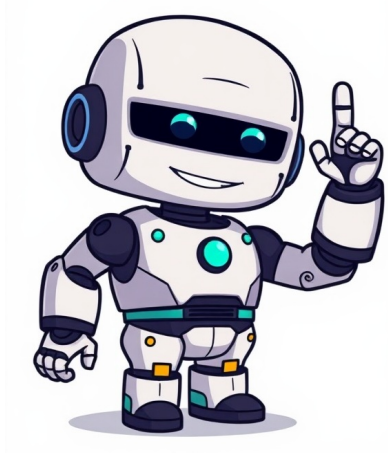


I'm not a robot



























Big Sur, located on the Central California coast, has been a touchstone of alternative culture for decades. In the final episode of the television show Mad Men, Don Draper is at a retreat in Big Sur when he achieves his climactic moment of enlightenment (which turns out to be an idea for a Coke ad that commercializes 1960s idealism). Today Big Sur is still home to plenty of resorts and retreats, including the storied Esalen Institute, which offers self-improvement workshops galore at its cliffside perch overlooking the Pacific Ocean. When LIFE magazine visited Big Sur in 1959, the Esalen Institute was three years from opening, but the coastal community had long been attracting free-thinking types. LIFE's story was headlined "Rugged, Romantic World Apart: Creative Colony Finds a Haven in California's Big Sur," and it offered an explanation of how Big Sur gained its bohemian character: In 1944 Henry Miller, the once-expatriate novelist whose most famous works (Tropic of Cancer, Tropic of Capricorn) are banned in the U.S. as pornographic, settled in Big Sur. Around him, living in tents and shacks, clustered a coterie of young rebels who seemed bent on creating what one reporter called "a cult of sex and anarchy." But the rigors of Big Sur living eventually drove most of the rebels to more casual surroundings. In their place came a calmer breed: dedicated craftsmen who find they work best far from the urban rat-race; others, still more conventional, who have retired, young and old, to Big Sur's tranquility. LIFE's story is richly illustrated with photos by J.R. Eyerman, and to today's viewer it can be remarkable how stately most the images are. Sure, Eyerman photographed a few skinny dippers by the shore and captured an outdoor art class drawing a nude model. He also shows a man teaching yoga to his neighbors long before that practice became popular. But Eyerman's other photos from Big Sur have a Norman Rockwell-like gentility. A group of musicians play chamber music at home. A retired magazine editor enjoys tea with his friends on the terrace. A group of men gathered at a bar are mostly wearing coats and ties. Granted, one of those men is the aforementioned literary rebel Henry Miller (whose years at Big Sur are commemorated there at the Henry Miller Memorial Library—which is proudly not banning any books on its shelves). But even the famously licentious novelist told LIFE that Big Sur at its best was a place "of grandeur and of eloquent silence." If there is a common theme to Eyerman's pictures beyond their location, is it quiet pleasure—the kind that continues to draw visitors to this coastal spot. Douglas Madsen (rear), a sculptor, instructed his neighbors in yoga in Big Sur, California, 1959. J.R. Eyerman/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Writer Henry Miller, 67 (second from left), a longtime Big Sur resident whose presence helped lure others there, held court with friends (from left, poet Eric Barker, sculptor Harry Dick Ross, and archaeologist Giles Greville Healey) at the round bar of the Nepenthe Restaurant, 1959. J.R. Eyerman/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Seating on fallen trees, a group of children listened to 80-odd year old Susan Potter recount tales of Irish folklore, Big Sur, California, 1959. J.R. Eyerman/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock The Hermits of New Camadoli, a Roman Catholic order dedicated to the arts, set up their first monastery outside Italy in Big Sur, 1959. J.R. Eyerman/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Retired American magazine editor and publisher (of Collier's) William Ludlow Chenery (center) and his wife Margaret shared tea with their guests on the patio of their home in Big Sur, California, 1959. J.R. Eyerman/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Author and former diplomat Nicholas Roosevelt (left, rear) played cello as he led a chamber music session at his home, Big Sur, California, 1959. J.R. Eyerman/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Sam Hopkins, 43, rejected the socialite world he grew up in and moved his family to Big Sur, California, 1959. J.R. Eyerman/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Diners watched dancers on the patio of the Nepenthe Restaurant, Big Sur, California, 1959. The restaurant opened in 1949 after the building was purchased from actors Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth, who had used it as a cabin. J.R. Eyerman/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Travel back in time with treasured photos and stories, sent right to your inbox In the spring of 1955, as the Cold War intensified and the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union escalated at a shocking pace, America—as it had