



# Lavender Notes

*Lavender Seniors of the East Bay  
a Program of the  
Oakland LGBTQ Community Center*

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*Celebrating 28+ years of service and positive change*

*September 2023- Volume 29 Issue 9*

## STORIES OF OUR LIVES

### Susan Elaine Musicant

Susan Elaine Musicant was born in February 1949 in Los Angeles. She was welcomed into the family as the third and final child as her mom had hoped for a girl. With two older brothers, each sibling arrived six years after the previous child. Their father was a physician who had come to the West Coast during WW-II as a MASH unit doctor.

"My Dad had immigrated to the United States at age 4 with his Eastern European Jewish parents along with what he described as 'a big tribe of family'," Susan says. "They first settled on the East Coast, where they had family. After his military service, however, he wanted to come back to California, so the whole family moved out here."



Dad Kissing Great-Grandson with woman

Judaism played a major role in Susan's childhood since her grandparents were very observant and lived close by.

"In those days, girls were not encouraged or expected to go through having a Bat Mitzvah, like boys were for their Bar Mitzvahs," Susan recalls. "However, I was already chafing about the fact that this coming-of-age process was only for boys. Sadly, I found the preparation for this wasn't actually meaningful for me, so I



Susan's family surrounding Mom

bailed after 4 years of Hebrew schooling."

Education was highly valued in Susan's family.

"I never felt an ambition to be a mother," she says, "but I always knew I would go to college. I attended UCLA, followed by UC Berkeley. I ended up dropping out of Cal after the student strike in response to the U.S. invasion of

Cambodia in 1970 shut down the university. There was a lot of turmoil amongst young people who were trying to find a sense of what is right and wrong. I got involved in the women's movement, which I feel planted the early seeds for me acknowledging I am a lesbian."

Before getting involved in the Women's Movement, Susan had been clueless to the possibility of having romantic relationships with another woman.

"Like many young people, I was looking for love," she recalls, "so I had a boyfriend in high school. I enjoyed the friendship, but when he started to talk about marriage, I was puzzled as to why he would be thinking about that! When I contrast my generation with my mother's, I acknowledged that for me and my peers, sex outside of marriage was easy and acceptable. At UCLA, I joined a Women's group. In that group, I had a few more experiences that made me become open to dating women. It was through those experiences, I pretty much realized that 'straight business' was a bit of a bore to me, by comparison."

Coming out was not a traumatic process for Susan.

"I received very little reaction from my parents or siblings," Susan recalls. "I still have the letter I wrote to my father, which explains that I merely prefer relationships with women. The letter spends almost as much time critiquing patriarchy and calling for racial and economic justice that I would like to see in the world. The letter acknowledges how those beliefs impact a familial relationship just as much as sexuality. I've never seen anything wrong with being a lesbian. Ultimately, my family moved forward knowing that I would continue dating women."

Prior to her relationship with her wife, Sharon, Susan had two significant long-term relationships.

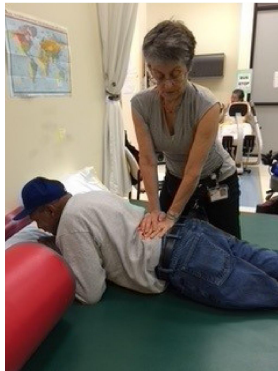


Susan & Sharon Singing at their 2003 Commitment Ceremony

"The endings of both those relationships were painful," Sharon recalls, "but good learning experiences. Sharon and I have been together for the last 30 years. We met at a lesbian singing camp. Sharon plays the guitar and sings. I play the fiddle and also play piano. We currently live in Maui where we have played music and sung at the Farmers Market in Kihei nearly every Saturday for the last 2.5 years. As devastating

fires swept through Maui – particularly Lahaina, as well as near Kihei – last month, we've remained safe. However, we're both very shocked and saddened that such a tragic thing could happen here."

Susan spent much of her career in the Bay Area. She eventually went back to school to complete her BA. After graduation she worked as an Adaptive Physical Education Teacher with autistic and developmentally delayed children.



Susan working with a CEI client

"My first exposure to physical therapy was with babies," she recalls, "which made me want to learn more about physiology and neurology. I received a Master's degree from the Physical Therapy program at Stanford University. Since I always had an affinity for working with older adults, I worked for 25 years at Center for Elders' Independence in Alameda County." (For more information, see <https://cei.elders.org/>.)

Since 2015, Susan has been a Doctor of Physical Therapy. She became an APTA Board Certified Geriatric Physical Therapy Specialist in 2017. Over the last 5 years, Susan has worked with DayBreak Adult Care as their Injury Prevention Coordinator.

"When the pandemic hit, I transitioned to working remotely," she recalls, "which allowed us to make the move to Hawaii. I've continued to offer Zoom classes for older adults who are stuck at home and who don't have access to physical activities. I love that the work incorporates Tai Chi, Fall Prevention, and even movement inspired by my love of Aerial Dance."

