



Lavender Notes

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STORIES OF OUR LIVES



Mel Terry and Geert Botzen

Finding “the love of my life” is the stuff of romance novelists, poets, filmmakers, operatic-classical-pop-rock-rap composers, dreamers and playwrights, including William Shakespeare (where would Calaf have been without Turandot, Romeo without Juliet or Maurice without Scudder)? For a generation or two, Freddie Mercury’s “Love of My Life” – a hit for Queen in countries throughout the world – almost instantly re-immortalized that eternal quest.

The two men featured in this month’s “Stories of Our Lives” column – Mel Terry and Geert Botzen – had many hurdles to leap to actualize each of them having found “the love of my life” in the other 41+ years ago – and finally being able to live together since then!

Mel was born in Boston in February 1947. He has a sister seven years older than him. Though he characterizes his childhood and family life as mostly positive, being the child of a mixed race man and a white woman made his family peculiar in their mostly-white neighborhood.

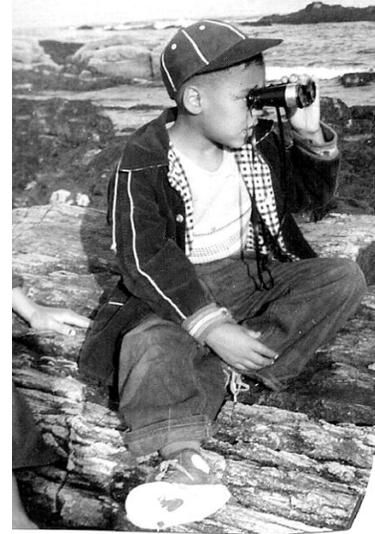
“When Mom and I walked down the street together,” Mel recalls, “people seemed to look at us with some disdain – almost like they didn’t believe we deserved the same space on the sidewalk as they did. Inside my grandmother’s three-story house, however, we were a happy supportive family. We were on the first floor, my grandmother & step-grandfather were on the second and my uncle – my father’s brother – lived on the third floor. I used to play regularly with one of my cousins until my uncle and his wife split; then I didn’t see her

for many decades until just re-connecting in the last couple years."

When Mel was about nine years old, he decided to be baptized in the Catholic Church, a religion espoused by his maternal Irish grandmother, but not so much by his parents.

"In addition to being baptized, I took holy communion at about the same time," Mel recalls. "My cousin and I were the only ones who really went to church. Though it was indeed making a weak attempt at seeking something spiritually, it was more like attempting to find a community to belong to. One-third of my schoolmates were Jewish, I lived in a primarily Irish-Sicilian immigrant neighborhood, so church was something for me to belong to. As a pre-teen, going to church gave me an excuse to smoke secretly away from my family!"

Mel - Age 5 - Boston



Mel did his last confession when he was 19 and already in the Air Force.

"Even in the military at first, this church thing gave me some freedom from the ranks," he recounts, "since we were released to go to mass or confession. But during that last confession, the priest made some remark about God loving 'even his dark angels' and otherwise left me with the feeling that he knew we're all going to sin again – being contrite repeatedly gives you permission to sin again. I pretty much left the church after that."

Mel attended Sarah J. Baker Elementary, then Boston Latin School for three years of high school. He finished his diploma at Boston Technical School. Rather than go directly to any higher education, he worked odd jobs for the first year after graduation, including in the mail room of a wholesale food distributor.

"For some reason, I'd lost confidence that I would succeed in college," Mel recalls, "so I joined the Air force at age 19. I was addicted to reading, however – finishing at least a book a week – not only Dostoevsky, but also Lennie Bruce! I found that even my fellow soldiers would be asking me for advice and it finally occurred to me that nobody was really 'smarter' than I was, but just perhaps more educated."

He was stationed at Castle Air Force Base, Atwater, in California's Central Valley – as well as being posted in Texas, Mississippi and Korea. He was trained in electronics, microwave communication maintenance, and flight simulators. When he finished his four-year stint, he returned to California, where he pursued his higher education at Merritt College and UC-Berkeley, before receiving his B.S. in Physical Therapy at UC-San Francisco in 1976.

Coming out to his family – something he didn't do until his 20s – was pretty matter-of-fact.

"As I approached adolescence, I tried liking girls," Mel recalls, "but it was fairly clear that I was a 'homo' from the beginning. I had a close relationship with my one boyfriend before Geert – I was even in his brother's wedding. When I came out to my Mom, she didn't say much – she knew right before my graduation in '76 when she was coming to California. Unfortunately, my father never knew before he died."



Meanwhile, when Mel was in Boston a few weeks shy of his 13th birthday, 3,500 miles away, in a suburb southeast of Amsterdam, a boy name Geert Botzen was born in January 1960. Though his physician mother gave birth to six children over the years, two did not survive, making Geert the youngest of four living siblings.



"My parents were very hard-working people," Geert recalls, "so my siblings and I were largely raised by our live-in housekeeper for the first 12 years of my life. My mother's medical practice was in our home, so she spent much more time listening to her patients than she did to us. My Dad was a physicist who worked three jobs. He was the Gentile physics teacher at the only Jewish High School in the country, worked at a thermodynamics lab and was a Professor of Physics at the University of Amsterdam. So he was not much available for us, either."

When Geert was 12 years old, the live-in housekeeper – whose daughter was his favorite playmate – died of breast cancer.

Geert - Age 3 - Suburban Amsterdam

"This was very traumatic to all of us," Geert recalls. "She had been much like a mother to us all. Unfortunately, her daughter – who was like a sister – was adopted by her aunt and uncle, then placed in a group home and has since disappeared from my life. Our family had considered adopting her, but for a number of reasons, it was decided that wouldn't be a good idea."

Parents and children together decided not to replace the housekeeper, which meant much of the labor of running the household fell to the four children, since the parents still didn't have the time to play that role.

