Stories of Our Lives

William H. "Bill" Beasley

Long-time LGBTQ rights activist in both Southern California and Northern California, Oakland's Bill Beasley started his activism as a teenager in the beginning of Georgia's black civil rights movement back in the 1950s. He was born on 29th October 1938 - the youngest of three sons - to an Atlanta Water Company employee and his wife - who ran a small day-care center out of her home. His parents also adopted a sister when he was 22. Bill will turn 80 on his next birthday in 2018.

A fierce advocate for African-American and LGBTQ rights for decades, Bill was 19 years old in 1957, when he participated in picketing and sit-ins at a segregated lunch counter in Atlanta.

"This action at a Peach Street and 7th Street lunch counter in West Atlanta was the spark that blew my eyes wide open to how we were being treated as black people," Bill recalls. "I was arrested for the first time, but I'm proud to know that this was one of the protests that spurred many other protests around the country, igniting the black civil rights movement - and it's safe to say that also had an effect on the eventual LGBTQ rights movement."

Bill also came out as gay during the 1950s, though he had known earlier in life that he was basically attracted to males rather than to females.

"Most of my friends from an early age and throughout my life have been girls - later women," Bill reminisces. "Oh, yes, I went with a girl to the junior and senior prom - at the segregated Turner High School. But I was much more interested in having sex with friends of my older brothers. In those days in the south, there wasn't such a stigma as there is today about guys having sex with each other, whether they thought of themselves as straight or gay. Guys were always playing with each other. Many of those sexual encounters started with me just laying my head in guys' laps and then one thing would lead to another! They loved it - and so did I!"

Though he never formally came out to his family, Bill has always presumed they knew - not only his siblings, but also his parents, aunts, uncles and cousins - who only wanted him to be happy.

"In fact, when I was a teenager, my Mom would always allow me space whenever I had one of my lover-boys over to the house," Bill recalls with a smile. "She would go next-door to her sister's house for long enough time for us to get it on in peace."

Bill has had three major relationships in his life. The first began as a crush on a fellow teenager with whom he had his first political discussions.

"Though he was straight and for many years rejected my attempts to sleep with him, he finally gave in when we were in our 20's," Bill recalls. "In fact, we were lovers for five years and moved together to St. Louis, where he'd found a good job in IT. During those Missouri years, I was in a March from St. Louis to East St. Louis with Martin Luther King."

The couple then moved to Long Beach and L.A., where Bill became involved in the anti-war movement - protesting Dow Chemical's involvement in making napalm and other toxic agents used in the Vietnam War. He was also one of the founding
"We had to escape the L.A. smog by moving to Berkeley," Bill recalls. "Though my lover had a good job with PacBell, it seems he hooked up with a woman in the North Bay and wound up returning to Atlanta."

It was at that time - in the early 1970s - that he wound up with his second lover, also a five-year relationship, as it turns out.

"I was walking down Telegraph and saw this cute guy, invited him over and we had a good time, though we didn't sleep with each other right away," Bill says. "We had a pretty good thing going for a few years, but when I returned from a two-week trip to Cuba, I discovered that he was having an affair with a woman, which wasn't okay with me. So we broke up."

It was at that time that Bill caught himself attracted to one of his friend's ex-boyfriends, who became his third lover, a relationship that lasted for five years.

"We wound up building a house together, with me thinking this was a forever thing," Bill says, with some remorse. "As it turns out, we didn't live together in that house for long, when he wanted to sell the house and move in with a woman he had met. Breaking up with him was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do in my life!"

Through all of this personal turmoil, however, Bill's political activism always kept him on the front lines of both the black civil rights and LGBTQ rights movement. He was the longest-serving member of the San Francisco Pride Committee - from the early 1970s until 2009, when he was named the Lifetime Achievement Grand Marshal of the LGBTQ Pride Parade. While on the board, he was one of the original advocates for inclusion of the words "bisexual" and "transgender" in the Pride Committee's title, as well as in the Pride Day events. Those two words were added in 1996.

