, nationwide network, and nearly 38 million members to help combat the negative effects of social isolation



Bringing a national spotlight to older adults who dream and those who want to help make those dreams come true



Educating about the effects of social isolation, the importance of intergenerational connections, and empowering people to choose how they live as they age



Learn More



More about affiliation from AARP

[VISIT AARP.ORG](#)



A note on affiliation from founder Jeremy Bloom

[READ ON MEDIUM](#)

On August 1, 2020, AARP formalized its affiliation with Wish of a Lifetime. Wish of Lifetime will retain its 501(c)3 status and operate as a separate but affiliated entity of AARP, as Wish of a Lifetime from AARP. Wish of Lifetime staff will continue to be based in Denver, CO.

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