



Lavender Notes

*Improving the lives of LGBT older adults
through community building, education, and advocacy.*

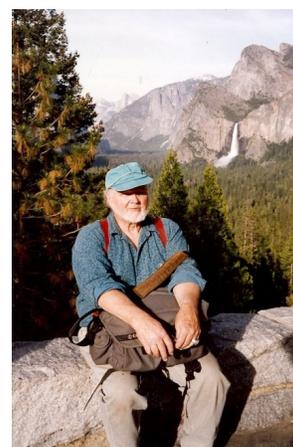
May 2015

Celebrating 20+ years of service and positive change

Volume 22, Issue 5

James Mitchell Armstrong, Jr. - A Tribute

James Mitchell Armstrong, Jr., a long-time Bay Area resident, photographer extraordinaire, theater critic and vivacious Lavender Seniors participant, died at Kaiser Hospital in Richmond on Thursday, April 2nd, 2015. A resident of El Sobrante, he was 90 years old. He had been in deteriorating health in recent years, after being a long-time participant in the "We're Still Here" support group at North Oakland Senior Center.



**James as a young man in the 40s, in his Berkeley house in the 70s,
and finally as many Lavender Seniors knew him**

Born in Louisiana on 11th January 1925, James and his family moved to Delleker, California, a tiny sawmill town in Plumas County, where his father was bookkeeper for a lumber company. The family subsequently moved to Salinas where James graduated with an Associates Degree from Salinas Junior College.

James joined the U.S. Army and was part of the post-war occupation forces in Germany from 1945-49. Among his other duties during that time, he worked with the Armed Forces Network radio. While in the military he became acutely aware of his attraction to men. Though aware of the risks involved since many lesbian and gay soldiers were dishonorably discharged during that period, he told many friends that he "flowered" as a gay man during his time in Germany.

After his honorable discharge from the military, James stayed on in Germany for several years. While still in Europe in the early 1950s, he met his longest-term friend, Howard Eric Kahn, now a 91-year-old San Francisco resident, who accompanied him on many of his adventures through the rest of his life on both sides of the Atlantic. Howard recalls that he and James took several side trips in Europe to Amsterdam, Vienna, Zurich, Basel and various cities in Italy.

James returned to California in the 1950s to complete his education via the GI Bill at UC-Berkeley. While at UC-B, he met another of his long-term friends, Virginia "Ginger" Buckner, who graduated in 1954, a year or two prior to James' subsequent graduation in English and Literature. She has taken on the responsibility of handling his affairs and closing of his estate.

"I met James when he played a monk in a production of *Measure for Measure*," Ginger recalls. "The production was directed by John Barton, one of the founders of the Royal Shakespeare Company, who was teaching at Cal.

James was among the daring cutting-edge people in my life, something I always admired him for."

According to Howard, James spent much of the late 1960s and early 1970s in Southern California trying to realize a dream of becoming a playwright or screenwriter.

"A group of gay men lived for a couple of years in a Silver Lake house alleged to have been owned previously by Bette Davis," Howard recalls. "During my visits there, I could see that none of them was very good with handling finances - even James, particularly with his rather unsatisfying County job. Thus, those swinging doors on the somewhat flamboyant 'Bette Davis house' came to a close by 1973 or so, when James returned to the Bay area."

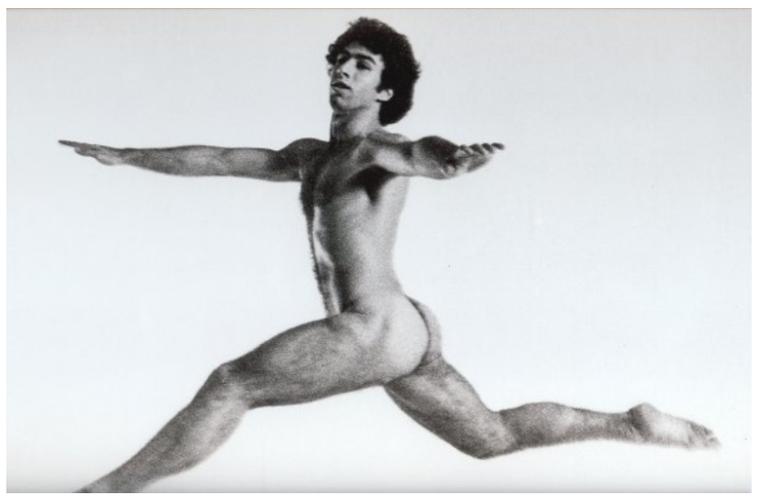


**Multi-faceted as Mapplethorpe, James loved photographing male nudes & colorful flowers
[Polly Gassler collection]**

From his return in the early 1970s until the mid-1980s, James was a photographer for the San Francisco Ballet. He was also a theater critic and travel editor, playing a role as major West Coast contributor for *After Dark* magazine in New York. During those years, he became friends with Fred Kuh, late owner of the original Old Spaghetti Factory in North Beach. James was an integral part of the "Macaroni Show" there, which regularly produced "revues" with lots of entertainment, music, dancing and frequent "costume changes" (interpret as you will).