Bill was on the board of Berkeley's Pacific Center for Human Growth and the board of "East Bay Gay Day," which for 10-12 years in the 1970s-80s involved an annual march from downtown Berkeley to Ho Chi Minh Park, where a rally was held with well-known musicians, poets, entertainers and politicians on the program schedule.

He was heavily involved with EBACABI (the East Bay Area Coalition against the Briggs Initiative) in 1978, after Anita Bryant's successful "Save the Children" campaign in Dade County, FL, reversed a gay rights ordinance there. Republican California State Senator John Briggs chose to "copy-cat" that homophobic victory via Proposition 6, which called for identifying, purging, firing and blackballing all LGBTQ employees in California's schools. That proposition was defeated less than six months prior to the assassination of openly-gay San Francisco Supervisor, Harvey Milk, and SF Mayor George Moscone, by the disgruntled and homophobic Supervisor, Dan White.
Bill, December 2017 - at his West Oakland home - was Lifetime Achievement Grand Marshal at the 2009 SF LGBTQ Pride Parade.

"I'm horrified at what's going on today, politically and socially," Bill says. "I am proud of the fact that I am a Christian who believes God put me on this Earth to help us black people, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning people gain our God-given rights to exist in peace! I am still called 'faggot' sometimes in some of the churches I attend and by homeless street people. I forgive them, though, because I know God just hasn't reached them yet."

[Editor's Note: Tracked down by Lavender Seniors at Oakland church services on Sunday, 10th December, Bill generously agreed to a hastily-arranged interview in his home the next day before this column-writer was leaving that very evening for five months out of the country. Because Bill has moved several times prior to landing at his current West Oakland residence, he says he has at least temporarily lost any photographs from his childhood and young years.]

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Book Review

**The Future Is History: How Totalitarianism Reclaimed Russia**
By Masha Gessen

Masha Gessen (nicknamed "Masha", though born Maria Alexandrova Gessen), one of the most "out" LGBT Russians, tells what we already suspect. Sexual minorities in the Soviet Union lead tough lives.

Gessen also wrote "The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin". She has won several awards and currently lives in New York City with her spouse, Darya Oreshkina and three children.

June 12, 2017 was the 27th anniversary of Russia's Declaration of Sovereignty. It is a national holiday. There followed the arrest of thousands of innocent citizens because they protested the lack of freedom. Some were released, others were imprisoned or fined.

Masha was active for over five years in the Soviet Union. Homosexuality was viewed as the same as pedophilia. Gays were seen as allies of the United States. They were not allowed to adopt children.

This is a deeply moving account of freedom-loving people who struggle for basic rights in Russia.

- Frank Howell
CONNECTIONS

Have you moved out of the area, do you want to get in contact with other Lavender Seniors near you or someone you have lost contact with? Email us and we will try to help out. No information will be shared without your specific permission.

LAVENDER SENIORS FRIENDLY VISITOR PROGRAM HAS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE.
Volunteers with the Lavender Seniors Friendly Visitor program are background checked, interviewed and trained, after which they are matched with a senior to visit regularly, usually for a couple hours each week. Visitors can share stories, chat about mutual interests and current events, and if both are willing and able, volunteers can take their seniors out for a walk in the park, a bite to eat, a cup of coffee, shopping or maybe a movie or a trip to the museum.

We ask volunteers to make a commitment of at least six months.

If you are in need of a Friendly Visitor, we can help with that too!

Please contact info@lavenderseniors.org and we will be in touch with you soon. Thank You!

Lavender Seniors Holiday Party at Harry’s Hofbrau, 9th December 2017

Volunteer Appreciation Day

Current, past and, hopefully, future Lavender Seniors volunteers were on hand to celebrate with regular participants at our annual Second Saturday holiday party at Harry’s Hofbrau in San Leandro on 9th December. Held in a reserved area of the well-known restaurant - Lavender Seniors banner proclaiming proudly who we are - participants were treated to a reduced-rate cafeteria-style lunch. Current volunteers were treated to a gratis “Senior Dinner” (in spite of Milton Friedman and others declaring “There ain’t no such thing as a free lunch”), in appreciation for their service to LGBTQ seniors.

