



Lavender Notes

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

September 2015

Celebrating 20+ years of service and positive change

Volume 22, Issue 9

NATALIE ZARCHIN: Tribute to a Lesbian Activist

August 1922 - July 2015 (age 92)

Natalie Zarchin's perspective on life is highlighted in her contribution to the Lavender Scrolls project: "My lesbian lifestyle has helped me age more successfully and given me permission to do what I want and satisfy my own needs."

When she was 84, Natalie was interviewed by Shirley Hamburg for the Lavender Seniors Scrolls project. Sitting in her El Cerrito home, she shared stories about her life that revealed a woman born in 1922 into a Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York. She served in the Navy WAVES for 3 years during World War II. She married in 1950 and had two children.



Her husband and family moved to El Cerrito in 1969 and Natalie continued in a life filled with social activism first by volunteering at the Berkeley Free Clinic where she became a co-director for a couple of years and moving on to becoming a counselor at the Berkeley feminist counseling collective, "Womanrise" and then working at "A Safe Place", a battered woman's shelter in Oakland. Her many activism efforts prompted her to start Gay and Lesbian Outreach to Elders in San Francisco. She was also a performing member of "Mother Tongue" a group of women speaking on their observations of life transformations.

Other organizations for which she was an active participant reads like a who's who of growing organizations that marked the period of LGBTQ pioneering activism in the greater bay area: Slightly Older Lesbians, Bay Area Women at the Helm, Old Lesbians Organizing for Change, and Lavender Seniors of the East Bay where she once served on the board during its early days.

"We included interviews with her on our training videos," stated Dan Ashbrook, past chair of Lavender Seniors, "targeting medical, mental health and social service providers who may need help in dealing sensitively with LGBT senior issues. Completed less than a year ago, this is a very special legacy for Natalie to leave behind."

She attended many a Women Over Fifty and Friends activities as well, and was considered one of the highly respected elders of the LGBTQ community, often asked to comment during events.

"She was on the steering committee of OLOC and became the communications facilitator for she had a wider system of connection to the National OLOC", states Lynn Brown of OLOC. She kept track of the members and addresses to send hard copies and e-mails to the membership. And when she remained closer to home, she utilized the internet to keep information flowing outward, always connecting people to political issues.

However, Natalie was not a person to be a homebody. According to reports, she was always out and about. How else can you be a connector without being engaged? "I loved to see her dance," Lynn Brown goes on, "Natalie loved to dance!"

In 1974, at the age of 52, Natalie decided being a lesbian activist was going to be her primary political stand, so she immediately came out publicly as a lesbian. She started receiving compliments for all the things she was criticized for in her early life; for being too athletic, assertive, and unladylike. Natalie was also a very talented artist and was in her early 60's when she created colorful pottery at the Richmond Art Center.



**Natalie Zarchin, age 92, at Lavender Seniors Platinum Anniversary Celebration, November 2014
(with vocalist Debra Paschke)**

Some thoughts that Natalie shared on her scroll:

"My Saturn Return" sculpture shows my life story in three twenty-eight year segments, growing up, wife-and-mother, and, finally, my lesbian life."

"When those critical voices come up in your head, just say 'oh there you are again. Hello. Goodbye.'"

"There are still many closeted old gays and lesbians who are isolated and depressed, afraid they won't be accepted in nursing homes or they'll be mistreated."

At the age of 79, she became lovers with a woman that she'd known for over 30 years. Being able to pass as straight is related to ageism. People think that at 84 how could she be in a lesbian relationship? Even lesbians sometimes don't see her as a lesbian because society considers people to be "old" when they're in their 70s, much less 80s.