many times before—detonated an atomic weapon in the Nevada desert. The test was not especially noteworthy. The weapon's "yield" was not dramatically larger or smaller than that of previous A-bombs: the brighter-than-the-sun flash of light, the mushroom cloud and the staggering power unleashed by the weapon were all byproducts familiar to anyone who had either witnessed or paid attention to coverage of earlier tests. Here, LIFE.com presents pictures made in the Nevada desert by photographer Loomis Dean shortly after a 1955 atomic bomb test. These are not "political" pictures. They are eerily beautiful, unsettling photographs made at the height of the Cold War, when the destructive power of the detonation was jaw-droppingly huge—although miniscule compared to today's truly terrifying thermonuclear weapons. As LIFE told its readers in its May 16, 1955, issue (in which some of these photos appeared): A day after the 44th nuclear test explosion in the U.S. rent the still Nevada air, observers cautiously inspected department store mannequins which were poised disheveled but still haughty on the sand sand in the homes of Yucca Flat. The figures were residents of an entire million-dollar village built to test the effects of an atomic blast on everything from houses to clothes to canned soup. The condition of the figures—one charred, another only scorched, another almost untouched—showed that the blast, which was equivalent to 35,000 tons of TNT, was discriminating in its effects. As one phase of the atomic test, the village and figures help guide civil defense planning and make clear that even amid atomic holocaust careful planning could save lives. Liz Ronk edited this gallery for LIFE.com. Follow her on Twitter @elizabethronk. Remains of a house (built for the test more than a mile from ground zero) after an atomic bomb test, Nevada, 1955. Loomis Dean The LIFE Picture Collection/Shutterstock In 1967 LIFE photographer Co Rentmeester connected with a unit of American paratroopers as they made the first combat jumps of the Vietnam war. The use of paratroopers was part of the incremental escalation that defined the war in Vietnam, and they were deployed in service of America's biggest military operation to that point. But what makes this set of Rentmeester's photos stand out is the intimacy and intensity of his paratrooper portraits, which resonate beyond their moment in history. The operation was important enough that it made the cover of LIFE's March 10, 1967 issue, with a photo of a silhouetted paratrooper leaping from the plane and the headline "Battle Jump: New Tactics Step Up the War." Rentmeester's photos capture the daring of the Second Battalion of the 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment as soldiers descended on Vietnam's dried-up rice paddies during Operation Junction City. The operation was multidivisional assault on the suspected location of the enemy headquarters. The story's opening spread featured close-up photos of two soldiers on their way to the jump: one who had never done anything like this before and one who knew the routine all too well. Baby-faced 19-year-old Pfc. Helmut Schmuck sat wide-eyed on the plane as he anticipated making his first combat jump ever. Then there was Sergeant First Class Leon Hostak, who had been a paratrooper during the Korean War and now was a leader of the young charges. According to LIFE's story, when it came time to jump, Hostak "was practically throwing his troopers out of the plane." The story's text, by Don Moser, described the mix of excitement and dread that preceded the jump; Pfc. William D. Kuhl was bubbling with the excitement of it all. "My mother is going to be proud of me than I am of myself," he was saying. "Then he laughed and started to sing the paratroopers' song. "Gory gory, what a helluva way to die," he bellowed, but the rest just got quiet and curled up inside themselves. All 600 paratroopers landed safely (including Kuhl, who snapped a photo on the way down for LIFE), despite encountering some initial sniper fire. But the mission itself was an anticlimax. The troops searched for a week before making major contact with enemy soldiers and "mostly pursued elusive shadows through the jungle," LIFE reported. Both sides suffered casualties, and the soldiers did not find the headquarters they sought. The last words of the story, attributed to an unnamed and frustrated planner of the mission, were "It's a damned rough game." Pfc. Helmut Schmuck, 19, a paratrooper of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, prepared for his first jump in combat, Vietnam, 1967. Co Rentmeester/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock An American paratrooper of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, jumped out of a C-130 plane and into a war zone in South Vietnam, February 22, 1967. Co Rentmeester/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock The back of the helmet of American helicopter pilot John Rion had a sticker that depicted the 'Peanuts' comicstrip character Snoopy, Vietnam, 1967. Co Rentmeester/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock In the first US combat parachute assault since the Korean War, paratroopers of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade descend on South Vietnam, February 22, 1967. Co Rentmeester/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock A photo taken by Pfc. William Kuhl of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade during the first paratrooper jump of the Vietnam War, February 22, 1967. Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Paratrooper of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, on a mission in Vietnam, 1967. Co Rentmeester/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division set up a howitzer for Operation Junction City during the Vietnam war, February 1967. A CH-47 Chinook helicopter is in flight. Co Rentmeester/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock The Second Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, Vietnam, 1967. Co Rentmeester/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Paratroopers of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, was through a stream in South Vietnam, February 22, 1967. Co Rentmeester/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock US soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, 1st Division, aimed an M60 machine gun out of a foxhole during Operation Junction City in the Vietnam war, February 1967. Co Rentmeester/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock From front left: Specialist 4th class Raymond Hill, team leader Sergeant Reed Cundiff, and Specialist 4th class Manuel Moya, Vietnam, 1967. Co Rentmeester/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Manuel Moya (left) and Reed Cundiff of a U.S. Army Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol of the 173rd Airborne, South Vietnam, February 1967. Co Rentmeester/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Portrait of Manuel Moya of a US Army Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) of the 173rd Airborne as he sat, in camouflage, in a helicopter, Vietnam, February 1967. Co Rentmeester/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Travel back in time with treasured photos and stories, sent right to your inbox In 1947 Jane Greer starred opposite Robert Mitchum in the film noir classic Out of the Past, and the success of that film helped earn her a place on the cover of LIFE. That movie was a crowning moments of a career that had elements of a film noir story on its own. The actress, born Bettjanne Greer, had actually been in LIFE magazine twice before that '47 cover. In 1942 she appeared, unnamed, as one of the young modeling the uniforms of the W.A.A.C.s, the new all-female military unit that came into being during World War II. She got the modeling job because her mother worked in the War Department. The very businesslike picture, included in this story, is not the sort of photograph that you would necessarily expect to draw attention to a young woman—but it hit the radar of singer Rudy Vallee. According to the magazine, Vallee "tried unsuccessfully to worm Miss Greer's address out of LIFE." He did connect with Greer eventually when she came to Hollywood, resulting in a brief marriage between the two. She and Vallee separated after three months. The uniform modeling job, which also made it to newsreels, had led to a screen test with David O. Selznick, reported LIFE. But "Miss Greer signed up elsewhere, however—with Howard Hughes." In its 1947 story LIFE described her audition for Hughes: She prepared for her first interview with Mr. Hughes by carefully learning the script with which she had heard he tested all aspiring stars. It was a comedy, The Awful Truth, and, because Howard Hughes is a little deaf, Miss Greer read it at the top of her lungs. Hughes was charmed. And this is when the noir aspects of Greer's story really took hold. Greer not only signed with Hughes but for time was in a relationship with the eccentric billionaire. She eventually bought her way out of Hughes' contract and caught on with RKO. LIFE wrote about Greer again for a story about starlets in training, and that studio soon gave Greer the female lead in Out of the Past. By that time she was also married to attorney Edward Lasker, and seemingly set up for superstardom. But then who should come out of Greer's past but Howard Hughes, now feeling jealous toward Greer. He bought RKO, which meant that Hughes now controlled her contract. "He said to me, while you are under contract to me, you will never work," Greer recounted in an interview decades later. "And I said, 'But that will