One of the highlights of the afternoon gathering - thanks to former board member (also featured in August 2017 issue of Lavender Notes), long-time LGBTQ activist and former florist, Gabriel Delgado - was a drawing for four coveted prize gift baskets. Three of the gift baskets Gabriel put together went to the general community. One - the largest - was for the winner drawn from a pool of current Lavender Seniors volunteers in attendance, whether they are Friendly Visitors, support group facilitators, educators/entertainers/presenters, newsletter contributors, simply filing at the office or staffing tables at such events as health fairs or Pride events.
And the \textbf{winners} were (shown here with their beautiful gift baskets):

Bobbe Leviten                         Kristen Loomis                     Ary Goldberg(R) with spouse,                      Beckie Underwood
and former board chair, D'Anne Bruetsch

Though it looks like the drawing might have been rigged - or taking place at an all-woman event - there's proof in the background of these photos that there were indeed many men (about half) in attendance, as well. Maybe next year, guys!

We wish the LGBTQ senior community and its many allies all the best for 2018 and beyond!
During the early days of the AIDS epidemic, for instance, many young men and women - in their most productive years - were facing premature "end-of-life" decisions around dying with dignity. There were lots of "reverse mortgages" taken out, many life insurance policies turned over to agencies for "viatical" or "life settlements," where immediate access to funds for survival was the outcome that people might decide on. California only adopted regulations on this process in 2010, so this concept has met with mixed (both positive and negative) reviews.

With the relatively recent advent of ADB (Accelerated Death Benefits), insurance companies may provide an option to terminally ill patients (generally defined as between 12-24 months left to live) to receive SOME of their payout while they are still alive, rather than only beneficiaries receiving the funds after their death. Whatever amount the patient receives via the ADB rider during the last months of life is deducted from what beneficiaries receive after his/her death.

All of these types of decisions must be confronted by LGBTQ seniors, as well, of course, whether we are on our own, caring for our same-sex partners, relatives or close friends. Some of the factors in making those decisions will be different for LGBTQ seniors than for others in the general population.

The speaker for January’s Second Saturday Pot Luck on 13th January, Nguyen Lam from Arkshire Financial, an insurance brokerage, will help navigate us through understanding all of the pros and cons of each of these options. He will speak on life planning strategies using various insurance instruments. There will be plenty of time for Q&A after his presentation to get all of those insurance-related questions answered.

After holding our December meeting at Harry’s Hofbrau, we are returning to our usual location on Saturday, 13th January, at All Saints Episcopal Church, 911 Dowling, San Leandro, where buffet lunch will be presented at 12 noon. After announcements at about 12:40pm, our speaker will make his presentation for a half-hour or so, after which there will be ample time to ask all of those insurance-related questions you might have. Please join us!

Third Wednesday LGBTQ Film Series, 17th January, 1-3pm

Poster Boy

The closeted gay son of a powerful, conservative (and extremely homophobic) U.S. Senator is caught in the crossfire between his father’s politics and his personal need to keep his secret, his fear of rejection and expressing his homosexuality. When the North Carolina senator decides his son should introduce him at an on-campus campaign rally (to help capture the young adult votes), the ensuing quandary leads to some remarkable chaos in everybody’s life.

Meanwhile, an ACT-UP activist meets the senator’s conflicted son, they have a sexual liaison in the school gym (before the activist knows who he has slept with) and becomes torn between his increasing fondness for the senator’s son and his commitment to political activism.
An outstanding cast increases the tension between politics and sexuality. With the help of this hot, slightly older new acquaintance (played by Jack Noseworthy), the closeted Henry Kray (played by Matt Newton), son of uber-conservative Republican U.S. Senator Jack Kray (played by Michael Lerner) puts a shocking spin on his dad's re-election campaign. One of the most powerful performances is delivered by the senator's wife (played by Karen Allen of "Raiders of the Lost Ark" franchise fame).