Comments from the Lesbian community:

"Natalie Zarchin has passed. She has been an active member of our community for much longer than I have been being a dyke. She was always a steadfast supporter of dyke-ness through the years and the struggles. We loved seeing her cheery face at our brunches and her encouraging emails were a great help to me." Mickey

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"The last time I saw Natalie..or I should say the last time I chatted with her, because she came to SO MANY lesbian events, that I saw her several times after that - was when I met with a group of dykes who were going to a play at Shotgun Players in Berkeley. Natalie was by far the oldest person there and I must admit I was astonished that someone with such limited mobility would make the effort to get herself to a dinner and show. Natalie just kept showing up, just kept sending emails, just kept doing, being involved, despite whatever physical limitations she had. She was truly astonishing with her will and her ability to live life fully in the community until the very end. And the community benefited greatly from her work and her presence." Terry Baum

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"I was not close to Natalie, but in around 1980 I spent time with a group at her house. She was a very charismatic woman, to me, as I think powerful women are most attractive. She had a hot tub, in Berkeley or maybe El Cerrito, and had hot tub nights for lesbians, so there were dozens of women, some from SOL and some of us younger, running around in her back yard and hanging out. It was the place to be!"-Dianna Seagiver

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"Natalie Zarchin was rather regular at our East Bay brunches - when not running to her other 15 commitments, that is. She shared some fantastic activist stories from the time many of us were barely born. She cracked some ridiculous jokes-too bad we'll now never have that party to drop the leftover acid from the 70's she's hid in her fridge since. ...You'll get to learn about one of the oldest among us....the foot soldier of the early feminist/lesbian movement in the US. "-Duca Knez.

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"Natalie was a formative presence in my early days of coming out as a Berkeley dyke. To me she represented who and what my mother would have been had she ever become a lesbian (which I truly believe she would have fully embraced). Natalie was our wise crone at SOL, at the Monday night hot-tub gatherings at Sue and Jodi's, at Jodi's family ranch, and at pretty much every Montclair women's event. She was a fixture of our community, tirelessly attending, contributing to, and pushing the boundaries of our political conversations. May her spirit be peaceful, joyous

and in full awareness of her many and loving contributions to our community."-Barbara Zoloth

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"Natalie's beautiful warm smile, her sparkling zest for life, her willingness to put herself on the line for the important social justice movements she believed in will always stay with me and inspire me."-Lilith Rogers

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"I just want to say that OLOC could not have been better represented than by having such a cheerful and caring older lesbian than Natalie Zarchin. She stands for us all and we will be able to hug each other again when we all cross the Rainbow Bridge!" -Suzanne Schmutz

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#### Natalie

In physics time is an arrow  
straight and fast, it flies just one way  
toward an uncertain future.  
In Buddhism time is a flower  
whose full and lustrous bloom  
lasts no more than a moment.

But Natalie, you were a force of nature  
at ninety-two giving computer tips,  
fighting for the rights of old lesbians  
with more energy and dedication  
than I could even imagine.

Instead of a whole house,  
your home became one room:  
photographs of your life, your family  
were framed neatly on the walls.

I saw you there, mouth hanging open  
eyes already in another place.  
Words had deserted you, right, you replied  
in response to everything.

But nothing was right at all.  
Your body had become a placeholder,  
another entity altogether,  
who bore no resemblance to you.

The receptionist at your facility  
had not known what to make of my friends and I,  
three old, butch dykes, aliens from an exotic land.  
She warmed slowly, perhaps realizing  
we are all nothing more than fragile beings  
who live for a while, get sick and die.

Born in 1922, you saw it all  
The pretty child, the shy adolescent,  
the Jewish WAC in World War II,  
the bride, the mom, the reborn dyke,  
you saw it all and then,  
saw it all change.

I could say you were like my mother  
A year older than she would have been,  
I could call you a maternal essence  
but it's not at all true.

Always, you were a peer  
who didn't buy into  
that romantic crap about the tons of wisdom  
that supposedly descends with age.  
In the end, you were simply a person  
whose contemporaries had all left this earth;

a woman, a lesbian, teaching by example  
what it truly means to be old.

One day you could no longer drive.  
A week later, your jaw was slack.  
Your eyes were still open  
but the light in them had vanished.

In physics they say our universe is still growing,  
that our lives are but tiny blips of light.  
In Buddhism they say the cup is already broken.  
But you were the cup from which  
I had not yet finished drinking.