In his never-published memoir, "Growing Up Respectable", James described his evolution from a small-town boy to a relatively cosmopolitan and "fast-lane" lifestyle full of extended family, friends and fun. With James' passing, his friends are now trying to locate someone willing to make a home for the last of his pets, one "Ms. Kitty" described by Ginger as a mellowly-aging cat. [Contact Ginger_Buckner@att.net].

James' remains were buried at the Sacramento Valley Veterans Cemetery in Dixon, California, on 14th April 2015. His headstone is scheduled to be in place by the end of April. No memorial service is currently planned.



Two of the hundreds of photographic studies of ballet dancers and male models in James's private collection.

His many beautifully-framed photographs - like those shown here in this tribute - are being donated to the Museum of Performance & Design, 893 Folsom, in San Francisco (phone 415-255-4800 for more information) to be archived as the treasures that they are.

Though he has no known surviving "blood family", he has many "extended family" members, such as Morris Simpson and other "We're Still Here" group members, Lavender Seniors participants, Walter Kahn and Ginger Buckner, who survive him, in addition to his many creative works of art, of course!

He will be missed.

Lavender Film Festival Moving to San Leandro Venue

The Lavender Seniors "LGBT Film Festival", which held its first showing in April after the Third Friday Lunch Bunch, is moving the venue to San Leandro to accommodate more LGBT seniors from throughout Alameda County. The Thunderbolt Theater at Marina Community Center, 15301 Wicks Blvd., San Leandro, is a theater-style room with tiered seating for 75 people. The center is fully accessible, has many senior activities, plenty of parking, near an AC-Transit bus stop and is outfitted with cutting-edge video and audio equipment.



The Marina Community Center, 15301 Wicks Blvd., San Leandro, is a modern facility with plenty of parking



The Thunderbolt Theater has tiered, padded seating for 75 and a top-quality video and audio system.

The festival will be held the third Wednesday of every month from 1-3 pm beginning Wednesday, 20th May (Assuming that we get the interest from the community). The padded seats have armrests and retractable student-style desktops that can be used for writing, holding popcorn and drinks. The theater space is totally accessible, with plenty of wheelchair space in the front row.

The film scheduled for 20th of May is "The Green," a 2011 movie featuring Julia Ormond, Jason Butler Harner, Cheyenne Jackson and Illeana Douglas. The 90-minute film takes place in a small Connecticut town where two men, long-time lovers, have moved, seeking refuge from the "big city" in an attempt to have more access to "the green" countryside. They have bought a big two-story fixer-upper and have settled into their respective jobs as high-school teacher and restaurant owner. Their comfortable lives are upended by an incident at the school - and the small-town mentality of this bucolic community. The two men turn to a lesbian attorney who helps the gay couple confront the issues they are facing.



The film won many awards at Film Festivals around the world in 2011-12

For those who are interested, there will be a discussion afterward of the issues raised by the film.

For those using public transportation, the best plan is to take BART to the Bayfair station, then take the 89 AC-Transit bus from there to the Marina Community Center.

For those driving from the north, get off at Marina Blvd, turn right to the first traffic signal, turning left on Merced Street, which becomes Wicks Blvd after a couple of miles. The Marina Community Center is on the right.

For those driving from the south, get off at Marina Blvd, turn left to the first traffic signal, then turn left on Merced Street, which becomes Wicks Blvd after a couple of miles. The Marina Community Center is on the right.

For more information about the Marina Community Center, call 510-577-6080. For more information on the film or the Lavender Film Festival, contact JohnDavid@lavenderseniors.org.

To watch a trailer for the film, check out <http://www.thegreenthemovie.com/>

The Lavender Film Festival idea will be re-evaluated at that point to see if it is a program that LGBT Seniors would like to continue.

Monthly Book Review

Gay Berlin

by Robert Beachy
Knopf - Hardbound

Berlin was always gay-friendly for decades, starting in the 19th century as far back as the 1850s. In 1928 Christopher Isherwood adopted the city as his favorite. Dr. Margus Hirschfeld made it headquarters for his Institute of Sexual Science. W. H. Auden labeled the city as the "buggers daydream." Leftist groups dominated the city until the Nazis swept into power in the early '30s. Gay publications abounded and there were even gay travel guides.



Don't miss this brilliant account of gay history in the 20th century.

- Frank Howell

Potluck "Show and Tell"

Show off something interesting

The month of May is national older American's month. D'Anne Bruetsch and the Association of Personal Historians are hosting "Show and Tell" events throughout the month. These events allow people to share interesting stories with each other.

We are having "Show and Tell" at the monthly potluck for May. If you have an interesting photo, a souvenir from a trip, a piece of art, bring it to the potluck. Everyone gets some time to tell a story about their special item. Come anyway, even if you don't want to share a story. Enjoy a nice meal and hear the interesting stories that your friends have to tell.