"This period of my life taught me a lot of independent skills," Geert recalls. "We all learned how to cook, clean and otherwise maintain a household, which has been useful to all of us as adults. One of the ways my parents coped with the pressure of their professional lives was to escape to the countryside on weekends for a well-deserved rest. They had a country home – surrounded by fields of flowers and not much for children to do – where they initially forced us kids to go with them. We didn't like the country, the smell of manure and the lack of entertainment or stimulation of any kind. So we tended to fight with each other mercilessly on those weekends. Father would become fed up and

send us to our rooms. But by the time I was 13 or 14, we were considered mature enough to stay at home without them. Wow, did we have the parties!”

Geert and his girlfriend would also head into Amsterdam, go into bars, etc., which the parents ultimately found out about.

“We had big fights about that ‘wild’ behavior that was happening while they were off in the countryside,” Geert explains. “Suddenly they were laying down the law, so I questioned them about their sudden interest in us, when they hadn’t much cared about us before! Though I was the baby of the family, I was actually the one who challenged my parents. So – during their ‘pillow talk’ at night – they sometimes came to the conclusion that they were indeed being unfair to us and did change some of the rules. Still their concern was too little and too late.”

When Geert came out to his frequently-absent and seemingly-unconcerned parents, however, they came through with flying colors!

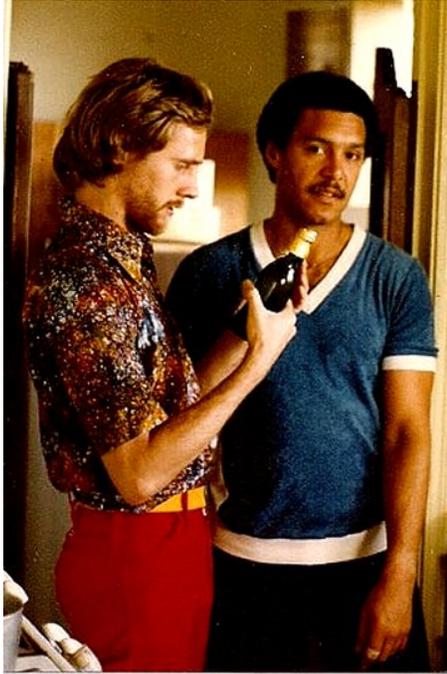
“By the time I was 13, it was clear that I had fallen in love with a homophobic friend of my older brother,” Geert recalls. “My sister informed me early on that she was aware of my late-night walks and that something was going on. I told her that there was something I had known about myself for a long time and that I did not think I could change. My sister then proposed to arrange for my mother and me to ‘have a talk’ when my parents came home from one of their weekend getaways. It seems that my sister, who was in ballet training and surrounded by many gay men, had figured out almost instantly what was going on and had clued in my mother. During that talk with my mother, she asked me a series of questions. Towards the end of the conversation, I could no longer answer her questions; all I could do was cry. She simply answered them herself. I was attracted to guys, not girls! She did not particularly show any emotion, just said that she hoped it wouldn’t make for a difficult life. Afterward I learned that it had been very emotional to her, but she told herself what she had told patients in similar situations: ‘He is still the baby you had in the crib, that you cuddled and raised. It’s just that you know him a little better now.’ And that helped her deal with it. With Dad, he preferred to believe for 2-3 years that it was a phase. But he, too, came around in the end.”

Geert went to grammar school in his home village, but went to high school in Amsterdam, which meant bicycling three miles each way. He studied Dutch language and literature at the University of Amsterdam for one year, then came to the U.S. in 1980, where he attended Merritt and Laney Colleges, eventually earning a BA in Theater Arts at SFSU in 1986. He received a Master’s Degree in Clinical Psychology and Drama Therapy at Antioch West in 1989.

So when and how did these two guys from across the planet meet each other? The initial meeting happened while Mel was on a big-city European tour in 1978, hitting London, Rome, Amsterdam and Paris.

“I had met a guy on the 4th of May and we’d agreed to meet again on the 5th,” Mel recalls. “When I went to the Homolulu, it appeared my new friend wasn’t going to show! I soon overcame my disappointment, however, when I looked across the horseshoe-shaped bar and locked eyes with this good-looking guy. I ordered a beer, walked over to him and tried to strike up

a conversation. He turned to me and said 'kom je hier vaak' – and since the 'v' in Dutch sounds like an 'f' in English, I was blown away at first. Was he asking me to go to bed with him in his very first sentence? When it occurred to Geert, however, that I didn't speak Dutch, he realized what I might've heard him say, so he explained in English that he'd just asked me 'do you come here often?'"



Mel and Geert together during those first "getting-to-know-you" years – and during Geert's sister's 1979 wedding

Though Mel's schedule called for only two days in Holland, the two were instantly smitten with each other, spent that first Friday night and Saturday together. Then on Sunday they had an unusual second date.

"I asked Mel if he'd like to come home with me to meet my brother and his girlfriend," Geert recalls. "Though he was initially a bit resistant about 'going to meet the family' when we'd only known each other such a short time, he finally agreed to it. We hopped on my bike for a wild three-mile ride back to my village. As fate would have it, after I'd introduced Mel to my brother and his girlfriend, then my sister and her boyfriend showed up; then my other brother and his girlfriend arrived unexpectedly. And finally, my parents – returning early from one of their weekend escapes – pulled up and wham! The whole damn family met my three-day-old boyfriend all at once. Since they all knew by then that I was gay, that I hadn't come home Friday night and here was this handsome guy spending the last two days with me, it wasn't hard for them to put the pieces together! There was no need to introduce Mel as 'my boyfriend' – they already knew!"

One of the issues concerning Mel initially was the nearly 13-year age difference between them.

"When we met, Geert was an 18-year-old studying for his high school examinations," Mel recalls, "and along comes this 31-year-old American who might be seen as putting the munch on their young son. But the age difference didn't seem to bother anyone but me. As I recall, his father drove us to the local train station to get back to the hotel where I gathered up my things and headed for the remainder of my five-week tour."

In 1978, there was no internet, no cell-phones, text-messages, FaceTime conversations, etc., so those five weeks and subsequent months were difficult for the two lovebirds to stay in touch. They did so by writing letters and even sending spoken letters on audio cassettes back and forth.