In fact, before deciding on her career path, Susan considered dance as an option. She has done Modern Dance, Ballet, Contradance, Afro-Haitian Dance; Belly Dance, and has learned some basic Hula in Hawaii.



Women Walking Tall, Lake Merritt, with Terry Sendgraff - 1992

"I saw the 'Fly By Night' performance in 1970," she recalls, "and it knocked my socks off! I got involved with this style of Aerial Dance in the 70's and continued for about 10 years through Low-Flying Trapeze Improvisational Dance, known as 'Motivity', with Terry Sendgraff. Aerial Dance and Contact Improvisation have brought me great joy, so I still incorporate those kinds of movements into my own classes with elders!"

Travel has enriched Susan's life experiences.

"I still have family in New York and Southern California, as well as abroad in England and Israel," Susan says. "In my 'Hippie Days,' I traveled through Europe with a boyfriend. One of the places I've never been that I'd like to go is Japan, for its sense of beauty, landscape, and culture. I would also like to return to the UK to visit family. I remain close with my cousin there and my extended family still gets together over Zoom every Sunday."

One of the many exciting adventures for her was going to Africa to work





with her cousin's US/Africa Children's Fellowship.

"It was pretty amazing to be sharing some of American culture with young African students," Susan recalls. "Picture me teaching them how to do the Virginia Reel at the same time I'm demonstrating how to play the

fiddle!"

In addition to dance, Susan is interested in developing her own mindfulness and meditation practice. She has been doing a lot of reading about it and has joined a Buddhist Sangha (support group).



Family Gathered for Mother's 98th Birthday

Prior to COVID she was also involved in "Village Song", (<http://www.villagesong.com>) an organization bringing participatory music to make a difference in the lives of Alzheimer's patients.

"I was introduced to this program when my mother was in Assisted Living before she passed away at age 98," Susan recalls.

"When I retire, I plan to volunteer with older adults in the areas of music, dance, and movement."



Celebrating Sharon's 60th Birthday, Mendocino Coast – Their Beloved Cat, Pearl

Susan explains a bit about her philosophy and the way she's lived her life.

"My activism did not involve flag waving and protesting," she says. "It has been about sharing my gifts where they might be helpful."

This point is demonstrated by her commitment to working with non-profits like CEI and DayBreak.

"As an organization, DayBreak also provides a lot of caregiver support, which is near and dear to my heart," Susan says. "I also volunteer providing massage to women with cancer. It all has to do with how we change and grow over time. People can re-invent themselves as they get older (and wiser) and know what they want to do and to give in life. As a somewhat introverted Jewish person tending to be self-critical, there is a lot to be said for loving the gifts

you have.”

Thank you, Susan, for sharing some of the richness in your life with Lavender Seniors and other members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies. All best to you and Sharon for the rest of 2023 and far beyond!

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## 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.

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### 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 [Jessie@OaklandLGBTCenter.org](mailto:Jessie@OaklandLGBTCenter.org) and we will be in touch with you soon. Thank You!



## Lavender Seniors Third Friday Lunch Bunch

Friday September 15th, 2023 @ 12:30pm The North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 Martin Luther King Jr Way, Oakland, CA 94609

Speaker TBA

RSVP link below (Required - lunch provided for registered guests.)

<https://forms.gle/HUQFes7VDY1poo526> - Don't Forget to "Submit"

For more information, please call Jessie at 510-781-2926 or email: [jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org](mailto:jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org)

# *Third Friday* **Lunch Bunch**

Every **Third Friday @ 12:30pm**  
North Oakland Senior Center  
5714 MLK Way



Please call **510-781-2926** or email: [jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org](mailto:jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org) to **RSVP**

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## September Social Seniors

Friday September 29th, 2023 @ 12:00pm, The Watermark, 1440 40th St, Emeryville, CA 94608

A new monthly social gathering for LGBTQ+ Seniors/Elder -

RSVP: <https://forms.gle/HRe8fAqMutUsAgwJ6> (Required - Lunch provided for registered guests.)

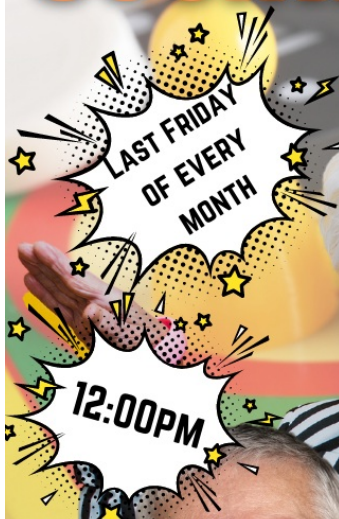
For more information, please call Jessie at 510-781-2926 or email: [jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org](mailto:jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org)



# SOCIAL



# SENIORS



**A SOCIAL GATHERING FOR LGBTQ SENIORS**

**@ THE WATERMARK**

**1440 40TH STREET, EMERYVILLE, CA 94608**

**CALL 510-781-2926 OR EMAIL: [JESSIE@OAKLANDLGBTQCENTER.ORG](mailto:jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org) FOR RSVP LINK**



+



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**SATURDAY + SUNDAY  
SEPTEMBER 9TH & 10TH**

**SATURDAY: TBA**

**SUNDAY PARADE: 11 AM**

**SUNDAY FESTIVAL: 12 PM - 6 PM**

**OAKLANDPRIDE.ORG**

Located in Uptown Oakland, 20th and Broadway, near the 20th Street BART station.

