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## “I Definitely Would Have Quit.” Melissa McCarthy Explains How Her Mom’s Support “Changed the Course of My Life”

The Emmy-Winning Actress Dishes on What it Means to Get Older, Working with Senior Citizens and How Her ‘Crazy’ Mom Helped Her Achieve Stardom

**WASHINGTON, DC**—Melissa McCarthy’s mom, Sandy, has a legitimate claim to the title of “World’s Most Loving Parent.” In an exclusive and emotional mother-daughter interview with *AARP The Magazine*, Melissa reveals details of her wild years as teenager and as a upstart on the New York City comedy scene, and the role her mom played in keeping her grounded and true to her passion during her years of near poverty. The actress also shares details of her marriage and family, her controversial appearances on *Saturday Night Live*, why getting older is a good thing, and her upcoming projects.

McCarthy was raised in rural Illinois where her family went to church on Sundays, always said Grace before dinner and cared for abandoned kittens. So it came as a surprise when she told her mother that she was dropping out of college and heading to New York with only \$45 in her pocket.

“We just said, ‘If she doesn’t want to go to college, OK. Let’s let her give this new thing a try,’” says McCarthy’s mom, Sandy. “Which is kind of terrible parental advice,” McCarthy notes, “but also the greatest thing I could have possibly asked for... A normal parent might have said, ‘You’re insane.’ Instead, this maniac kept saying, ‘OK, good luck. Let me know what play you’re doing.’ I was, like, ‘My mother’s crazy!’”



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More than a decade later, Melissa McCarthy is now one of the highest-paid and most sought-after actresses in Hollywood. She won an Emmy Award for the sitcom *Mike & Molly*, broke into film with her Oscar-nominated role in *Bridesmaids*, and made the entire country laugh out loud with her performances on *Saturday Night Live* as former White House press secretary, Sean “Spicey” Spicer.

Reflecting on how her mom helped her get to where she is today, McCarthy says, “I don’t know how you did it, Mom. I would have said, ‘This is silly. You’re not going to become an actor...’ The fact that you didn’t give me guilt changed the course of my life. Because if I’d been guilted out, I definitely would have quit.”

Now approaching age 50, McCarthy muses on the type of person she hopes to be when she’s her mom’s age. “I hope a crazy one,” she exclaims. “I always say, ‘Once I hit 70, it’s going to be all catfats and turbans and big wacky glasses.’ I’m more than halfway there. I see these years ahead as a time to say, ‘What does it matter? You want to wear daisy prints? Who cares!’ Getting older means knowing yourself, and if you know yourself, express it. That ripples out. It makes the world a happier place. When you’re in line for coffee and the older lady in front of you has a daisy-print blouse and a smile on her face and something to say about the world, you feel the magic of it.”

The following are excerpts from *ATM*’s April/May 2018 cover story featuring Melissa McCarthy and her mom, Sandy, available in homes starting in April and available online now at [www.aarp.org/magazine/](http://www.aarp.org/magazine/).

### **Selections from Melissa & Sandy McCarthy’s Cover Story in *AARP The Magazine*’s April/May Issue**

#### **McCarthy’s feelings on getting older and approaching age 50:**

MM: “I’ve never minded getting older... I’ve never had that thing of, ‘Why can’t I still be 35?’ The older you are, the more interesting you are as a character. There’s a whole life history and knowledge of the world and self-possession that come from someone who has seen more. That experienced point of view is always more exciting. Yes, things may start to sag and shift, but the older you are, the wiser, the funnier, the smarter you are. You become more you.”

### **Discussing her younger self:**

MM: "In your 20s, oftentimes you don't have anything else to worry about other than your narcissistic self...You cry if you don't have the right shirt. You cry if you have work. You cry if you don't have work. It's the worst night of your life if you can't get in to see some band."

MM: "I knew I wanted something, but I didn't know exactly what...Way longer than I should have been, I was looking to my parents for help when I couldn't quite make it."

### **On the support that her mother provided in her younger years:**

MM: "I don't know how you did it, Mom... I would have said, 'This is silly. You're not going to become an actor. The odds of this are ridiculous, and you should move home and knock it off.' But you'd just send me 70 bucks, 200 bucks. The fact that you didn't give me guilt changed the course of my life. Because if I'd been guilted out, I definitely would have quit."

SM: "As long as you had a place to live and a bank for depositing a check, I knew you were trying...You always knew who you were, and I knew you'd be fine."

### **On working with senior citizens when she was in high school:**

MM: "I straight-up loved being with people over 65... because I'd instantly get perspective on the not-so-well-formed experience I was currently having. When somebody who's 80 tells you it's going to be OK, you take that in."

### **On playing the role of Sean 'Spicey' Spicer:**

MM: "I think people just needed an outlet and a release and something to laugh at."

### **On living so close to her parents, now that they've moved to Los Angeles:**

MM: "It's been the first time we've lived in the same city since I was 18, and it just feels like heaven. When parents live far away and they come visit, you do things together and it's great. But to be able to do the stupid everyday stuff—let's go for coffee, let's have breakfast, or come over and play rummy or Uno with the kids and try my bean soup—it's absolutely the greatest thing ever."

### **McCarthy's take on what it means to be a plus-size woman in Hollywood:**

MM: "I just find it dumb and boring. I really do. No one's asking a man, how do you keep your legs in shape? Which I've been asked. I think every time we categorize people—by weight, by race, by gender—we put them in boxes and it's not a good thing for the world."

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### **About AARP The Magazine**

*With more than 38 million readers, AARP The Magazine is the nation's largest circulation magazine – and the definitive lifestyle publication – for Americans 50 and older. AARP The Magazine delivers targeted content in three demographic versions – for readers age 50 to 59, 60 to 69 and 70-plus – including health and fitness features, financial guidance, consumer information and tips, celebrity interviews, and book and movie reviews. AARP has been publishing a magazine for members since its founding in 1958. AARP The Magazine is published bimonthly in print and continually online. Learn more at [www.aarp.org/magazine/](http://www.aarp.org/magazine/).*

### **About AARP**

*AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence and nearly 38 million members, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also produces the nation's largest circulation publications: AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org) or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.*

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