be the end of my career.' And he said, 'I guess it will, won't it?'" Hughes didn't completely end her career, but he put a damper on it at a time she should have been reaching new heights. Eventually Greer got herself out of her RKO contract and returned to regular work, including multiple appearances in the 1950s on The Ford Television Theatre. And she enjoyed a late-career revival in the 1980s, including an appearance in Against All Odds, the 1984 remake of Out of the Past that starred Jeff Bridges and featured Greer as the mother of the movie's female lead, played by Rachel Ward. Greer also had a six-episode run on the prime-time soap opera Falcon Crest, and appeared in three episodes of the David Lynch television show Twin Peaks. She died in 2001 of complications from cancer, just shy of her 77th birthday. This montage was the opening photo of a LIFE story on actress Jane Greer in a 1947 issue of LIFE; the caption said that she was "dreaming that she is pursued by the men she has been bumping off all day on the movie set." Peter Stackpole/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Jane Greer (left), with Jeff Bridges and Swoosie Kurtz, costars in the 1984 film Against All Odds, which was a remake of Greer's 1947 classic Out of the Past. DMI The following is adapted from the introduction to LIFE's newscspical issue 100 Photographs: The Most Important Pictures of All Time and the Stories Behind Them, available at newsstands and online: Photos are proof. We know this from our own lives. Here's what dad looked like when he was in high school. Look at this cake I baked. I ran into Taylor Swift at the mall—see, here we are in a selfie. A telling taunt of our age is "photos or it didn't happen." The same holds true for the wider world. The pictures that really matter are the ones that prove something, that show us a definitive truth, that make us understand. Here's what a human fetus looks like. Here's the glory of Muhammad Ali. Here's the shock we felt when the World Trade Center Towers collapsed. In our quest to select the most important 100 photographs ever, we looked for pictures that demonstrated something important and meaningful. Some capture a news event or show the brutality of war. Others crystallize a particular cultural moment. Some take us on a fantastic voyage—up into space, perhaps, or inside the human body. Some photographs matter because they showed what cameras are capable of and illustrate the extraordinary power of photography as a medium. The oldest photo we chose was the first one ever taken, of a French landscape in the 1820s. The process involved chemical applications and a multi-hour exposure that left an impression on a pewter plate. That grainy photo of the view outside the photographer's window signaled our species' transition to the world of pictures. Thanks to the internet and our smartphones, we now see more images each day than the people who lived in a world of paintings and prints saw in a lifetime. Most of these photographs we flip past and forget. Others linger. The best reorient our understanding. The rare ones—the ones we feature in this special issue—change how we see the world. Here are a few selections from LIFE's new special issue 100 Photographs: The Most Important Pictures Ever and the Stories Behind Them (clockwise from top left) Joe Rosenthal/AP/Shutterstock; Robert Beck/Sports Illustrated/Getty; Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, [LC-DIG-fsa-Bb29516]; NASA Regarded as the first photo ever taken, this image of a French countryside was achieved when Joseph Nicéphore Niepce placed a thin coating of light-sensitive phosphorus derivative on a pewter plate and then placed the plate in a camera obscura and set in on a windowsill for a long exposure. Joseph Niepce/Hulton/Getty Lewis Hine's photos such as this one of "breaker boys" who picked pieces of slate from conveyor belts as freshly broken pieces of coal rolled by, helped raise support for child labor laws. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, National Child Labor Committee Collection, [LC-DIG-nclc-01130] In a defining image of the Vietnam war, the wounded Marine Gunnery Sgt. Jeremiah Purdie (center, with bandaged head) reached toward a stricken comrade after a fierce firefight south of the DMZ, October 1966. Larry Burrows/Life Pictures/Shutterstock Egged on by the bogus claims of the outgoing 45th president, a mob stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021 in an historic attempt to disrupt the tallying of electoral college votes. Tayfun Coskun/Anadolu Agency/Getty The Hubble Space Telescope's photo known as Pillars of Creation captured the conditions in which new stars are born. NASA, ESA, and the Hubble Heritage Team Larry Burrows (1926-1971) was born in London to a hardworking railway employee, and as Larry's Britishness never