Comparisons with the politics of sexuality in the context of current divisiveness will be inevitable to viewers. Though marriage equality has become the law of the land, DOMA and "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" have been repealed, there are still powerful conservative forces in the country that are moving "religious freedom" legislation through state houses across the land, trying to step back the progress made for LGBTQ Americans since Stonewall.

The film will be shown at 1pm on Wednesday, 17th January, followed by a brief discussion and evaluation of the film, its place in LGBTQ film history, its relationship to today's political scene and its relevance to the experience of LGBTQ seniors and their allies. The venue is the Carnegie Lecture Hall at San Leandro's Main Public Library, 300 Estudillo, San Leandro.

Lavender Seniors will provide popcorn, apple juice and bottled water, as usual, to add to the theater ambience in this wheelchair- and walker-accessible venue. Ample parking is provided (both two- and three-hour) outside the library.

Third Friday Lunch Bunch, 19th January, 12-2pm

Laughter for Beginning (a BETTER) New Year

Though the LGBTQ community was targeted for many blows this year - in the U.S., as well as around the world - we are a community known for our resilience and intrepid perseverance. Otherwise, we wouldn't have won the victories and achieved such advances as same-sex marriage, repeal of DOMA/DADT, and various LGBTQ-rights ordinances and legislation passed around the country (and the world) since the Stonewall rebellion in 1969.

Another major factor that has kept our community with at least one nostril above water is our collective sense of humor, without which many of us may have become either suicidal or homicidal this past year (if not before). So Lavender Seniors is kicking off the (BETTER) New Year by recruiting a lesbian comedian (comedienne, if you prefer) for our 19th January Third Friday Lunch Bunch.
Loren Kraut, who has participated in comedy competitions around the country (including coming in Third Place at the 2015 Comedy Girls Competition in Las Vegas) will join us for an uplifting look at facing 2018 with courage, determination and humor.

As usual, the Third Friday Lunch Bunch will be held at the North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 MLK Jr Way (corner 58th Street) from noon until 2pm on Friday, 19th January. Food is served promptly at noon, followed by community announcements about 12:40, at which time Loren will take over the program. She will leave plenty of time at the end of her performance to field questions and answers from participants.

Parking and entrance is at the rear of the building.

LGBT Online Support Group for Caregivers

If you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender and caring for someone with ongoing health problems...you are not alone! Family Caregiver Alliance's online LGBT Caring Community Support Group connects you with others facing the day-to-day challenges of caregiving. If you're assisting someone with Alzheimer's, stroke, Parkinson's, traumatic brain injury, or other chronic health problems, you can get support from the convenience of your home.

Share experiences, resources, and ideas in a supportive, caring environment. Available 24 hours a day, all you need is e-mail, and it's free! Visit www.caregiver.org.

Info on Covered CA from Director Lori A. Cox

From the Office of Lori Cox, Social Services Agency Director...

As you may know, the Trump Administration issued an Executive Order directing the development of regulations to implement association health plans and short-term duration plans and cut marketing funding for the federal marketplace states. The impact could be devastating in markets across the country. Covered California, however, has taken actions to assure Californians will have continued access and coverage today and options for 2018. Covered CA worked with our health insurance companies to price plans accordingly to ensure stability in 2018. As a result, Covered CA will continue to offer quality, affordable health insurance when open enrollment begins on November 1 for 2018 coverage.

Covered CA has shared that they want consumers to understand that the actions in Washington:

- Do not have ANY IMPACT on coverage or rates for 2017;
- Does not in any way limit your access to cost-sharing reduction benefits that make accessing care more affordable now or in 2018.
- Does not affect Covered California’s prices for 2018 - which are already posted on their website at www.coveredca.com/
CONGRESS PASSED THE TAX SCAM BILL - BUT WE ARE NOT DONE FIGHTING.

2018 WILL BE THE FIGHT OF OUR LIVES!

Congressional Republicans rammed their disgusting, historically unpopular tax bill through both houses of Congress this week. Only 2 of California’s 14 Republican Congress members voted against this bill (Issa and Rohrbacher). No Democrats voted for it. Donald Trump is expected to sign the bill by the end of the week, which will personally enrich him at the expense of the rest of us. But our fight is NOT over.

