



LAVENDER NOTES

Newsletter of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

Volume VI, No.11 – November 2001

A Volunteer Services Program — project of The Tides Center

• 1395 Bancroft Ave. • San Leandro, CA 94577 • (510) 667-9655 •

Senior Outreach Notes

And the beat goes on — since July we have gained 10 new Senior Participants since we began our Title III contract with the Area Agency On Aging in July. In addition, the program has more telephone calls coming in from mainstream senior providers asking about Lavender Senior's services.

On October 10th, Lavender Seniors hosted a volunteer appreciation event for the three agencies that initially came under the Collaborative Lesbian & Gay Senior Services Project. The new East Bay Center for Philanthropy located at Oakland's Civic Center Plaza was graciously provided for the event by the East Bay Community Foundation.

Some 35 outreach volunteers from Spectrum, Marin, New Leaf Outreach to Elders, San Francisco and Lavenders Seniors enjoyed a day of socializing, renewing acquaintances from previous trainings, sharing experiences and inspirations of being a volunteer helping LGBT seniors overcome isolation and become more connected to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups in their local community, and learning from one another. A theme that came out of the day's presentations is: one by one we are building LGBT community, through a visit, a call, a community presentation, it all counts.

Jan Fraser, a retired Ph.D. in Gerontology, and a new volunteer from San Ramon, joined with our Project Director, Dotty Fowler for the October Volunteer Meeting held on Saturday, October 20, for a lively discussion on "Continuing Care" and issues related to dementia. Jan brings a wealth of experience in elder care services that we will all be able to learn from.

The monthly Volunteer Meetings will be held on the third Saturday every month (9:30 – 11:30 A.M.) at the San Leandro Community Church. Next month, Lisa Ho from the Alameda County Area Agency On Aging will speak on the basics of community-based case management services and accessing existing Senior Services. For December, the film, "Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter" will be featured. All Outreach Friendly Visitor, Telephone and Panel Speaker Volunteers are urged to attend the regular monthly meeting.—*Joyce Pierson*

Monthly Outreach Volunteer Meeting

Third Saturdays, 9:30 – 11:30 A.M. – November 17, 2001

Speaker: Lisa Ho, Alameda County AAA

Basics of Case Management & Access to Senior Services

Location: San Leandro Community Church

A personal note: As many of you know, I was unexpectedly hospitalized for a few days in October, but I'm doing OK now. My thanks to everyone who helped in my absence and the various get-well cards and messages!—*Joyce*

LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

by Dot Hallinan

A group of liberal activists within the Catholic Church is celebrating its 25th anniversary and its expansion to 25,000 members. The full name of this group intrigues me: "Call to Action: Liberty and Justice for All," more popularly known as the CTA. So, a friend and I attended their celebration and conference in Los Angeles, last August. This national group (with links to international groups around the world) are the folks who published the 1990 "Call for Reform in the Catholic Church" in the New York Times. It has planks for justice in society, but also planks for justice within the Church itself.

This is where we, the LGBT community, come in. There were a number of delegates from various Dignity groups; and the New Ways Ministry group was there as well. This latter is a group founded originally some years ago by Sr. Jeannine Gramick and Fr. Robert Nugent to welcome, support and encourage gays and lesbians within the Catholic Church. The two founders continued to minister to lesbians and gays even after they left the New Way group in the hands of gay and lesbian lay leaders. Unfortunately, Rome had begun an investigation of the two religious workers which resulted in a mandate that both must stop giving classes, workshops and retreats for lesbians and gays. Fr. Nugent ceased his work. Sr. Jeannine, while she no longer gave workshops nor retreats, did tell her story of what had happened to her and to her work.

See 'Note on Author' on page 6

'Liberty and Justice' on page 5

A Volunteer Services Program

Lavender Seniors provides a Volunteer Services Program to isolated gay and lesbian seniors. It also presents LGBT educational panels to care providers who offer services to all seniors. Lavender Seniors is a member of the Lesbian and Gay Senior Services Collaborative along with New Leaf Outreach to Elders in San Francisco, Senior Spectrum in Marin. Lavender Seniors is funded in part by Alameda County Area Agency on Aging, the East Bay Community Foundation, Horizons Foundation, Gateway Initiative of the SF Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund. We gratefully acknowledge this support and that from all other donors.

LAVENDER NOTES

is the newsletter of
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 San Leandro, CA 94577
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Mission Statement

The mission of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay is to improve the quality of life of older gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered residents of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties through community outreach, advocacy and education.

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There are no membership dues. All persons over 55, their partners, and guests are welcome. The cost of mail makes it necessary to request a donation of \$15 dollars per year to receive the newsletter. Visitors or persons interested in learning more about Lavender Seniors may receive the newsletter for three months without charge. None will be turned away for lack of funds.

Signed articles represent the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay.

