

Survive and Thrive September 2023: “I Want to Be a Farmer, a Garbageman, or Tom Brady”

Dear Survivor,

Life is full of pressures, and they don't lessen over time. Life doesn't get easier. [Getting older isn't for the faint of heart.](#)

In high school or college, we're asked what we want to do. Not an easy question to answer. The only time it's easy to answer that question is when you're a kid. “A Farmer, a garbage man, Mrs. Smith, my first-grade teacher, a fireman, Tom Brady...” They just roll off the tongue with conviction when you're a child. In my conversation with you, we were laughing, “I'm still trying to figure it out,” you said.



By JACEK SKROK @ SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Which got me thinking, “What kind of investor do you want to be?” It's funny (not that funny), but when we look back at our “best” investments some of the good ones are from what we didn't do. Take your house, for example. After taking out a mortgage at a double-digit interest rate, somehow you got it paid off, and it's worth something. You didn't trade options. You didn't write a “call” on your living room, hoping it'd be in the money next month. What if you were wrong and lost that room to the market? At least you wouldn't be asked, “What are we going to watch tonight?” anymore.

Don't be disillusioned, dear reader, by the “doing,” especially when it comes to investing. I don't even like the word because it means taking on some level of risk with your hard-earned money. Don't try to be the “other” guy. You be you. It got you this far. I want to hear how you did it. [Let's talk.](#)

Do You Know What Stagflation, Deflation, and Inflation Are?

Have you been out to lunch or dinner lately and looked at the astronomical prices on the right side of the menu? Did you think, “With these prices, you'd think someone, anyone, would like to take my order?”

Then, you get your cheeseburger, in no paradise of yours, and it's missing one of the fixings you know you ordered. And, by the time your server revisits you, it's about time for your next meal. That, my friend, is stagflation. Higher prices, less service.

Look, Your Survival Guy is no economist, and I'm thankful for that, but I can play armchair economics now and then and not because I feel wicked smart now that my [alma mater Babson College is in The WSJ's top ten colleges at #10](#). But it doesn't hurt. No, I'm here to say investors worry about stuff, stagflation, deflation, and/or inflation, and miss the boat on taking action. I'm here to say we got 'em all, all at the same time.

If, for example, you're sitting on a portfolio of commercial real estate in one of the big blue blob cities, then you know a thing or two about deflation. That sound you hear is yesterday's prices looking for something, anything to stop the pain. They, too, can't find the workers your restaurant desperately seeks. That's deflation.

Then, not to be forgotten, is inflation, where speculators pay through the nose for AI stocks to load up, yet again, into the next bubble. That, dear reader, is too much money chasing too few goods. Do I know when it will burst? Not my concern. What is my concern is not to bore you with speculation about our future when I know for certain how hard it is to understand where we've been and where we are.

What history makes clear is there are big-time losers, big-time winners, and those who avoid the fray. My concern is with the latter. I want a place for us to hide, where the living is good (doesn't have to be the best), and you have a place to rest your weary head. That's a good life to me. And one I want for you.

I was talking with my father-in-law Dick Young yesterday about Jimmy Buffett's passing and his concert in Key West just months before. "I hope every one of your clients gets to watch part of Jimmy's last concert in Key West." It's one of my favorites because I think

Jimmy knew the importance of it all and because he sounds like he's at peace and talks about his life there like it was yesterday. Enjoy.

"Jesse's Going Crazy, Just Running Along the Edges"

Just thinking about our dog Louis, who turned twelve in July, brings a flood of memories. Like when our kids came home that day, dropping their backpacks on the floor like they summited Everest, as a puppy came sliding and tumbling around the corner into them for the first time.

Or, when Louis brings Your Survival Guy dead animals, rolls around in "something," or won't come in when I know he hears me, and I'm ready for bed. Or grabs dinner—not his—from the counter.

Then there's the times we're all together on long walks in New Hampshire.

But let's not forget the dog fights at Thanksgiving, two years in a row, and another trip to the vet.

