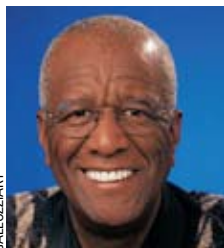


WALLY AMOS : B E P O S I T I V E



GALLUZZI/ART

Wally Amos is the founder of Uncle Wally's Muffin Company. You can reach him at [www.wallyamos.com](http://www.wallyamos.com).

## Life is great today

LET ME SHARE several life experiences that convinced me life is great today. Since the fall of 2005 I have been having fistulas in my brain. A fistula is an abnormal connection between a vein and an artery. If left untreated fistulas can cause bleeding that can be fatal. Neurovascular surgeons treat them with an surgical procedure. My first procedure, 14 hours long, was performed at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), on January 18, 2006. They repaired the fistula and found a second one. I was given the option of returning or having it repaired two days later. I said, 'Do it now.' On January 20, they repaired the second one after seven and a half hours. Due to the marvels of modern medicine, I flew to Los Angeles for a meeting January 23, and my wife, Christine, and I returned to Hawaii on January 25.

In May 2006 the symptom of tearing red eyes returned. I consulted with my doctor at UCSF, who

said, "Let's wait and see." The symptoms persisted, so on August 22 of that year I returned to UCSF for my third surgery, which was successful and took approximately four and a half hours.

The doctors decided I should have an annual checkup and scheduled a return visit for October 23, 2007. The procedure took eight hours and they discovered another fistula but could not completely repair it because it was in an inaccessible, and very dangerous, location. I was told not to lift anything heavy or bend down.

I returned for my fifth procedure on May 8, 2008, in a very calm state of mind in spite of being told that if they could not repair it, a brain surgeon would perform his magic on May 9. I concluded I had the best doctors, and if the fistula could not be fixed, well, it could not be fixed. The procedure took less than four hours, and they discovered the fistula was completely gone and no new ones had appeared. I was pronounced fistula-free and given a clean bill of health.

I now live in a constant state of grace and gratitude. No worries, no regrets. I know today truly is a blessing and is the only time there is. Thanks be to God and the doctors at UCSF. ☺

**More in archives**  
On [Costco.com](http://Costco.com) enter "connection"; at *Online Edition*, search "Wally Amos"

## What's on your computer?

APPROXIMATELY 9 MILLION people each year fall victim to identity theft, according to the Federal Trade Commission ([www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)), leading to financial loss and a considerable waste of time to correct the problems created. For a small-business owner, it could be especially devastating.

One of the easier ways thieves can target you is through your computer and online activities. Fort Myers, Florida, Costco member Thomas Salamone, chief technology officer of Identity Finder ([www.identityfinder.com](http://www.identityfinder.com))—a software product designed to prevent electronic identity theft—offers these tips to help you secure your personal information.

**1. Protect your passwords.** Make sure a password has at least seven characters, contains numbers and uses upper- and lowercase letters.

**2. Install software updates and fixes weekly or monthly.** Update Windows and Mac OS, Web browsers and multimedia applications such as Apple QuickTime and Adobe Flash as soon as companies release them. These fixes plug holes that hackers use to gain access to your files.

**3. Never enter private information on public computers, such as those in a hotel, airport or library.** These systems may be infected with a keylog-



PHOTODISC/RF

ger or spyware, capturing everything you type.

**4. Don't click on e-mail messages that contain hyperlinks to Web sites.** Close the e-mail and type the Web site address manually. Phishing attacks are common and attempt to trick you into visiting false sites to steal your personal information. ☺

Members can find out about Costco's Identity Guard identity protection service by going to [Costco.com](http://Costco.com) and clicking on "Services."

Another Cool Web Site

Yelp  
your biz

YELP ([www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com)) is a social networking site (and Costco member) that allows users to share information about local businesses—good and bad. Businesses do not have to register to be included, and many company owners may be surprised to find they already have an online presence.

In April 2008, the site launched a free set of tools in Yelp for Business Owners ([www.yelp.com/business/discover\\_biz\\_owners\\_site](http://www.yelp.com/business/discover_biz_owners_site)), which allows them control over their listing, including the ability to:

- Monitor online conversations
- Make sure contact, location and business hours info is up-to-date
- Add pictures
- Reach out to customers who had good or bad experiences
- Offer coupons
- Keep track of page views and number of reviews, as well as receive notification when new ones are posted
- Highlight their specialties, provide a short history, introduce the manager/owner of the business and recommend other businesses

For those with their own Web sites who think a Yelp listing is unnecessary, Costco member Chantelle Karl, Yelp's public relations manager, says, "Yelp pages are highly ranked in Google and Yahoo. The Yelp listings often appear in a search above a business's own Web site."

Karl claims Yelp has received more than 15.8 million unique visitors in the past 30 days.

That's a lot of potential customers. ☺