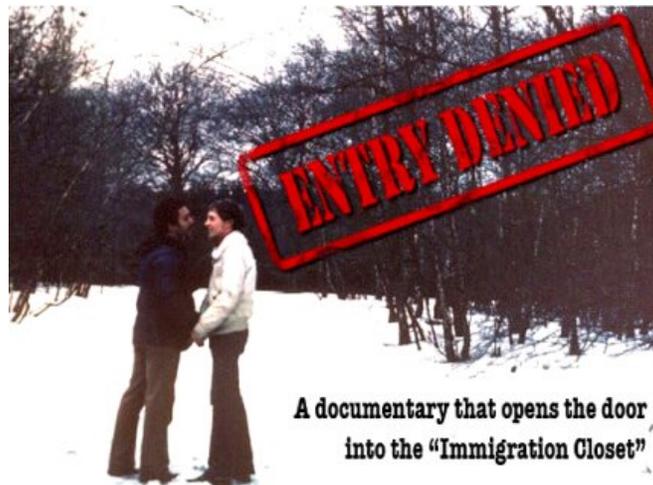
"I went back to Amsterdam in January of 1979, spending two weeks there," Mel recalls. "I thought it might be perfect timing for Geert to come and spend time with me in the U.S. after his finals were over. When Geert applied for a tourist visa to come visit, thinking that would facilitate his application he naively used a "neutral" letter from me, answering the inevitable 'Do you know anybody in the U.S.' question. With his limited knowledge of English, he didn't pick up the nuances. No straight man would ever write such a letter to another straight man!"

The visa was denied and things got even a bit weirder at that point.

"An American Consulate agent actually called my mother," Geert recalled, "asking her if she was aware that my relationship with Mel was not 'normal'. When she said she knew about the nature of our relationship, she was informed that such a relationship is illegal in the U.S. The one letter we received was from the Embassy stating that all of the information in this case would be destroyed, so that the situation would not be held against me if I applied a year later. When I showed up a year later, however, I could see clearly that the old application was still there. The Consular official asked me if I was still planning to see this Mr. Terry again. I shook my head in disbelief; I guess he took that to mean 'no'. He told me to take a seat. A few minutes later, he returned the passport. I thanked him, looked inside, saw the visa, walked out very calmly, and once outside, jumped in the air for joy! Yea!!!"

Nevertheless, the pair was only able to spend about half of the first three years together. Their ongoing situation was included in the 2012 documentary "Entry Denied," telling the story of several international/transnational/bi-national LGBTQ couples who were systematically denied entry into the U.S. during the DOMA (Defense of Marriage Act) era (1996-2013 for Section 2 of DOMA and 1996-2015, making the rest of DOMA unenforceable). One other couple featured in that 28-minute documentary is an American-South African lesbian couple who wound up spending ten years in Canada, in order to continue living together as a couple.

(To see the 28-minute film: <http://www.unaplusonefilms.com>).



The documentary begins with a 25th anniversary celebration for the pair, one

of the happy milestones in spite of ongoing harassment by U.S. immigration authorities. As the documentary also points out, however – because of the risk of Geert not being able to return to the U.S. if he went to visit his family in the Netherlands – his parents came regularly to visit here instead.

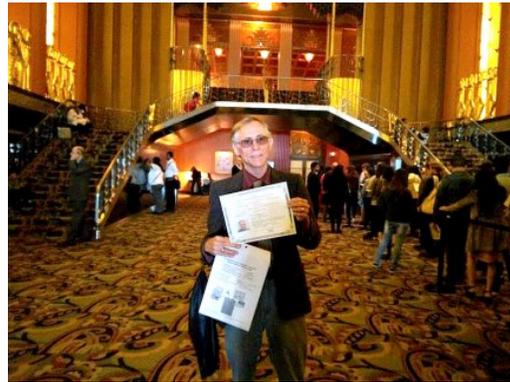
“Unfortunately, at one point, my father was unable to come because he’d been diagnosed with asbestos-related lung cancer,” Geert recalls sadly. “He insisted that I shouldn’t come to see him, because it was too much of a risk – he loved me and he loved Mel too much to support my coming to see him before he died. So I was unable to make that last goodbye or even to attend his funeral. I couldn’t believe that my chosen country – Mel’s country – could do that to me! When I remember how my Dad hugged me and kissed me at the airport when I was leaving for the U.S., it breaks my heart that I couldn’t see him, hug him and kiss him one more time!”

Even after the ban on homosexuals immigrating to the country was lifted in 1990, the ban on HIV-positive people – enacted under Reagan in 1987 – still prevented Geert from immigrating legally to the U.S. Beginning in 2000, NY Congressman Gerrold Nadler began introducing the Permanent Partners Immigration Act, followed by Barbara Lee and John Kerry introducing a bill to lift the HIV ban in both the House and Senate in 2007. After 22 years in existence, that ban was finally lifted in January 2010, giving Geert and Mel a somewhat new lease on life.

“We are so grateful to Barbara Lee for her strong advocacy on behalf of couples like us,” Mel remarks. “And, of course, we were thrilled that she was one of the people who joined us for our wedding in 2008! We have remained active in various immigrant rights groups, particularly those focusing on LGBTQ couples.”



Two milestones: family-attended wedding 2008;



Geert citizenship achieved June 2018

The pair has had a delightful history of positive relationships with each of their mothers and other family members. In fact, Mel’s mother lived with them for about 15 years (1980-1995) and Geert’s mother visited regularly here until such time as Geert could travel freely in and out of the country, particularly important after his Mom was unable to travel. They both still have regular interaction with Mel’s older

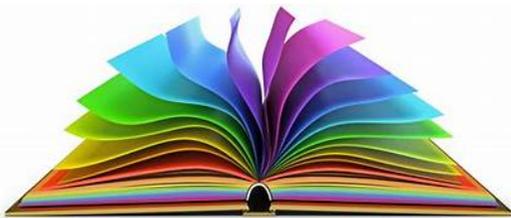


sister, who lives in Massachusetts and Geert's three siblings, who are still in the Netherlands.