The GOP Leadership has already indicated that this tax scam is just the first step in their attack on our earned benefits-turning 2018 into an all-out fight to defend Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

Analysis after analysis confirms this bill is a disaster for California. It triggers automatic cuts to Medicare, undermines the Affordable Care Act, imperils Social Security, and increases taxes for many middle-class and low-income families just to give the wealthiest among us yet another undeserved advantage.

It’s no surprise that this awful bill is deeply unpopular. For weeks, constituents have been protesting at the California offices of GOP members of Congress only to have their concerns fall upon deaf ears. CARA was represented at many of these events, speaking on behalf of the millions of seniors and people with disabilities who will suffer in order to fill the pockets of the wealthiest individuals and corporations.

Our fight is far from over. 2018 offers us an incredible opportunity to educate more people, organize more people, and engage more people to turn out at events in their districts, phone and email their elected representatives, and VOTE for candidates that will represent our interests and protect America’s most popular and successful programs - Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security - rather than voting to undermine them as Congress just did. We must let Congress and the President know that we have a long memory - and we will remember next November.

We want to thank each and every one of you who made a phone call, talked to a neighbor, family member or friend, signed a petition, and showed up at a rally to protest these cuts. Make no mistake - your voice was heard. The CA Republican Congressmembers know we are mad as hell, and we will not go away! Let’s use this holiday season to reflect on our work, share some good food and good times with friends and family and rejuvenate ourselves so that we are ready to take on 2018 with renewed energy and conviction. Together, we can take back our country. CARA is ready to roll up our sleeves and get to work. We hope you will continue to work with us to make 2018 a
From the Staff and Board of CARA, we thank you for all you do each and every day to make California and our country a place where seniors and our families can live and age with dignity and independence.

Have a wonderful Holiday Season and we’ll see you in 2018.

(CARA offices will be closed from Dec. 22nd through Jan. 1, 2018)

JANUARY 9TH SB 562 - HEALTHY CA ACT EVENT POSTPONED UNTIL LATER IN JANUARY!
The Select Committee on Health Care has agreed to have their January 2018 meeting focus on single payer and SB 562, so we will focus our turnout and energy on that event. Stay tuned for the date, time, bus locations and other details.

You can contact CARA at:
CARA, 600 Grand Ave. #410, Oakland, CA 94610
NORTH: 510-663-4086 * 510-663-4099 (fax) * jreid.cara@gmail.com
CENTRAL VALLEY: 714-488-5488 * Vishnu.cara@gmail.com
SOUTH:
LA COUNTY: 917-434-3220 * jennichang.cara@gmail.com
ORANGE/SAN DIEGO: 714-488-5488 * smeyer.cara@gmail.com
TOLLFREE 1-877-223-6107 * www.californiaalliance.org

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You are receiving this email because you indicated you wished to be kept informed regarding CARA's activities.

Our mailing address is:
California Alliance for Retired Americans
600 Grand Ave.
Suite 410
Oakland, Ca 94610

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Community Phone Calls

Just a few of the things offered:

LGBTQ Chat 2nd and 4th Mondays, 1:00pm - 2:00pm
This group is open to all LGBTQ seniors and is an opportunity to connect with others socially in a supportive environment where participants can share individual and collective experiences. We will create an inclusive place to share our stories with each other and build a sense of community. Facilitated by Sylvia Vargas, Openhouse Friendly Visitor Manager

Where Were You When? Saturdays, 12:00pm - 12:45pm
Where were you when you were 50 years old? Or 10? Do you remember where were you on Christmas Eve in 1960 or the summer just before you started high school? Join us to discuss memories of where you were when. Facilitated by Janice Rooker
Write for Life Tuesdays, 12:30pm - 1:30pm
Few of us have been taught to be self-caring and accepting of ourselves. As we continue our journal writing group we are given permission to express our emotions without censorship. Participants are not expected to share journal entries; rather we will discuss what we discover about ourselves as we write. Writers, non-writers, and new participants are welcome!
Facilitated by Dr. Sheppard Kominars