Saturday, May 9th, noon to 2:00 p.m., Unity Church, 1420 Santa Maria Blvd., San Leandro, CA.

D'Anne Bruetsch, Personal Historian.



Senior Center Without Walls Community Phone Calls

Tall Tales "Truth is Stranger than Fiction"
Mondays, 2 - 2:45 pm



SENIOR CENTER
Without Walls

Do you like to tell a good story, or perhaps to listen to one? Join SCWW's "Liars" Club and see if you can figure out which stories are true and which are fanciful fabrications. With Kathleen Torres.

Book Club

Twice a month! Every 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 3 - 4 pm

Book lovers unite! Call in to share your favorite books and authors with other book lovers. Raquel de Knust and Andy Andersen facilitating.

View the full spring catalog of community phone calls [here](#). 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.

May 4th and 11th, 4 - 5 pm, Power of Relaxation

May 6th, 3 - 4 pm, Understanding Hearing Loss



THE MAYOR'S COMMISSION ON AGING & THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT PRESENT:

CELEBRATE HEALTHY AGING

GROWING OLDER, GETTING BETTER

Senior Information Fair
in honor of Older Americans Month:

Wednesday, May 6, 2015

11:00 a.m.— 2:00 p.m.

Frank Ogawa Plaza in front of City Hall

Activities will include:

- Senior Service Information Tables
- Health Screenings
- Performances from Senior Centers
- Artwork Display by Oakland Seniors
- Catered Reception in lobby outside City Hall Chambers



FOR MORE INFO PLEASE CONTACT:
MAURINE WATKINS
AGING AND ADULT SERVICES
510-238-2385
MWATKINS@OAKLANDNET.COM

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.

Monthly Events

Out Standing Seniors

May 5 & 19, 11:15 - 2 pm (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.

Senior Information Fair

May 6, 11 - 2 pm, Frank Ogawa Plaza, Oakland

Information tables, health screenings, artwork, performances.

Sponsored by Oakland Human Services Department (See flier above)

Lavender Seniors Advisory Board Meeting

May 6, 7 - 8 pm (Wednesday before Potluck event)

1420 Santa Maria Street, San Leandro

A portion of this meeting is open to the public.

Support Discussion Group for Aging Lesbian Women

May 7 & 21, 1:30 pm (1st and 3rd Thursdays)

The Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Avenue (at Derby), Berkeley

Find support and like-minded wonderful people!

San Leandro Potluck

May 9, noon - 2 pm (2nd Saturday of each month)

Unity Church of San Leandro, 1420 Santa Maria Street

Corner of Joaquin & Santa Maria (Bancroft & E. 14th Street)

Come relax for a couple of hours. Share the love, meet others, talk and laugh!

Come and bring something interesting for "Show and Tell". Tell us something about yourself that we didn't know before. (See article above).

Senior Men's Group

May 14 & 28, 1:30 pm (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!

Oakland Community Orchestra

May 15, 10:30 am - noon

North Oak Senior Center will be hosting the Oakland Community Orchestra for a performance. The performance, scheduled to end by noon, will be held immediately prior to the LS Lunch Bunch.

Oakland Lunch Bunch

May 15, noon - 2 pm (3rd Friday of each month)

Sponsored by City of Oakland Aging & Adult Services

North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Oakland

Enjoy a free lunch and an interesting program every month.



LGBT Film Festival

May 20, 1:00 - 3:00pm (3rd Wednesday of each month)

Marina Community Center, 15301 Wicks Blvd, San Leandro (See article above)

Enjoy a new movie every month.

Coming in June ([more details in next month's newsletter](#))

June 19, LGBT 'Senior' (as in 50+) Prom, Hayward Senior Center

June 21, SF Pride Parade, San Francisco

Board of Advisors

Chair: D'Anne Bruetsch

Vice Chair: Akilah Bolden-Monifa

Secretary: John David Dupree

Treasurer: Carmen Chiong

Tom Baker

Patrick Forte

Frank Howell

Barbara Jue

Mike Trutner

Beckie Underwood

Thank you to our sponsor, Chapel of the Chimes

[Chapel of the Chimes](#) is proud to be a Lavender Seniors "LGBT elder-friendly" business since 2007. A member of the Lifemark Group, [Chapel of the Chimes](#) is a family of premier Bay Area cemeteries, funeral homes, crematories, and mausoleums providing full end-of-life services.

Call and set up your Health Care Directive today!

Chapel of the Chimes, Oakland
4499 Piedmont Avenue
Oakland, CA 94611
FD# 1254



Allison Rodman, Family Service Counselor
... Care, Comfort & Plan
allison.rodman@lifemarkgroup.com
[510-593-6978](tel:510-593-6978)

Lavender Seniors
is a project of
LIFE ElderCare

Email: info@lavenderseniors.org
Website: <http://lavenderseniors.org>

3300 Capitol Avenue
Fremont, CA 94538
510-574-2073