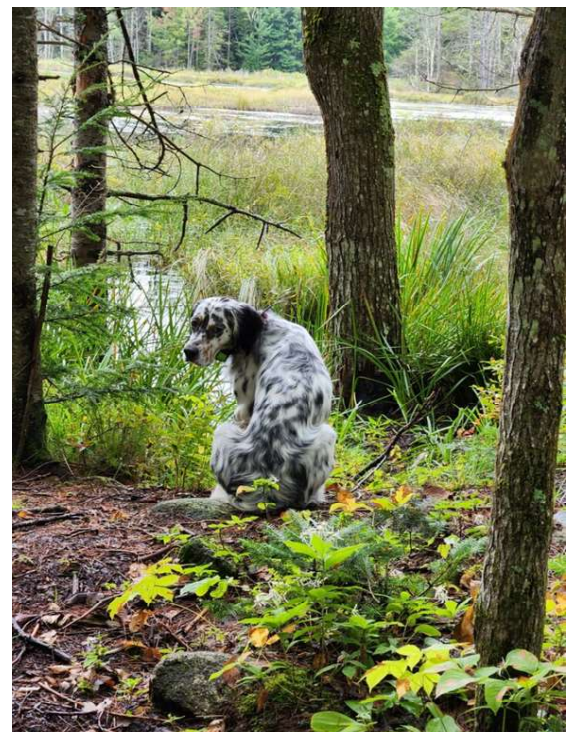
Did I mention the money?

Anyway, Your Survival Guy was talking with a long-time client yesterday—who was in his Polaris Ranger sitting near a pond in the woods of Maine—not far from his 100+ acre property.

"Jesse's going crazy," he said. "Just running along the edges looking for stuff in the water. He loves it out here. Keeps himself busy."

"What's not to like?" I asked.

"Oh, yeah, it's nice here," he said. "A beautiful morning."



"LET'S WRAP THE PHONE CALL UP BOYS."

Your Survival Guy knows Jesse because Jesse is a descendant of Jasper (RIP). I felt like I knew Jasper, too, right until the end because that's what we talked about. It's sad when our animals are sick. And I knew when my client picked up the phone that Jasper had moved on. I knew he would miss those times in the morning when they'd be out in the woods.

But now it feels like old times again.

It's funny how my conversations with you, dear reader, happen. Maybe it's just a coincidence, but I think it's something more. Because later in the day, another client, out of the blue, said his "buddy" barks when he plays the song *Green Onions* (the "on hold" music when you call our office). We weren't even talking about our dogs.

With all our makin' and our savin' let's not forget about the enjoyin'. Just don't keep 'em waiting too long.

Survive and Thrive this Month.

Warm regards,

Your Survival Guy

"Your Survival Guy"

- If someone forwarded this to you, and you want to learn more about Your Survival Guy, read about me [here](#).
- If you would like to contact me and receive a response, please email me at ejsmith@yoursurvivalguy.com.
- Would you like to receive an email alert letting you know when *Survive and Thrive* is published each month? You can subscribe to my free email [here](#).

P.S. Jimmy Buffett—just writing his name makes me think of a different place and time—will be remembered as a pirate who brought his listeners treasure.

What a blow it was recently after learning that he died. In an instant, I knew what it felt like the day the music died.

My life flashed before my eyes, the memories of living life with his songs. His Labor Day weekend shows at Great Woods in Mansfield, MA, now over.

Every time we'd prepare for a family party, I'd prep with his music playing. For birthdays, we'd have "Lovely Cruise" playing. We had Jimmy Buffett's music on so much that at one point, one of my kids said, with the other nodding in agreement, "Dad, you're ruining Jimmy Buffett for us." And I didn't want to do that.

Because our love for Jimmy runs deep. I can't tell you how many times we sat on the couch in the kitchen while I read *Jolly Mon* and *Trouble Dolls*, coauthored with his daughter Savannah. At their grandparents' house in Key West, a wooden tiki-like figure looms over the kitchen. We all know him as Jolly Mon. Back in cold New

England, my kids felt safe at night with the little trouble dolls nearby. And yes, I love all of Jimmy's Christmas albums.