waned, neither did his industry. Early on as he was learning his craft, he thought nothing of repeating an entire day's work to get the job done right. Time spent in the museums of Europe served him well, honing his own artist's eye—and a mastery appreciation for color—for his life's work: the battlefields. From Suez to Lebanon, Cyprus to the Congo, he became versed in the cruelties of war. Then, in 1962, he began nine years of documenting a beautiful land seized by war: Vietnam. His images are nothing short of timeless. "One Ride with Yankee Papa 13" has been called perhaps "the greatest photo-essay ever made." After Burrows's death, LIFE Managing Editor Ralph Graves stated, "I do not think it is demeaning to any other photographer in the world for me to say that Larry Burrows was the single bravest and most dedicated war photographer I know of." Paraleptic Lau Nguyen, 10, Hanoi, 1970. (Photo by Larry Burrows/The LIFE Picture Collection © Meredith Corporation) This image of a North Vietnamese atrocity has been used by some as a counterpoint to the My Lai massacre. In any case, it remains a powerful human document. The boy at right was paralyzed by shrapnel and shipped to America for surgery. He spent three years there with a foster family before being sent back to Vietnam. By then, he could speak only English and could walk only with crutches; he had become an enigma to his family. To Larry Burrows, "Lau's is not the greatest tragedy in Vietnam. But as one looks at pictures of this courageous little chap, one has to wonder whether the ultimate agony of this war is not seen in his eyes." —Adapted from The Great LIFE Photographers Travel back in time with treasured photos and stories, sent right to your inbox About The Collection The LIFE Picture Collection is the visual chronicle of the 20th century and one of the most important photographic archives in the United States. From 1936 to 2000, LIFE commissioned more than 10 million photographs across 120,000 stories. At its height, LIFE magazine's incomparable images and essays reached 1 of 3 American readers. The original prints, negatives, and associated manuscripts remain in Dotdash Meredith's LIFE Picture Collection, an unprecedented cultural asset with millions of untold stories and unseen images. We work with individuals and organizations to research, license, publish, exhibit, and reproduce our imagery for new audiences. If you're interested in partnering with us, please review the information on this page. Multiple exposure photograph of LIFE photographer Marie Hansen handling a camera, running & crouching as she would do on assignment. (Photo by Gjon Mili/The LIFE Picture Collection © Meredith Corporation) Using Our Content LIFE is happy to work with you to research and secure licenses and permissions for our materials; please see categories below. Contact us via email at [email protected] or fill out this form for next steps. We will respond within five business days. Editorial LicensingSecure permissions to reproduce LIFE images or text in a book, film, display, magazine, website, or other editorial project. Brand & Merchandise LicensingOur team can work with you on licenses to reproduce LIFE's iconic logo or images on a wide range of merchandise and products. ExhibitionsInformation on borrowing our prints and materials for museum and gallery display. ResearchWe can assist with researching text and images in our vast archive. Some research fees may apply depending on the request. OtherDon't see your request described above? Please explain your interest in the form below. How To Search You can view portions of our collection via the following sites: LIFE Picture Collection on ShutterstockNearly one million images from the archive are available via our agent, Shutterstock. Please fill out this form to be connected with a Shutterstock editorial research specialist.Visit Site LIFE Photo Collection on GoogleSearch millions of images from the Picture Collection. Most were never published and are now available for the first time through the joint work of LIFE and Google.Visit Site LIFE Magazine Issues on Google BooksEvery weekly issue of LIFE for its complete run from 1936-1972 is available via our partnership with Google. You can search by keyword (make sure you select "Search All Issues" under the search box), browse by year or peruse topics at the bottom of the page. Each issue has list of linked contents and a tag cloud under the contents to make finding and reading items easier. (LIFE also existed as a monthly from 1978 to 2000. You can view those issues via EBSCO.) Visit Site LIFE Records at the New-York Historical SocietyAlthough the LIFE Picture Collection retains prints, negatives, caption files, and other materials associated with the production of LIFE Magazine, the New-York Historical Society is home to the Time Inc. Corporate