Time is not a cup.  
It is not an arrow nor a flower.  
Time unrolls like a banner, flows like a river,  
bends all our lives in one direction,  
like the wind pushing brutally hard  
against reluctant trees.

We transform, we die  
even one hundred years is not enough,  
at the end, when we are starving  
for just one more hour, one more day.

I saw you vibrant and alive,  
and with one foot in this world, the other in the wilderness.  
As always, you made peace with the unknowable,  
carving out the wild, phantom trail  
each one of us is destined  
to follow. -Joan Annsfire

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"I met Natalie not long after I started working at Lavender Seniors of the East Bay in 2005. She was one of the Board members. She was the one who was always welcoming to me and easy to deal with. Actually, they all were pretty easy to deal with. Natalie was the embodiment of the older lesbian for me. She helped make the job exciting for me.

I had to leave to go back to southern California in 2007 because I had two 90+ mothers in Santa Barbara to have more time with.

I returned last summer for the OLOC convention. It was my first, but there was Natalie and a couple of the others that I remembered from my San Leandro days. Natalie was always right in the center of the action. Again, I was right at home -- welcomed and loved by these dear Lesbians."

Thank you so much for allowing this opportunity to talk about her,

-Barbara Faulkner
Former Executive Director Lavender Seniors

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Natalie's life observations encapsulate the many social values and interactions as only experienced in decades of living. She leads us to better grasp and understand the world in which we live and gives the following generation inspiration to improve the aspirations of lesbians and feminists.

Perhaps Natalie never heard of Marge Piercy nor Barbara Kasoff, but upon her departure as co-founder of Women Impacting Public Policy, Barbara Kasoff quoted this poem by Marge Piercy. It is fitting to state the poem here for Natalie, for she, too, is one of the women reflected in this poetic tribute to activist women:

***What can they do to you?  
Whatever they want.  
They can set you up,  
They can bust you,  
They can break your fingers,  
They can burn your brain with electricity,  
They can take your child.  
They can do anything and you can't stop them from doing.***

*How can you stop them?  
Alone, you can fight,  
You can refuse,  
You can take what revenge you can,  
But they roll over you.*

*But two people fighting back to back can cut through a mob.  
Two people can keep each other sane; can give support, conviction, love, hope.*

*Three people are a delegation, a committee, a wedge.*

*With four you can play bridge and start an organization.*

*With six you can rent a whole house,  
Eat pie for dinner with no seconds,  
And hold a fund raising party.*

*A dozen make a demonstration.*

*A hundred fill a hall.*

*A thousand have solidarity and your own newsletter.*

*Ten thousand, power and your own paper.*



*A hundred thousand, your own media.*

*Ten million, your own country.*

*It goes on one at a time.*

*It starts when you care to act,  
It starts when you do it  
again after they said no,  
And it starts when you say  
"We" and know whom you mean,  
And each day you mean one more.*

And as Barbara Kasoff is quoted:

*"These words remind us that progress occurs one step at a time and never by yourself - always with others. Thank you for taking the time to "care to act." Let's keep our seat at the table but let's make sure we bring many more women with us."*

It sums up Natalie's activism in life.

**"Accept who you are and be open to taking risks." NATALIE ZARCHIN**

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# Monthly Book Review: It's Not Over: Getting Beyond Tolerance, Defeating Homophobia, and Winning True Equality

Houghton-Mifflin- \$27.00

Author- Michelangelo Signorile

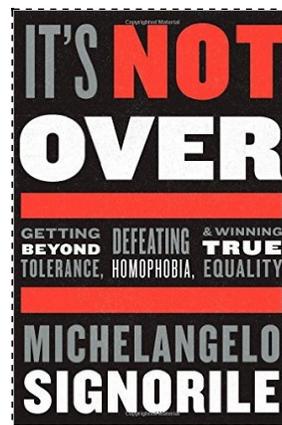
Signorile is well known in the lavender community and is the author of Queer In America. He has a radio show and has written for the Advocate and many other publications. He lives in New York City.

He does a compelling job of exposing homophobia in all its evil guises. Bigotry against transgenders is highlighted. One trans woman was rejected by a beauty saloon because they did not consider her a real woman.