Stop by the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center/Lavender Seniors of the East Bay booth and say "Hi".

Volunteers are always needed and welcomed to help out. Contact Jessie at [Jessie@OaklandLGBTQCenter.org](mailto:Jessie@OaklandLGBTQCenter.org) to sign up.

Check out the [website](http://OaklandPride.org) for more information on the events that day.





+ **Pridefest**  
OAKLAND

Grammy nominated headliner

**Deborah**  
**Cox** **PERFORMING LIVE**

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Downtown Oakland on Broadway

**FESTIVAL: 12-6pm**

Uptown Oakland, 20th  
& Broadway

\*Near 20th ST



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**WWW.OAKLANDPRIDE.ORG**

## 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:

(The times are no longer listed in the generic catalog, once you have signed up you will get a link to a catalog with times in your time zone)

#### LGBTQ Chat Wednesdays, 9/13, 9/27, 10/11, 10/25, 11/8, 11/22, 12/13, 12/27

This group is intended for participants who identify as LGBTQ, and is an opportunity to connect with others socially in a supportive environment, where participants can share individual and collective experiences. We will create an inclusive place to share our stories with each other and build a sense of community. Facilitated by Kay George

#### Mystery Melody Saturdays, 9/2 – 11/4

The mystery melody themes, with guidelines to help you get started are: 9/2 Songs about work and workers ('16 Tons'); 9/9 Songs about or for children (Brahms' Lullaby); 9/16 Active verbs, run, dance, sing ('Run Around Sue'); 9/23 Songs from musicals; 9/30 Adjectives ('Big Bad John'); 10/7 In the Sea, fish, ships ('Beyond the Sea'); 10/14 At night, sleep, dreams ('Daydream Believer'); 10/21 Question words, who, why, when, do; 10/28 Songs of the 60s; 11/4 Anticipating the holidays, Christmas, Thanksgiving. Facilitated by Jan Knowles

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](mailto:coviaconnections@covia.org).



#### Out Standing Seniors - Hayward - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Sept 5 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. (1st Tuesday)

Meets via Zoom email [outstandingseniors@pacificcenter.org](mailto:outstandingseniors@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

#### Living OUT in Livermore - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Sept 5 2:00 - 3:30 p.m. (1st Tuesdays)

Meets via Zoom email [livingoutlivermore@pacificcenter.org](mailto:livingoutlivermore@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to safely share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

#### Older & Out Therapy Group - Virtual - Sponsored by Pacific Center Meets via Zoom Tuesdays 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Please email [olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org](mailto:olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org) for more information. No drop-ins. Intake is required for attendance.

*Free therapy group for LGBTQIA+ community members age 55+*

#### Life after 40 - Gay & Bisexual Men's Group

Meets in person at Oakland LGBTQ Community Center every 1st Tuesday at 7:00pm & virtually every 3rd Tuesday at 7pm.

*A support group for men over 40*

Older & Out Therapy Group - Oakland - Sponsored by Pacific Center In-person at Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

Wednesdays 1:15pm - 2:45pm

Please email [olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org](mailto:olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org) for more information.

Intake is required for attendance.

*Free therapy group for LGBTQIA+ community members age 55+*

Older & Out Therapy Group - Berkeley - Sponsored by Pacific Center In-person at N. Berkeley Senior Center

Fridays 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Please email [olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org](mailto:olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org) for more information.

Intake is required for attendance.

*Free therapy group for LGBTQIA+ community members age 55+*

Rainbow Seniors

Sept 12 & 26 12:30 p.m. (2nd & 4th Tuesdays)

San Leandro Senior Community Center

email [rainbowseniors@pacificcenter.org](mailto:rainbowseniors@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

Tri-Valley Rainbows - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Sept 21 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. (3rd Thursday)

Meets via Zoom email [trivalleyrainbows@pacificcenter.org](mailto:trivalleyrainbows@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

Oakland Third Friday Lunch Bunch

Sponsored by City of Oakland Aging/Adult Services, Lavender Seniors of the East Bay & Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

Sept 15 12:30 - 2:30 p.m. (Third Friday)

North Oakland Senior Center

*This month's program: ('TBA'- see info above)*

Social Seniors

Sponsored by Oakland LGBTQ Community Center and Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

Sept 29 12:30 p.m. (Last Friday)

The Watermark

1440 40th St, Emeryville

*See flyer above for registration info.*

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Lavender Seniors of the East Bay  
a Program of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center  
Advisory Council



Lavender Seniors of the East Bay  
a Program of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

Message: 510-736-LGBT (510-736-5428)  
or [info@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:info@lavenderseniors.org)

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Beckie Underwood  
John David Dupree

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