So many memories of sitting outside having dinner in Key West at Dick and Debbie's, listening to Jimmy, knowing that when the wind was blowing a certain direction, you could hear him playing on Duval Street. Having lunch at Louie's Backyard and knowing what he meant by cheeseburgers in paradise and how he felt writing "Trying to Reason with Hurricane Season" while he was living next door to the bar many years ago. The colder the temps were outside, the warmer his music was. And yes, thank you, JB Paris is a mighty long airplane ride.

I read all his books. The man could not keep still. I remember reading how he was always sure to count the receipts at the end of the night. He was a one-of-a-kind musician *and* businessman. After all, he had boats to build, planes to buy, and fly fishing trips to take to St. Somewhere.

Listening to all the tributes to Jimmy over the weekend on radio Margaritaville was cathartic. When one listener called in, she said she had been listening to him for 50 years, and he meant so much to her family. His passing was such a shock. So sudden. She could barely get the words out when she was asked what song she'd like to hear. "If the Phone Doesn't Ring, It's Me," she cried. Sail on Jimmy.

P.P.S. It was a typical Saturday morning, except Your Survival Guy was heading back to college to drop off my son for year two. What could be so hard about that, I thought. Four hours of assembling a couch and coffee table later, I'm here to say it wasn't as easy as I thought it would be.

Now, for any of you who have a daughter and a son, you know the difference. There's a difference between being packed and ready and being packed and ready. One of them, when you ask, "Are you packed?" is really packed, while the other is thinking he's got this and will throw it all together, no problem. Your Survival Guy remembers the weeks of preparation involved for year one drop-off last year. That was tough. But hey, year two, no problem. Anyway, we got the cars packed and were finally on our way.

When we got to campus, there wasn't a move-in welcoming crew like I remember from last year. No army of volunteers helping to carry a carload of stuff up to the room. This year, we were on our own. It was hot, and Your Survival Guy didn't realize how many friends were made last year until I was stuck holding heavy boxes while hellos were made and discussions of "How was your summer?" took place. That's OK. I needed the workout. But here's the kicker. Once we got everything in the room, I asked, "What else do you think you'll need?" "Well, I could use a small couch and coffee table," he said.

What am I supposed to do just get in the car and leave? Walking through Jordan's furniture, the smallest couch they had wasn't going to fit in my living room, never mind a dorm room. Then, walking through the aisles of Walmart, I was thankful Your Survival Gal wasn't with us. Sometimes, you just gotta bite the bullet. We found everything a college room needs, and then some, and yes, some assembly required. And that's how the next several hours were spent.

Life throws you curveballs sometimes. That's why there's Walmart. They have it all. If you have a college student or a recent grad in your family, be sure to download my Special Report: [How To Invest After Graduating College](#).

P.P.S. Your Survival Guy [tried to reason with Hurricane Lee and lost](#). It never made landfall in my neck of the woods or sea. Just lots of wind and rain. No more boating this season. Thank you, Tom Sawyer, for another great one. It's bittersweet.



Because in my conversations with you, we talk about a feeling of relief when the season's over, whether it's boating or gardening. There's comfort in knowing you don't have to worry about not using the boat enough or if the garden's going to float away from too much rain (a big problem this year). There's always a punch list.

Which brings us to investing. No matter how much money you save or invest, there's always a punch list.

"Have we saved enough?"

"Should we take a family vacation?"

"We need a new car."

You're always wondering what "to do." And each season brings new memories, a new harvest, and a list of problems and "should dos." All you can do is do the best you can to make them happen. Sometimes hurricanes, too much rain, you name it, can get in the way. Such is life.

With investing, like seasons, you go in with great expectations. But some seasons are just better than others. Your Survival Guy didn't say it was easy. Don't ask me when to haul your boat. It's a leap of faith. [Let's talk.](#)