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## **Lonnie Ali Speaks Out About The Impact Taking On The Caregiver Role Has Had On Her Relationship With Husband Muhammad Ali In A New, Exclusive Interview With AARP Bulletin**

See The Greatest and His Wife Pose for the Cover of AARP Bulletin's June Issue; Exclusive New Video and Photos of the Ali Family in their Home Available at [www.aarp.org/bulletin](http://www.aarp.org/bulletin)

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 2, 2014)** – The Ali caregiving story is about love, companionship and devotion. It is the story of a brave spiritual couple joining hands and going the distance in a difficult fight against an insidious disease, Parkinson's. But perhaps most importantly, it is the story of a resilient woman serving as the voice, guiding light and conscience for an all-but-silenced superstar athlete and civil rights activist.

In a rare and candid interview at the couple's desert home in Phoenix, Arizona, wife Lonnie Ali opens up exclusively to *AARP Bulletin* about the challenges that come with caring for the man known as "The Greatest," Muhammad Ali and the impact taking on the role of caregiver has had on their relationship. Discussing everything from how the couple has dealt with Parkinson's disease over the years to building a new kind of relationship every day, Mrs. Ali offers insight into the round-the-clock life of caregivers.

As the primary caregiver of the boxing legend, Lonnie is every bit the inspiration her husband is to the more than 42 million Americans in this same role. And given newly released reports from **AARP** and the **Associated Press**, which finds that nearly two-thirds of spousal caregivers admit it causes real stress on their family, her story is one of urgency, importance and relevance to families across the nation.

The following are excerpts from the June issue of *AARP Bulletin's* feature story, *Caring for the Champ*, in homes now and available online at [www.aarp.org/bulletin](http://www.aarp.org/bulletin):

### **On the Impact Being a Caregiver Has Had on Their Relationship**

"The hardest part for any caregiver, whether it is a child, parent or spouse, is the relationship change."

"The relationship changes overtime with the illness. Physically, [patients] are not as mobile; they are not able to do things with you like they used to. The medications might affect their cognitive ability. They may not be able to speak as well...that is where you [transition] from a wife or a husband to a care partner or caregiver."

### **On Muhammad Ali's Positive Outlook**

"I am so fortunate. I have a husband who doesn't complain about anything. He is not a moaner, a whiner or a poor-me kind of person. Muhammad has learned how to not sweat the small stuff. He is amazing that way."

"Parkinson's has taken away a lot from this man—a lot that would put people in bed, make them cover their heads and never look up. He has a lot to be depressed about...But I think he is secure in who he is, and about his place in history. That's not to say that Parkinson's hasn't changed him—it has. But he still has enough sense of self and dignity that he maintains."

### **On Dealing with Parkinson's Disease**

"Everything now is about protecting him and making sure he is healthy...When there is influenza, we don't go to movies. We don't want him exposed."

"This is the beauty of Muhammad. He has made this illness, as horrible as it is, as much as it has taken away from him, serve him in some way."

"If there was ever anyone who always lands on his feet and comes out smelling like a rose, it is Muhammad. It is his remarkable attitude toward life. He never has let anything stand in his way."

"We are on this journey for a reason, I know that—whether it was to bring attention to this illness [or] whether it was to save his mortal soul."

*Additional information and resources for caregivers are available on AARP's online Caregiving Resource Center ([www.aarp.org/caregiving](http://www.aarp.org/caregiving)). Both Jon Saraceno, the author of AARP Bulletin's story *Caring for the Champ*, and AARP's Family & Caregiving expert Amy Goyer, are available for interviews upon request.*

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## About AARP

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse. We advocate for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name as well as help our members obtain discounts on a wide range of products, travel, and services. A trusted source for lifestyle tips, news and educational information, AARP produces AARP The Magazine, the world's largest circulation magazine; AARP Bulletin; [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org); AARP TV & Radio; AARP Books; and AARP en Español, a Spanish-language website addressing the interests and needs of Hispanics. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. The AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org).

## Media Contact

Michelle Alvarez  
[malvarez@aarp.org](mailto:malvarez@aarp.org)  
(202) 434-2506  
[@AARPMedia](#)

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