Archives, which contain LIFE editors' files, correspondence, and other print and manuscript materials. You can view finding aids and more information for that collection in the link below.Visit Site Additional Collections in addition to its core LIFE photographic archive, the Picture Collection has also acquired a number of photgraphic collections over the years, including: DMI CollectionThis archive from the former David McCough Agency chronicles red carpet, music, and other celebrity events from the late 1970s through the early 2000s. You can view samples of the collection via our partnerships with Google Arts & Culture or Shutterstock. Dahlstrom CollectionAbout 7000 glass plate negatives of New York and the mid-Atlantic region taken by photographers Wallace Levison and George Brainerd from approximately the 1890s through 1910s. You can view samples via our agent Shutterstock. Hugo Jaeger Photographic ArchiveColor photographs of Europe primarily during the Nazi era taken by one of Adolf Hitler's personal photographers. These images document rallies, private events of National Socialist leadership, and important photographs of ghettos and concentration camps. You can view samples via our our partnerships with Google Arts & Culture. For more on the history of the collection and its acquisition, please see this LIFE.com feature. Mansell CollectionAssembled by a London collector and organized by subject, this archive is particularly focused on art and culture. It contains more than 600,000 pieces—prints, daguerreotypes, glass plates, and other formats—from the 1870s-1940s. You can view samples of the collection via our partnerships with Google Arts & Culture or Shutterstock. Pix Inc. Photographic ArchivePrints from a photographic agency founded by LIFE photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt and others in the late 1930s. You can view samples of this archive via our partnership with Google Arts & Culture. The following is from the introduction to LIFE's special tribute issue, Jimmy Carter: A Noble Life, which is available online and at newsstands. When James Earl Carter died at his home in Plains, Georgia, on December 29, 2024, he was 100, and many people who as 18-year-olds had voted for or against him in the 1970s were contemplating retirement—an unthinkable concept for Carter. To the end, the nation's longest-lived President remained passionately engaged in American life and global affairs, his body buffeted by illness but his intelligence undimmed. Jimmy Carter's protean career saw soaring triumphs and crushing defeats, but one theme ran through it like a river—a call to service, deeply rooted in devout Christian faith. He'd risen meteorically to the White House, suffered a precipitous fall, then rebuilt his legacy through good works at home and abroad, whether it was promoting public health and welfare or safeguarding the environment or protecting human rights. His dogged resilience was a lesson in the human capacity for renewal. It seemed Jimmy Carter would go on forever. He was 96 when he and his wife, Rosalynn, appeared with three other former Presidents and their first ladies—the Clintons, Bushes, and Obamas—in a two-ad campaign urging Americans to sign up for the COVID-19 vaccine in March 2021. One spot showed clips of the couples receiving their shots; in the other, the ex-Presidents stood together, each addressing the camera. It was Carter's second time in the news that week. Days earlier, he'd released a statement blasting Georgia Republicans for a slate of measures restricting absentee ballots and eliminating Sunday voting, widely seen as a reaction to GOP losses in his traditionally red home state. Georgia had favored Joe Biden in the 2020 election and sent Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock to the U.S. Senate, partly on the strength of mail-in and Sunday votes from majority Black districts. "I am disheartened, saddened, and angry," said Carter, who had backed both senators and endorsed Biden. "We must not promote confidence among one segment of the electorate by restricting the participation of others." Carter became such a fixture in public life, it was hard to believe he'd burst onto the national scene seemingly out of nowhere in 1976 to wrest the presidency from Gerald Ford. A polarizing war, racial division, and Watergate had left the nation starving for change—and the unpretentious governor/peanut farmer from Plains, Georgia, fit the bill. Physically unprepossessing, Carter was hardly magnetic in stump speeches, but he won 297 electoral votes, 50 percent of the popular vote, and on Inauguration Day became the first incoming President to walk from the Capitol to the White House. In the Oval Office, Carter saw himself as a technocratic problem solver, but he was an insular President, reliant on a tight inner circle of friends and advisers