In addition to being friends and caregivers with their own families, these two have both made considerable contributions to quality-of-life issues both in the Bay Area and abroad. Mel's career as a physical therapist included working at Adult Rehabilitation in Oakland (operated by Easter Seals), a PT stint in Denmark, plus 30+ years as physical therapist at the UC-Berkeley Health Services, from which he retired in 2007. He also did volunteer work with severely disabled children. Geert worked for 23 years in a Hayward day treatment program for severely emotionally disturbed children. When that funding was lost, he spent the remainder of his career working with the Fred Finch Center, helping provide school-based treatment for special-needs children throughout Alameda County.

Mel has been a member of the Oakland Gay Men's Chorus since 2007 and continues being active in Stagebridge, begun 41 years ago to provide training and participation opportunities for seniors in various aspects of the performing arts and storytelling activities. They were both actively involved in the Nederland-America University League until recently.

Lavender Seniors was honored to have both Mel and Geert attending our Silver Anniversary Celebration last month (in fact, they rescued us at one point by delivering the keyboard for OGMC's performance at the event). We are all deeply sorry at what they were put through over the years in order to stay together, but are deeply grateful to both for their contributions to our community!



BOOK REVIEW

Hateland: A Long, Hard Look at America's Extremist Heart

By Daryl Johnson

Johnson is fascinated by domestic terror groups by way of his work at the Department of Homeland Security. His company is called DT Analytics. He has frequently appeared all over the media such as CNN and the New York Times.

He gives us detailed stories of terror groups. A classic case is Thomas Robb, a member of the Christian identity group in 1979. Robb joined the Knights of The Ku Klux Klan and finally is named the Grand Wizard in the 1980s. He sought to soften the image of his group by stopping the use of the "N" word but continued to defend the white race.



Johnson paints classic accounts of bigots in America. This is a compelling

required read for civil right workers in all countries.

- Frank J. 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 us at karen@lavenderseniors.org or (510) 424-7240 and we will be in touch with you soon. Thank You!



Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch will be our annual holiday and volunteer appreciation at Harry's Hofbrau

A day of that much fun just needs to be repeated.

Last year in December we celebrated our traditional Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch at Harry's Hofbrau in San Leandro. What do you say we do it again!

Lavender Seniors will pay \$5.50 towards the \$12.50 "senior meal" and participants will pay the \$7.00 balance.

Currently-active volunteers will receive their meals free, as part of our volunteer appreciation.

We will provide festive decorations, prizes for just holding the right ticket and

a whole lot of fun.

Your job is to RSVP through eventbrite. [Sign up](#) - it's free to make your reservation.

It will really help if we know how many folks are attending before the last minute. That way the prizes will be better thought out.

So folks, get those RSVPs in and we will see you on December 14th with bells on! (Maybe bells are a bit much but you get the picture.)



Disobedience

This month's Lavender Seniors film series features "Disobedience," a film released in 2018 that chronicles the life of two Orthodox Jewish women (one of whom has mostly left the faith), who continue to struggle with their attraction to each other in a sub-culture that is clearly hostile and homophobic.

New York photographer Ronit Krushka (Rachel Weisz) flies to London after learning about the death of her estranged father. Ronit is returning to the same Orthodox Jewish community that shunned her decades earlier for her childhood attraction to Esti (Rachel McAdams), a female friend. Their fortuitous and happy reunion soon reignites their burning passion as the two women explore boundaries of faith and sexuality.



Since her rabbi father died in the middle of a sermon to his northeast London synagogue, the community chose not to notify Ronit of her father's death. But when she is notified (secretly) by Esti, she decides she needs to fly home to pay her respects. When she arrives at the home of her once-close friend, Dovid, she soon discovers that he is now married to her old love, Esti. That, combined with discovering that many blame her for her father's death (broken heart) and that she has been totally dis-inherited by her father, Ronit struggles with whether to stay around even briefly. Interactions with Esti soon give her the clear signal that she should stay.



Ronit, Esti and Dovid Lighting a Candle



Ronit and Esti in a Dramatic Hallway Scene

What transpires in the succeeding days are intense, to say the least, and informative of this particular sub-culture and its attitudes toward homosexuality.

One observant reviewer of the film had this poignant remark about the two women:

"The love scenes are above all romantic. Both women have been lost, Esti with her dutiful sexual service and Ronit with her reflexive but joyless assertions of freedom. They long for connection."

This film will be shown at 1pm on the third Wednesday, 18th December, in the accessible Carnegie Lecture Hall of the San Leandro Public Library, 300 Estudillo. It appears that the film series will be shifted upstairs to also-accessible-by-elevator Conference Room B for January, February and, perhaps, March of 2020 while room renovation is taking place in the Lecture Hall, though we are looking for alternatives. Stay tuned on that.

The library is accessible to public transportation (two blocks above the Dutton/E.14th AC-Transit bus stop and five blocks above the San Leandro BART station).

Ample two-hour and three-hour parking is available at the Library. For those driving, the library can be reached easily by 580, 880 and Bancroft Avenue.



Stagebridge Salutes Jerry Fishman

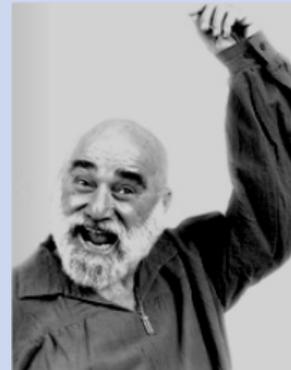
This month's Third Friday Lunch Bunch will feature a presentation by Oakland's Stagebridge, the nation's oldest and most renowned theatre company of older adults – an organization dear for many years to the heart of our fallen Lavender Senior colleague/friend, Jerry Fishman. Jerry passed away one year ago on 13th December 2018 (5th of Tevet 5779 using the Hebrew calendar). The group will dedicate this performance to Jerry.

As many of you know – particularly those who regularly attended Third Friday Lunch Bunch, Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch or the Third Wednesday

LGBTQ Film Series – Jerry rarely missed any of these gatherings the last few years of his life, even as his health slowly-but-steadily deteriorated. From the summer of '18, he arrived at these events in a wheelchair, pushed by his devoted long-term partner, Richard Riffer (they were together nearly 20 years), but always cheerful, with arms extended for the hugs he wanted to both give and receive.