Write for Life: Men's Group Sundays, 1:30pm - 2:30pm
Are you worth 20 minutes a day? Whether you are 65 or 85, and whether you like to write or hate it, a mere 20 minutes a day could change your life! Research has proven that giving ourselves permission to express our emotions without censorship improves the quality of life. Participants are not expected to share journal writing and discussion will focus on what we find about the process as we write. All are welcome - those who enjoy writing and those who don't. Facilitated by Dr. Sheppard Kominars

Personal Storytelling Tuesdays, 3:00pm - 4:00pm
Under the guidance of Master Storytelling Mary Gay Ducey, Stagebridge Storytellers have been exploring the art of personal storytelling, adapting folk and fairy tales, and creating vibrant stories from real events in history. Stagebridge tellers have taken personal memories, classic stories, and fascinating historical events, and turned them into engaging personal narratives. In this call-in Storytelling Concert, you will hear these stories come alive! Each story is followed by a Q&A and brief discussion. Facilitated by Stagebridge, California

View the Fall catalog of community phone calls here. Check the website for the Winter Catalog that will be out shortly after the first of the year and for more information. To participate in these or other Senior Center Without Walls (SCWW) telephone activities, or to learn more about SCWW programs, call 877-797-7299 or email info@seniorcenterwithoutwalls.org.

THIS MONTH'S EVENTS

Out Standing Seniors
January 2 & 16, 11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. (1st and 3rd Tuesdays)
Hayward Senior Center, 22325 N. Third Street, Hayward

A safe and confidential space for LGBTQ seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.

Older & Out - Livermore
January 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, 1:00 p.m. (Tuesdays)
Livermore Senior Services, Robert Livermore Community Center, 4444 East Ave., Livermore

Free drop-in therapy group for LGBTQ community members age 60+

Queerly Aging Lesbians
January 4 & 18, 1:30 p.m. (1st and 3rd Thursdays)
The Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Avenue (at Derby), Berkeley

Find support and like-minded wonderful people!

Older & Out - Berkeley
January 5, 12, 19, 26, 3:15 p.m. (Fridays)
North Berkeley Senior Center, 901 Hearst Ave, Berkeley

Free drop-in therapy group for LGBTQ community members age 60+

Older & Out - Hayward
January 8, 22, 29, 1:15 p.m. (Mondays)
Hayward Senior Center, 22325 N. Third Street, Hayward

Free drop-in therapy group for LGBTQ community members age 60+
Rainbow Seniors
January 9 & 23, 12:30-2:00 p.m. (2nd & 4th Tuesdays)
San Leandro Senior Center, 13909 E 14th St, San Leandro
*A safe and confidential space for LGBTQ seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

Lavender Seniors Advisory Board Meeting
January 10, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. (2nd Wednesday)
675 Hegenberger Rd., Oakland
*A portion of this meeting is open to the public.*

Senior Gay Men’s Group
January 11 & 25, 1:30 p.m. (2nd and 4th Thursdays)
The Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley
Co-sponsor: The Pacific Center, 510-548-8283
*Feel alone? Need to find space to be yourself and chat with others? Join us!*

Lavender Seniors Pot Luck
January 13, noon-2:00 p.m. (second Saturday)
All Saints Episcopal Church, 911 Dowling Blvd., San Leandro
*This month’s program: "Using Insurance for Life Planning" (see info above)*

Lavender Seniors Film Series
January 17, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. (3rd Wednesday)
San Leandro Library, 300 Estudillo, San Leandro
*This month’s movie: "Poster Boy" (see info above)*

Island Pride Peer Support Group
January 18, 10:30-11:30 a.m. (3rd Thursday)
Mastick Senior Center, 1155 Santa Clara Ave, Alameda
*A Peer Support Group is a safe & confidential space for LGBT Seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information & to support one another.*

Oakland Lunch Bunch
Sponsored by City of Oakland Aging & Adult Services
January 19, 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. (3rd Friday)
North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Oakland
*This month’s program: "Comedy with Loren Kraut " (see info above)*

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