nicknamed the Georgia Mafia. Bluntly honest, he seemed incapable of schmoozing legislators. Still, backed by a Democratic Congress, Carter could claim substantial achievements, including enacting strong new pollution controls, bolstering consumer protections, establishing the Energy and Education departments, and appointing many female and Black federal judges. And then there was his crowning foreign policy triumph, brokering peace between Israel and Egypt. Menachem Begin and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat—the Camp David Accords. But other crises overwhelmed Carter's presidency: runaway inflation, energy shortages, and the humiliating hostage standoff with Iran. In 1980, Carter lost to Ronald Reagan in an epic landslide, 489 electoral votes to 49; he returned to Plains depressed, and roundly dismissed as a failure. As it turned out, he was just getting started. Other one-term Presidents have enjoyed distinguished second acts. John Quincy Adams served 18 years in the House as a fierce abolitionist; William Howard Taft became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. But Carter's four-decade post-presidency, the longest in American history, was unmatched for its breadth and depth of accomplishment. Much of it sprang from the Carter Center, the nonprofit he and Rosalynn started in 1982, which has launched programs in 80 countries to promote health, sanitation, economic justice, and democracy. Carter became a leading authority on election integrity, roaming the globe to monitor voting. His most visible humanitarian war, though, was when he rolled up his sleeves and built houses with Habitat for Humanity, helping to provide some 4,400 families with safe, affordable shelter. Carter won hearts around the world with his grace in the face of a 2015 cancer diagnosis—melanoma had metastasized and spread to his brain. He thought he had weeks to live but recovered and kept going. Social media immortalized him as a humanitarian action hero—a viral meme depicted him on the job with Habitat, hammer in hand, captioned, "You May Be Badass, But You'll Never Be 91-Year-Old Jimmy Carter Battling Cancer While Making a House for the Unfortunate Badass!" Even in his final years, Carter continued to show up for his convictions and his community. In May 2022, he filed a friend of the court brief to prevent a road being built through an Alaskan refuge. The following year, he and Rosalynn surprised attendees of the annual Peanut Festival in Plains when they waved to the crowd from a car. It would be the beloved couple's last appearance at the event. Rosalynn died on November 19, 2023, at age 96. Carter's tribute to his wife of 77 years summed up his own character as well. "She gave me wise guidance and encouragement when I needed it. As long as Rosalynn was in this world, I knew someone loved and supported me." Here are a selection of photos from LIFE's special tribute issue to Jimmy Carter. Carter met with Israel's Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat of Egypt at Camp David, 1978. The agreements that resulted from the meetings, known as the Camp David Accords, led to a historic peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. Everett/Shutterstock Even before his Habitat for Humanity days, Jimmy Carter enjoyed building things. Here the former President made use of the woodworking tools given to him as a going away gift from his Cabinet and staff. Carter was sanding a table he built for Rosalynn to use as a typewriter stand. Bettmann/Getty Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, visited children suffering from schistosomiasis during their Feb. 15, 2007, trip to Nasarawa North, Nigeria. The Carters traveled to the community to bring national attention to the country's need to make disease prevention methods and treatments with the medicine praziquantel more accessible in its rural and impoverished communities. Emily Staub/The Carter Center Jimmy Carter helped an Egyptian voter to cast his ballot at a polling station in Cairo on May 24, 2012 during the country's second day of the country's first free presidential election. Representatives from the Carter Center came to the country to serve as election monitors. Wissam Saleh/AFP/Getty In 2010 the PBS program Nature visited what remained of the legendary Cabo Blanco Fishing Club in Peru. The club was known for the massive fish that its members once pulled from the nearby waters. Those waters teemed with marlin and tuna and other big fish because that was where two major ocean currents came together, the chilly Humboldt Current and the warmer Pacific Equatorial Current. This meeting had the effect of driving plankton to the surface and creating an all-you-can-eat buffet for its larger predators. People had such an easy time finding trophy fish that the spot gained the nickname Marlin Boulevard. In 1953 