Among the many inspiring productions from Stagebridge – which promotes “creative aging” and “healthy aging” – was their version of “Hair: The Tribal Rock Musical” a few years back, which, of course, Jerry was part of. They also have workshops on story-telling and every other conceivable creative venture through their award-winning Performance Arts Institute.

Check out the current Stagebridge schedule in this newsletter.



Stagebridge Production of “Hair” – and Jerry Fishman in high performance mode

The nutritious buffet lunch (vegetarian option available) will be served promptly at 12 noon on Friday, 20th December, at the North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 MLK Jr Way (corner of 58th Street). Parking lot and entrance are at the rear of the building (off 58th Street).

Please come and join us!

FOUNDERS CORNER

Highlights of a Silver Anniversary to Remember

By Barbara Jue
Co-Founder/Board Member

A standing ovation greeted Congresswoman Barbara Lee when she appeared during the last hour of Lavender Seniors 25th anniversary celebration at Eve’s Waterfront Restaurant on November 9th. This capped off the afternoon’s celebration of good food, socializing, entertainment, proclamations, donor and volunteer appreciations during the celebration attended by approximately 220 East Bay LGBTQ seniors and their allies!



**A Few Lavender Seniors Take a Photo Opportunity with Our Congressional Representative:
Congresswoman Barbara Lee (center), Shawn and Christel Cantlin (left), Co-Founder Barbara Jue and Victor Aguilar,
Jr. President**

Some friends who may not have met in years joyously found each other with wide smiles and energetic hugs. Others were just glad to see old friends and meet new ones on this special day!

Guests were greeted at the registration desk by volunteers and board members, Ana Bagtas and Carmen Chiong, who led sponsored guests to their tables. Vice President Gwen Boozé checked people in with the organized listing of people and payments she had created, as well as greeting family and friends. Some guests, standing out on the deck area watching the sailboats and dragon-boat teams skim by, were welcomed to the celebration by President Victor Aguilar, Jr. Board Secretary John David Dupree checked on performers' needs, sound and video set-ups. Staff of Eve's Waterfront Restaurant made certain the purple cloth napkins specifically purchased for this occasion were folded and placed on the tables.

A Memorial Table was set up. Karen Anderson, LSEB Friendly Visitor Coordinator, assembled the volunteer award certificates. Gift baskets assembled by Gabriel Delgado and his partner, Robert, were perched nearby for door prizes later in the program. Co-founder and board member, Barbara Jue, checked on details that may have slipped through the cracks, like placing simple table decorations such as silver-foiled Hershey's kisses and curled silver & lavender ribbons. And board member Melissa West ran interference for various logistical problems.

Before the sit-down lunch: choice of brick-pressed chicken, seared salmon, or stuffed portobello mushroom, followed by individual decadent fruit-topped chocolate cakes for dessert, the LSEB board blew out candles spelling 25 years sitting on a layered cake. Sparkling apple cider and water were the offered beverages.



**Karen Anderson (L) offering Appreciation to Long-Time Friendly Visitor Volunteers,
River Lebow, Susan Greef and Hosea Turner**

Emcee Peggy Moore's close ties with Lavender Seniors years have been evident since early in its founding, when she was an outreach coordinator. Her Sister's Stepping events had drawn hundreds into the Oakland streets and launched her career on the national stage. She described donating her time for this occasion as a "labor of love", giving up some of her own personal birthday time. Peggy acknowledged the living Founders who attended this anniversary, including Shirley Dennett, age 90; Dee Nagy, Frank Howell in his 80s, and Barbara Jue in her 70s. It was good to see everybody out and about!



Shirley Dennett & Dee Nagy



Frank Howell



**Barbara Jue (right) with San
Leandro's Mayor Cutter**

The three performance groups were (1) the Oakland Gay Men's Chorus, whose first-ever public appearance dated back to a Lavender Seniors event in San Leandro in 1999; (2) Mothertongue Feminist Theater Collective, who dedicated their performance to Lavender Seniors co-founder, Dotty Fowler; and (3) Voices Lesbian A Cappella for Justice, considered the oldest continuously-running Lesbian choral group at 31 years.



Oakland Gay Men's Chorus



**Mothertongue Feminist
Theater**



Voices Lesbian A Cappella for Justice

In his "State of Lavender Seniors" address, President Victor Aguilar, Jr., described its Mission Statement, declaring that "for the past 25 years, we have put together successful programs to support the goal of advocating and

providing services for East Bay LGBTQ seniors." With funds from grants, bequests or legacies, donations and sponsorships, we have continued the great work originally envisioned by Lavender Seniors dedicated and enthusiastic Founders."

"We want to make each Lavender Seniors program more robust," Victor continued. "To do all the things that we plan will require more people power – feet-on-the-ground people power. We need to have an executive director who can propel us forward, acquiring the funding necessary for that progress. Most good charities – like Lavender Seniors – struggle with the scarcity of funding, even though we may all deserve physical and financial support. As we evolve, we need increased recruitment, vetting, training and supervision of dedicated volunteers. Sustained funding is critical to achieving that success!"

He concluded his welcoming remarks by thanking everyone for coming. He referred to those working with LGBTQ seniors as "warriors," that there is strength in numbers and we need to broaden our horizons, at least for now. Maybe there will be no need for Lavender Seniors in another generation or two – but for the time being, we have a community of vulnerable seniors that need our support, advocacy and care.

The honorees saluted during this celebration share one thing in common – their sustained support of Lavender Seniors in word and deed. The Friendly Visitors honored – River Lebow, Susan Greef and Hosea Turner – have averaged eight or more years serving our friendly visitor clients. Some financial sustainers – including the family of Stella Lopez-Armijo and Ina Mae Murri ("Stina") represented by Shawn and Christel Cantlin – who have provided more than ten years of essential monetary support; Jim Wood, the lawyer who shepherded Lavender Seniors through their 501(c)(3) status; Kathleen Miller, who kept the Friendly Visitors Program alive through two crucial transition years, and the cities of Oakland and San Leandro, which have provided support to keep our programs viable as costs of services increase.