Inclusion of a name in this newsletter does not necessarily indicate a person's sexual orientation. §

The Leather Scene: a Closer Look

In this segment of our series on LGBT issues, we focus on the "Leather/Fetish/BDSM" community. Before we can explore the topic, we need to understand the basics. What does BDSM stand for? The letters overlap to denote Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism. What's the significance of leather? In this community, it isn't worn for fashion purposes. Instead, it is an expression of self (a "second skin"), a fetish, or a declaration of membership in the group (but some in the community don't wear it, and some outside the community do).

A controversial topic, Leather / Fetish / BDSM (hereafter shortened as "BDSM") is becoming more widely known and accepted. In 1999, the National Organization for Women recanted its former policy statement that BDSM involves "exploitation and violence" and now recognizes it as an affectional orientation. Still, BDSM is not widely embraced, and the positive aspects of BDSM practices are not generally understood or acknowledged outside the community.

BDSM practices include the following: infliction of pain through flagellation, electric shock, fire and wax, or cutting and branding; bondage; fetishism; and role-playing (such as Master/Slave, Cop/Perp, Sadist/Masochist, Daddy/Boy). For some, BDSM involves sex or eroticism; for others, it does not.

BDSM activity is generally referred to as "play" because it is considered pleasurable and not part of "real" life. Any given BDSM "scene" involves two or more participants acting as "top" (dominant) and "bottom" (submissive). Some individuals play all (or most) of their scenes in the same role, adopting

(from *SAGE Newsletter*, Sept. 2001,
New York City)

stable identities as tops or bottoms. Others switch roles depending on scene or partner. But whatever their choices for BDSM play, the participants' roles don't necessarily correspond to their personalities or positions in real life. Some prominent, high-powered individuals choose to bottom in BDSM scenes, for example.

Today's BDSM community is markedly different from its beginnings in the 1950s, when the society was small, limited, and clearly defined: Milton Schwartz (cruising name "Bill"), who was involved from the start, says members in the early days didn't usually switch roles, and they joined the society to satisfy deep S/M desires first felt in childhood. Today, he says, many individuals are just experimenting the lifestyle. The community has grown dramatically, and he believes organizations like Gay Male S/M Activists (GMSMA) promote membership, offering demonstrations on safe ways to perform scenes. He doesn't applaud these promotional efforts, and he sees their educational focus as "cold-blooded."

But GMSMA's educational approach may also have stimulated growing acceptance of BDSM, especially among those who charged it was violent and abusive. GMSMA emphasizes their activities are "safe, sane, and consensual." In contrast to victims of violence and abuse, who exercise neither choice nor control, BDSM practitioners make a conscious decision to enact scenes together. And each participant has the power to end a scene, often using a "safeword." Practitioners also engage in extensive pre-scene discussion of their desires, expectations, roles, and limits. Finally, excessive use of alcohol or drugs before a scene is discouraged, helping ensure "sane" encounters.

'the leather scene' on page 3

Subscription Renewals

When renewing your subscription, please make the check payable to **The Tides Center/Lavender Seniors**

This newsletter is available in **Adobe Acrobat Reader** via E-mail; request: hendriksen@aol.com
 510-652-6906

BOOKS

Reviewed by *Frank Howell*

A Whosoever Church: Welcoming Lesbians and Gay Men into African American Congregations

By Gary David Comstock

Westminster John Knox Press

There has been much controversy in recent years about homophobia in the churches. But little attention has been paid to prejudice against gays and lesbians in the black congregations. This has led to other forms of denial like failing to come to grips with AIDS in any form.

Gary David Comstock, a University Protestant Chaplain and Associate Professor of Sociology at Westleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut has challenged the status quo with a stimulating new collection of opinions by twenty black ministers within the black community, including Amos Brown, who is well known in the San Francisco community.

The members of the clergy represented here are mostly positive and accepting in tone. Rev. Irene Moore admires the blacks who sing in the church. "We call gay males the 'choir queens'." King (Martin Luther) even said that you can't get good music unless you've got some gay boys up there in the choir."

The problem of homophobia is also connected to the attitudes of black macho males who tremble at any threat to their manhood.

It is ironic that churches are usually regarded as the soul of Christian love and acceptance. But the greatest prejudice is all too often generated at the ground zero of Christianity.

Gary Comstock gives us the cannon fodder we need whenever black gays and lesbians are attacked. He demonstrates that light can be found in the center of a dark forest.

Completely Queer: The Gay and Lesbian Encyclopedia

By Steve Hogan and Lee Hudson

Henry Holt, paperback, \$25.00 – 1999

Time for a class quiz: Who wrote the first gay anthem? Answer: Madeline David. Who was the first gay man to address the Democratic National Convention? Answer: Jim Foster, 1972.

These and other alluring facts can be found in this readable, informal survey of gay and lesbian history. The conventional A to Z arrangement provides a generous supply of pictures and graphs. For example, you can find a graphic display of gay authors and their pseudonyms, gay slogans, a chronology of the gay games, and a listing of detectives and the books they appeared in.

The subjects range widely – biography of ancient personages to contemporary figures, lavender life in the countries of the world, hate crimes, homophobia, gay groups, and political life.

This is a wonderful reference book or you can simply relax and browse through it.