A gay man and his partner were refused a room by a hotel in North Carolina.

A lesbian couple were denied a pool pass for themselves and their children because they were not considered to be a real family.

This is an comprehensive overview of prejudice in in America. A memorable reading experience.  
-Frank Howell



\*\*\*\*San Leandro Potluck...date change this month only.\*\*\*\*

Unity Church is having a memorial for one of their founders on our regular day (second Saturday). We have moved our potluck to the third Saturday (Sept 19th).

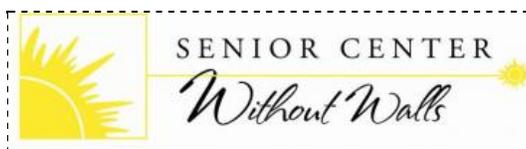


## LGBT Online Support Group for Caregivers

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](http://www.caregiver.org).

## Senior Center Without Walls Community Phone Calls



September 18 1:00 - 2:00pm Hot Air Balloon Ride!

We are thrilled to welcome back Trace Rew to SCWW! Trace will be taking us for another "fun-tastical" hot air balloon ride with twists and turns throughout the adventure. Have your imaginations ready and enjoy this magical ride!

Book Appreciation & Discussion Now twice a month! 1st & 3rd Saturdays 3:00 - 4:00pm

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

Trivia Time Wednesdays 4:00 - 4:30pm

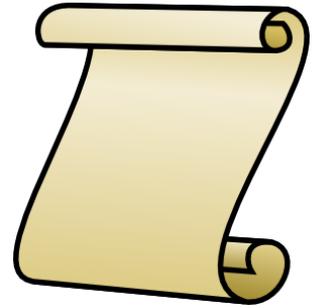
We have spent our lifetimes collecting information, some of it more useful than others! Here is your

chance to test your knowledge of names, places, facts and figures. Amy Schaible hosts.

View the [Aug-Sept 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](mailto:info@seniorcenterwithoutwalls.org).

## *Letters to the Editor*

Tell us what you think of this new column. Send your letters to the editor to: [info@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:info@lavenderseniors.org)



## *Swim for Women's Cancer Research Center*

### Support Cancer Research

Since 1986, WCRC has provided programs and a network of support and essential resources for women with cancer and their families. Their programs include emergency financial assistance, psychotherapy, in-home practical and emotional support, cancer navigation, support groups, community health education and a wide range of wellness classes.



The best thing about their services: they are offered free of charge, thanks to the generosity of donors like you! Please make a contribution to your favorite swimmer at

<http://www.wcrc.org/swim/>

October 3th and 4th, 2015

9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Trefethen Aquatic Center

Mills College, Oakland, CA

Lavender Senior member, Suzanne Schmutz, is swimming in this event again this year. Just enter her name on the web page to donate in her name. Please give generously.

Here are some donation suggestions, but feel free to contribute as much as you like:

\$36.00 = a dollar for every 50-yard lap!

\$72.00 = a dollar for every 25-yard length!

\$176.00 = ten cents for every yard!

All donations are 100% tax deductible.

## *Third Wednesday Lavender Seniors Film Series: 16<sup>th</sup> September 2015*

### **"The Kids are All Right"**



This 2010 LGBT comedy-drama focuses on a lesbian couple ("Nic," played brilliantly by Annette Bening, and "Jules", played equally brilliantly by Julianne Moore) who have given birth to two children using the same unknown sperm donor. As teenagers, the sister ("Joni", played by Mia Wasikowska) and brother ("Laser", played by Josh Hutcherson) become curious about their father. Upon somewhat reluctant and secret investigation, they discover that their "donor dad" is "Paul", played by Mark Ruffalo.

When the kids secretly make contact with their "Dad", all hell breaks loose, launching a new chapter for everyone as family ties are defined, re-defined and re-re-defined. Besides featuring an all-star cast, the film received wide critical acclaim ("Rotten Tomatoes" declares 93% positive reviews of nearly 300 world-wide.