Jim Wood and Barbara Lee



Kathleen Miller and Barbara Lee



Photog Sandy Morris & Emcee Peggy Moore

During the celebration, Lavender Seniors received a Resolution from State Senator Nancy Skinner, A Certificate of Appreciation from Rep. Barbara Lee, and Commendation letter from the City of Oakland in celebration of this anniversary. San Leandro Mayor Pauline Cutter shared a table with San Leandro business owners. And – as stated earlier – our own Congresswoman Barbara Lee brought all who were able to their feet! She graciously stayed with us even though she had four other events scheduled that day. Some attendees had never heard before that she felt honored to have been asked ten years ago by openly-gay Congressman, Barney Frank, to co-chair the Congressional LGBTQ Caucus and she remains as committed now to our community as she was then. Thank you for contributing so much to our Silver Anniversary

celebration memories!

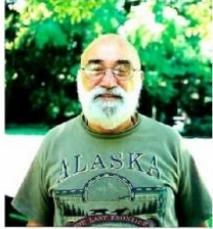
Lavender Seniors board members and other volunteers put many hours into creating this celebration and fundraiser. We appreciate very much that – once again – Sandy Morris was there with her camera to help document our community, as was Pam Spevack!

[Editor's Note: So many photos were taken by Pam and Sandy that we will send out an e-mail "blast" over the next few weeks so that many people can see themselves and others who were there!]

Here's to the launch of another fruitful 25 years! At this time of various high holidays, we are indeed very thankful for donations of time, energy and financial support from each of you who continue to contribute. Happy Holidays to all!

In Memoriam

Fifteen Lavender Friends Lost since the 20th Anniversary



Jerry Fishman



Bea Howard



Gordon Osser



Francis Tom



Marvin Burrows &
Bill Swenor



Natalie Zarchin



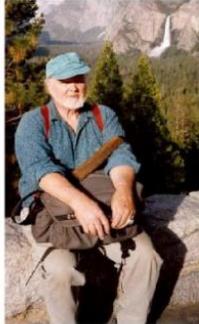
Bill Heck



Grant Peterson



Celeste Newbrough



James Armstrong



Ron Washington



Bill Baillie



Jan Zobel



Ruth Jacobs

**SPECIAL
EVENTS**

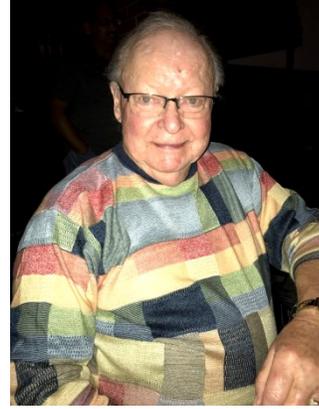
*Royal Grand Ducal Council
OF ALAMEDA COUNTY*

November Coronation / December Fund-Raisers

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay was in the house as the Royal Grand Ducal Council of Alameda County held its coronation ceremony during a fun-filled pageant and very successful fundraiser at the White Horse on Saturday, 23 November.



The Coronation



Leroy Sellberg

The Royal Grand Duke introduced Karen Anderson, Friendly Visitor Coordinator, who spoke of work Lavender Seniors is doing with LGBTQ Seniors and the need for everyone’s support and engagement.



Aja Monet-Ashton, Grand Duke 42 of the Grand Ducal Council of SF and Lavender Seniors Vice-President Gwen Boozé plus some of Aja's other personalities

In addition, the Royal Grand Ducal Council of Alameda County is sponsoring two benefits in December for LGBTQ-focused organizations like Lavender Seniors of the East Bay. Benefits for these events go to the Monarch’s Charity Fund, which has so often donated to Lavender Seniors.

“This organization has contributed so much to Lavender Seniors over our 25-year history, including having given us a large donation this year, as well,” said Barbara Jue, one of the co-founders of Lavender Seniors. “Their ongoing and regular support has been crucial to us, in order to continue providing quality services to the LGBTQ senior community in Alameda County! I encourage the community to come out for these benefits!”

The Royal Grand Ducal Council of Alameda County Presents:

Drag Brunch and Show

When: Sunday, December 8th, 2019

Brunch Seating: 11am; Show Begins: 12 noon

Where: C’Era Una Volta Restaurant, 1332 Park Street, Alameda

(come along the well-signed promenade to the back of the building, Suite D)

Brunch orders from \$7 (fruit plate) to \$17 (full brunch)

[Reservations are recommended via www.ceraunavolta.com or by calling 510-769-

* * * * *

Holiday Extravaganza

When: Sunday, December 15th, 2019 – 4-7pm

Where: Hayward Turf Club, 22519 Main Street, Hayward

These fundraisers help our community! Tell your friends! Come and have a great time!

STAGEBRIDGE

Fall 2019 Performing Arts Institute

November 13 – December 12, 2019



Come play in these final classes of the Fall session:

Wednesday, November 13

1:00-3:00pm · *Improv Singing* with David Norfleet · Choir Room

Wednesday, December 4:

10:00-11:30am · *Anarchist Improv* · Choir Room

Thursday, December 12

1:00-2:30pm · *Vocal Improv and Body Music* with Renée Benmeleh · Angel Room

...and join us for Fall Showcases!

(Free except where noted with *)

Tuesday, November 19:

1:30pm · *Folktales From Around the World* with MaryGay Ducey · New Oakland Room

Monday, December 2:

10:30 am · *Performing a Monologue* with Ely Orquiza · New Oakland Room

11:00am · *Movement Theater Bazaar* with Bruce Bierman · Choir Room

11:00am · *Monday Singing* with Scrumbly · Angel Room

2:30pm · *Musical Theatre: Oliver!* with Ellen Robinson & Bruce Bierman · Choir Room

3:00pm · *Beg/Int Playback Theatre* with Martin Holtz · Angel Room

Tuesday, December 3:

11:00am · *Tuesday Singing* with Scrumbly · Angel Room

3:30pm · *Advanced Playback Theatre* with Martin Holtz · Angel Room

Wednesday, December 4:

10:30am · *Creating Stories That Matter* with Jeanne Haynes · Angel Room

Thursday, December 5:

11:00am · *Thursday Singing* with Scrumbly · Angel Room

7:00–9:00pm · *Staged Reading: 12 Angry Jurors* with Charley Robinson · **The Flight Deck***
suggested donation \$10*

Friday, December 6:

10:30am · *Hip Hop Dance Demystified* with Judith Kajiwara · Gallery

11:00am · *Building a Solo Performance* with Edris Cooper-Anifowashe · Choir Room

Tuesday, December 10:

11:00am · *Joy of Dance* with Bruce Bierman · Choir Room

Thursday, December 12:

12:15pm · *The Play of Clown* with Joan Howard · Gallery

Stagebridge is located at the First Congregational Church of Oakland
2501 Harrison St. Oakland, CA 94612 · (510) 444-4755 · www.stagebridge.org

STAGEBRIDGE

UNITING THE GENERATIONS SINCE 1978

PERFORMING ARTS INSTITUTE

Staged Reading Showcase: 12 Angry Jurors



Date: Thursday,
December 5th, 2019

When: 7:00PM
(doors open 6:30PM)

Where: THE FLIGHT DECK
1540 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94612

Based on an adaptation of Reginald Rose's famous play *Twelve Angry Men*, actors in **Charley Robinson's** Staged Reading Class go from rage to the stage in this 90-minute performance, and now they're sharing this dramatic piece with you!

Join us for an evening of great entertainment while helping support Stagebridge's programs.

Seating is general admission. RSVP at:

SB12AngryJurors.brownpapertickets.com

Suggested Donation: \$10.00

www.stagebridge.org | info@stagebridge.org | (510) 444-4755

Remarkable WWII Rosie



Artist Carol Witten exhibits 60 Digital Prints (diptychs) from her historical essay:

Remarkable WWII Rosie

This exhibition beautifully reveals Witten's style of combining traditional portraiture with a narrative. Through their stories we hear the hammers and watch the soot fall as Rosie reveals the danger, sexism, and racism she endured and overcame to become the most beloved women in America.

Witten interviewed and photographed women now 90 years old, many 100 years old and over, who built with scant training the planes, ships, and ammunition that enabled America to win World War II.

Saturday, 11/09/19 - Sunday, 1/26/20

Jewett Gallery
Main Library
100 Larkin St.
San Francisco

A close-up, detailed photograph of a burger. The burger is stacked with a sesame seed bun, a beef patty, melted cheese, a slice of tomato, a slice of pickle, a slice of onion, and fresh lettuce. The background is blurred, showing a person's hand holding a fork.

Eureka Eat Drink American

Join us for
Giving Tuesday



PACIFIC CENTER
FOR HUMAN GROWTH

Tis' the season of giving!
Join us on Giving Tuesday, December 3rd
as we dine for a cause.

Eureka! will be donating 15% of sales
 from the day to benefit **Pacific Center**
Be sure to mention the fundraiser!

Eureka! Eat
 Drink
 American



**PACIFIC
 CENTER**
 FOR HUMAN GROWTH
 Energy, Discovery, Community

WORKS IN PROGRESS, An Open Mic for Women :

**Fireside Room, Plymouth United Church of Christ
 424 Monte Vista, Oakland**

Sat., Dec. 14, 6:30-10:15 pm - *FESTIVE HOLIDAY PARTY*

Featuring : ***Anna Maria Flechero.*** Born and raised in San Francisco, Anna Maria strikes an extraordinary balance between the roots of her Latin-jazz and R&B upbringing. Known for her stylized interpretations of jazz standards and her own originals about life and love, song stylist/songwriter Anna Maria has performed at international venues as well as in our own Bay Area at Yoshi's Oakland and Angelicas Redwood City, to name a few.

Other wonderful artists will entertain and delight you!!

\$7 to \$10 Admission includes a raffle ticket for one of eight special prizes.

Come celebrate with us ! Adult women only

6:30 – 7:30 Pot Luck – Bring your favorite dish to share.

7:30 – 10:15 Performance, Fireside Room

Hosted by Feminist Author & Poet ***Linda Zeiser.*** Produced by ***Linda & Carolyn Zeiser.*** For information or to sign up to perform, contact Linda at ***(510) 701-1022, ZeiserpoetMC@aol.com.***

Works In Progress is a creative space for women artists: Poets, Musicians,

Comediennes, and Performance Artists. All are encouraged to share their works, completed or evolving. **WIP is scent free** and wheelchair accessible (no accessible bathroom).

Well Connected

Enriching lives and supporting well-being.

(FORMERLY SENIOR CENTER WITHOUT WALLS)

Community Phone Calls

This award-winning program offers activities, education, support groups, and friendly conversation over the phone or online.

Just a few of the things offered:

LGBTQ Chat 2nd and 4th Mondays, 1:00pm - 2:00pm

This group is open to all LGBTQ older adults to connect with others socially in a supportive environment where participants can share individual and collective experiences. Facilitated by Ariel Mellinger, ASW, Support and Wellness Coordinator, Openhouse SF

Music's Memory Lane Tuesdays, 6:00pm – 6:45pm

Each week we'll discuss a hit song, vintage television variety show, or a memorable musician in music history. From Big Band music to the Beatles, we'll dive into our recollections of concerts, lyricists, and pop culture. Facilitated by Steve Maraccini

Newcomers Welcome Mondays, 10/7, 11/4, 12/2 1:00pm – 2:00pm

Are you confused about how to start "connecting" with Well Connected, or interested in volunteering as a facilitator? Learn more about how to make that first phone call, or how to start a conversation as a new facilitator. Learn about why a group is listed in black on the calendar, what those icons mean in the catalog, or how to take a turn to talk. Do you have an idea for a group you'd like to facilitate? No question is too silly or too simple! Facilitated by Patt Schroeder, Covia Program Specialist

View the Current catalog of community phone calls [here](#). Check the [website](#) for more information. To participate in these or other Well Connected telephone activities, or to learn more about their programs, call 877-797-7299 or email coviaconnections@covia.org.



FAMILY CAREGIVER ALLIANCE®
National Center on Caregiving

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 [LGBT Caring Community Online Support Group](#).