Alfred C. Glassell Jr., a Texas oilman who was one of the founders of the Cabo Blanco Fishing Club, reeled in a black marlin that weighed a record 1,560 pounds. His catch still stands as the mark for that kind of fish. Glassell's long wrestling match with his marlin was so momentous that footage of it was used in the 1958 film version of Old Man and the Sea. That catch was obviously extreme, but it was also representative of the kind of mammoth fish that found in historic numbers at Cabo Blanco. Back then, at least, When Nature went to Cabo Blanco nearly 60 years after that record catch, reporters found a club that had been abandoned and its fishing waters depleted. Here was the explanation for what happened: In the years that followed Glassell's record-breaking catch, a dramatic increase in the commercial fishing of anchovies, which are often used for fishmeal or bait, led to a significant decline in this important billfish food source. According to some, a particularly severe El Niño event in the Pacific likely compounded their scarcity. In 1970, the Cabo Blanco Fishing Club finally closed its doors, due to the military rule of General Juan Velasco Alvarado and the hostile environment toward North Americans his policies engendered. The giant billfish were gone, and so were the tourists. LIFE magazine was fortunate enough to visit Cabo Blanco in 1959, when the club was still in its heyday. Staff photographer Frank Scherschel captured the fisherman out at sea and along the shore. He documented one boat bringing in a 337-pound tuna—which was no record-setter, but still plenty big. Scherschel showed the collection of marlin tails in the club parking lot, and the club's board of big catches. The club also had on display its first thousand-pound catch, reeled in by Glassell in 1952 (his record-setting marlin the next year was donated to the Smithsonian). Cabo Blanco was enough of a hot spot that it reportedly attracted the likes of Marilyn Monroe, Ernest Hemingway, John Wayne, Paul Newman down to Peru to fish and/or enjoy the scene. While that heyday is long gone, some people still head to Cabo Blanco where, according to the travel blog Trans-American journey, the main recreational activity is now surfing. When people do fish, they are mainly coming away those little anchovies, which can fit in the palm of your hand. In 1968 LIFE magazine summed up the appeal of French philosopher and author Albert Camus with a single sentence: "Camus looked directly into the darkness as saw sun—the human spirit." The line came from a review of Camus' book "Lyrical and Critical Essays." And the fact that LIFE was reviewing such books at all is a throwback to a time when mainstream American media regularly chronicled the doings of French intellectuals. LIFE ran its biggest story on Camus in October 1957, right around the time he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for fictional works such as The Stranger, The Plague and The Fall, and philosophical writings such as "The Myth of Sisyphus." Camus was a mere 44 years old at the time, and he remains the second-youngest person to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature, after Rudyard Kipling. LIFE's 1957 story about Camus carried the headline "Action-Packed Intellectual" and began with the note that he "jealously guards his privacy." But the author relented enough to allow LIFE staff photographer Loomis Dean a rare window into his life. Dean documented Camus at his publishing office, at home with his family, and preparing to direct a staging of his play Caligula. Camus declared to LIFE, "I consider myself an artist first, almost exclusively. What is an artist? Principally a vital force, and of that, frankly, I think I have almost too much. It wears me out." The most famous photo from Dean's shoot—which is also one of the most popular images in LIFE's online print store—is of Camus standing on the balcony of his Paris publishing offices. Camus looks like an aviator of 1950s intellectual cool. He even takes a drag on a cigarette, a throwback to the days when smoking was less taboo. In the original story the image of Camus on the balcony ran with this quote from him: "I don't like to work sitting down. I like to stand up—even at my desk. I probably need to wear myself out." It's the kind of intellectual who could become popular—one who doesn't take anything sitting down. French author and philosopher Albert Camus stands with an unidentified woman and reads one of a number of letters on a balcony outside his publishing office, Paris, 1957. Loomis Dean/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock Albert Camus smoked a cigarette outside Theatre des Mathurins, where the rehearsals of his play Caligula were taking place, 1957. Loomis Dean/Life Picture Collection/Shutterstock

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