"Hilarious, Heartfelt and Irresistible" - Rolling Stone  
"A generous, nearly note-perfect portrait of a modern family" - New York Times  
"One of the best films of the year" - At the Movies  
"Funny, Smart and Sexy" - Entertainment Weekly

Come and join other East Bay LGBT seniors from 1-3pm on the third Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> September, in the Thunderbolt Theater at Marina Community Center, 15301 Wicks Blvd., San Leandro. Popcorn, water and Martinelli's sparkling cider will be served during the showing, followed by a discussion of the issues brought up in the film.

For those using public transportation, take BART to the San Leandro station, where pick-up between 12:30-12:45pm can be arranged by e-mailing [JohnDavid@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:JohnDavid@lavenderseniors.org) or calling 510-532-8951 at least a day in advance.

For those driving from the north, get off I-880 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 I-880 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.

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## *Third Friday Lunch Bunch: Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2015*

### **The Great Broadway Sing-Along** with Bruce Bierman



Sit back, relax, digest, and sing (or dance beside your chair) along to some of the greatest Broadway tunes ever written! Nosh on some Gershwin, Bernstein, Sondheim, Jule Styne, Cole Porter and more. Words and lyrics will be furnished along with full orchestra back up (via I-pod). Unleash your inner Ethel Merman and 'Sing Out Louise!'

## About Bruce

Bruce currently serves on the teaching faculty of the Stagebridge Senior Theatre Company in Oakland. He began its first musical theater program directing and choreographing such musicals as: *Fiddler on the Roof*, *South Pacific*, *Hair*, *Funny Thing Happened*, *Chicago* and *Pippin*. He is co-founder of 'Intergeneration: Bringing Queer Generations Together through Art' and artistic director of NewStages - a theater company that serves LGBT seniors.

## About the Third Friday Lunch Bunch

As usual, food (including both vegetarian and non-vegetarian) begins being served buffet style at the Third Friday Lunch Bunch at 12 noon on Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> September. After LGBT seniors and their allies have had time to get re-acquainted and enjoy a meal together (approximately 12:40-12:45), plus share a few announcements, the Stagebridge program will begin.

The Lunch Bunch is held at the North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 MLK Jr Way, in the former Merritt College Building. Parking and entrance are at the back of the building off 58<sup>th</sup> Street. For further information, please contact Kathleen Miller, Lavender Seniors Coordinator, by telephone at 510-574-2073 or by e-mail at [Kathleen@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:Kathleen@lavenderseniors.org).

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## Monthly Events

### Out Standing Seniors

**September 1, 11:15a.m.-2:00 p.m.**

**September 15th, 11:15a.m.-2:00 p.m.**

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.*

### Lavender Seniors Advisory Board Meeting

**September 9, 7:00-8:00 p.m.**

1420 Santa Maria Street, San Leandro

*A portion of this meeting is open to the public.*

### Support Discussion Group for Aging Lesbian Women

**September 3 & 17, 1:30 p.m.** (1st and 3rd Thursdays)

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

*Find support and like-minded wonderful people!*

### San Leandro Potluck **\*\*\*\*\*NOTE DATE CHANGE THIS MONTH ONLY\*\*\*\*\***

**September 19, 12:00-2:00 p.m.** (3RD Saturday *this* month)

1420 Santa Maria Street, San Leandro (Corner of Joaquin & Santa Maria)

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

### Senior Men's Group

**September 10 & 24, 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!*

### Oakland Lunch Bunch

Sponsored by City of Oakland Aging & Adult Services

**September 18, 12:00-2:00 p.m.** (3rd Friday of each month)

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

*This month's program is: "The Great Broadway Sing-Along" see info above.*

### LGBT Film Festival

**September 16, 1:00-3:00 p.m.** (3rd Wednesday of each month)

Marina Community Center, 15301 Wicks Blvd, San Leandro

*This month's movie is: "The Kids are All Right" see info above.*



# 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.

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[510-593-6978](tel:510-593-6978)

## Lavender Seniors of the East Bay Board of Advisors

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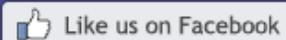
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### Lavender Seniors

is a project of

LIFE ElderCare



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