CARA Alert – November 15, 2019

A publication of the California Alliance for Retired Americans

[Print/Download](#)

CALIFORNIA MASTER PLAN ON AGING UPDATE

As you may have heard, Governor Newsom created a Master Plan on Aging Stakeholder Group to help develop recommendations for the State to implement in order to build a blueprint to address the needs and concerns of our State's rapidly growing aging and disabled population. CARA has a seat on this Stakeholder group, which has met twice and has a very ambitious timeline.

The Master Plan for Aging (MPA) is seeking recommendations from the public – individuals, organizations, academic institutions, policy makers to help inform the work of the MPA. Below is the list of upcoming meetings of the MPA Stakeholder Advisory Committee (which are open to the public – you can attend in person in Sacramento or call in – go to engage@aging.ca.gov to get the details). Also listed below is the current MPA Framework that has been discussed by the Advisory Group, and a template for providing recommendations. If you are interested in sending in your recommendations on any or all of the 4 Goal Areas, please use the format provided in the template and send it to the engage@aging.ca.gov no later than Dec. 13, 2019.

CARA will be submitting recommendations of our own. We will also keep you posted as there will be public forums/webinars to review ALL recommendations and offer opportunities for discussion before the MPA Advisory Committee acts.

This is an important opportunity to make our voices heard as California endeavors to develop a Master Plan for Aging that will be meaningful and

implemented in the years to come.

1. Master Plan for Aging Meeting Calendar

SAC webinar-only meeting Wednesday, December 18 from 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. with call-in information TBA.

Next in-person SAC meeting Tuesday, January 21 from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at 1414 K Street, featuring Los Angeles County and Los Angeles City presenting the **Los Angeles Purposeful Aging Initiative**.

2. MPA Framework: Vision, Mission, Goals, Objectives, Recommendations

Here is the latest version of the **MPA Framework** document. This is a work in progress, so it may go through a few more revisions before finalized.

Here is a “**Recommendation Template**” to systemically capture recommendations from the subcommittees and focus forums. The template will help bring findings to the full Stakeholder Advisory Committee for discussion, as well as develop, revise and track recommendations for inclusion in the MPA and LTSS reports.

Reminder: The deadline for “initial” recommendations in writing is Friday, December 13, via engage@aging.ca.gov.

Get Social With CARA. Did you know that CARA is on Facebook? Learn about our local activities and meetings, town halls and about other news affecting retirees. **Be sure to like our CARA Facebook page here.** Make sure your friends and family like this page too. Help retirees build power by liking CARA's Facebook page. Every like and share helps spread our message.

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

TOLLFREE 1-877-223-6107 • www.californiaalliance.org



THIS MONTH'S EVENTS

Out Standing Seniors - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Dec 3 & 17, 12:30 - 2:00 p.m. (1st and 3rd Tuesdays)

Hayward Senior Center, 22325 N. Third Street, Hayward

Join Meet-Up

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

LezBold Peer Support Group

Dec 5 & 19, 1:30 p.m. (1st and 3rd Thursdays)

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

[Join Meet-up](#)

Find support and like-minded wonderful people!

Older & Out Therapy Group - Berkeley - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Dec 6, 13, 20, 3:00 p.m. (Fridays)

North Berkeley Senior Center, 901 Hearst Ave, Berkeley

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

Older & Out Therapy Group - Oakland - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Dec 6, 13, 20, 2:00 p.m. (Fridays)

Oakland LGBTQ Community Center, 3207 Lakeshore Ave., Oakland

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

Older & Out Therapy Group - Hayward - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Dec 9, 16, 1:00 p.m. (Mondays)

Hayward Senior Center, 22325 N. Third Street, Hayward

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

Rainbow Seniors - Sponsored by Pacific Center & Lavender Seniors

Dec 10, 12:30 - 2:00 p.m. (2nd & 4th Tuesdays)

San Leandro Senior Center, 13909 E 14th St, San Leandro

[Join Meet-up](#)

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

Living OUT in Livermore - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Dec 3, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m. (1st Tuesdays)

Robert Livermore Community Center Senior Services, 4444 East Avenue, Livermore 94550

[Join Meet-Up](#)

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

Lavender Seniors Board Meeting

Dec 11, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. (2nd Wednesday)

4300 Bermuda, Oakland

A portion of this meeting is open to the public.

Senior Gay Men's Group

Dec 5, 12, 19, 1:30 p.m. (Weekly on Thursdays)

The Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley

Co-sponsor: The Pacific Center, 510-548-8283

[Join Meet-up](#)

Feel alone? Need to find space to be yourself and chat with others? Join us!

Lavender Seniors Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch

Dec 14, noon - 2:00 p.m.

Harry's Hofbrau, 14900 E. 14th St., San Leandro

This month's program: "Annual Holiday & Volunteer Recognition Luncheon" (see info above)

Lavender Seniors LGBTQ Film Series

Dec 18, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. (3rd Wednesday)

San Leandro Library, 300 Estudillo, San Leandro

This month's movie: "Disobedience" (see info above)

Tri-Valley Rainbows - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Dec 19, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. (3rd Thursday)

City of Dublin Senior Center, 7600 Amador Valley Blvd., Dublin 94568

Join Meet-up

A Peer Support Group is a safe & confidential space for LGBT Seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information & to support one another.

Oakland Third Friday Lunch Bunch

Sponsored by City of Oakland Aging/Adult Services & Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

Dec 20, 12:00 - 2:00 p.m.

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

This month's program: "Stagebridge" (see info above)

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay Board of Directors

President: Victor Aguilar Jr

Vice President: Gwendolyn M. Boozé

Treasurer: Carmen Chiong

Secretary: John David Dupree

Founding Member: Barbara Jue

Communication Director: Melissa West

Member: Ana Bagtas

Member: Janell M. Lee

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

Message: 510-736-LGBT (510-736-5428)

Friendly Visitor Program: (510) 424-7240 or

karen@lavenderseniors.org

Mailing Address: 4123 Broadway,
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Oakland, CA 94611

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Newsletter Editorial
Board:

Beckie Underwood

John David Dupree

Barbara Jue

Contact Us