Donor Acknowledgments

Doris M. Fischer Trust

Kate Rosenblatt

Hal Seip

*

**Especially to honor the
victims of September 11**

*Bobbie Jarvis
and Meg Bruynell*

**

Jeanine DeBacker

(for office adding machine
and lots of tape)

And all the other folks who gave
generously of their time and effort.

The Leather Scene

(from page two)

Still, criticism of BDSM persists. For example, some outside the community can't understand how BDSM practitioners could submit to pain, believing they must suffer self-hatred. But pain can lead to intense feelings of pleasure, stimulating the body's release of endorphins — chemical substances that create an emotional high. For some people, pain leads to an ecstatic, spiritually transcendent experience, creating a sense of unity the partner and with the universe.

Some charge that BDSM is not egalitarian and that it reinforces the culture's unequal power relationships. But before any given BDSM scene — which admittedly involve unequal power dynamics — all players participate equally in defining limits, roles, and activities. And rather than blindly reinforcing inequality, BDSM power play enables an exploration of how power functions in everyday life, in work interactions as well as personal relations. Through engagement in BDSM power play, some speak of gaining increased awareness of power games and better ability to assert themselves in relationships.

In fact, some practitioners say BDSM play actually offers therapeutic benefits. BDSM scenes can evoke repressed feelings of loss, rejection, inferiority, and abandonment. Some scenes allow practitioners to reenact painful incidents in a setting in which they exercise control, thereby transforming the experience. And many scenes foster powerfully intimate exchanges of responsibility and trust between a top and a bottom.

BDSM practices are diverse and complicated. Individual practitioners experience the practices in uniquely personal ways. Whatever their reasons for participating, their right to do so is increasingly being affirmed as the BDSM community grows. This shows that society is becoming more tolerant and that more people are recognizing the complex nature of pleasure and sexuality, as well as power and pain.—*Beth Kling*

Sources include *Leather Folk: Radical Sex, People, Politics and Practice*, ed. Mark Thompson, and *Urban Aborigines*, by Geoff Mains.

¡Happy Birthday!**Fred Jennings***November 1***Robbie Coles***November 3***Dot Hallinan***November 6***Dotty Fowler***November 8***Warren Palmtag***November 10***Robert Yates***November 11***Grant Peterson***November 13***Roger Dougherty***November 20***Edd Dundas***November 22***Betty Dudley***November 25***¡Feliz Cumpleaños!****Project Director's Report**

Approaching the end of calendar year 2001 with a look at Lavender Seniors programs of the last year reveals that this has been a period of continuous development in all aspects of our programs.

The Board of Lavender Seniors elected a new president and decided to establish a project director position separate from the Board to direct the organization's program activities. This year Lavender Seniors contracted with a new fiscal sponsor, the Tides Center in San Francisco. For a 9% fee they handle all of our financial activities and give advice and support about legal, human resources and insurance matters as needed. Their services have given an important boost to our fast developing project of friendly visiting, phone reassurance, educational presentations and social opportunities. Recently Lavender Senior's new Board President, John Ellefsen, became a commission member of the Alameda County Area Agency on Aging; his work and presence on the Commission has brought a new visibility to the senior LGBT community in the East Bay.

The governing board of the Collaborative of three county senior LGBT agencies of which we are the start-up member decided earlier this year to no longer raise funds as a separate entity.

This has put pressure on the Lavender Seniors to move into fundraising in a more intense way. We have had some success with this, submitting proposals to various foundations; however, the need to raise money in more diverse ways remains an ongoing challenge. Lavender Seniors will be seeking more financial and volunteer support from the entire East Bay LGBT community.

It was most gratifying to many of us to be able to attend the day long Collaborative volunteers get-together on October 10 at the East Bay Community Foundation in Oakland. Lavender Seniors hosted the day for volunteers from all three counties' senior LGBT projects. It was a day of discussion about friendly visiting, of training by site coordinators and just sitting around talking over some good food. One of the important needs that was identified out of the day's activities was that of reaching greater diversity in the programs of all three counties.

Many thanks to all who worked on this event, to those who set it up, those who participated and to the East Bay Community Foundation who graciously allowed us to use their handsome new meeting space.—Dotty Fowler

SHORT NOTES*by Sidney Pouffe***Reward Offered**

During remodeling of his home, one of our members had a devastating theft. A well-disguised box containing approximately 25 *dildoes* went missing. Some were one-of-a-kind!

If you have any information about this *heinous* act, please contact Larry Buttwinick at (510) 727-0790.

Along the Way

John Ellefsen, our president, is home from successful cataract surgery.

Nancy Fugett is visiting her favorite sister in Texas, where Nancy used to live.

Joyce Pierson is home from the hospital — where she got the good news that surgery was not needed, after all.

—Sid

BIZARRO Piraro

Presentation of the Month: Joyce Pierson and Outreach Volunteers

will talk about the work they do as friendly visitors and phone support volunteers. Some participants will join in to talk about the visits, calls and other forms of assistance that they receive.

Saturday, 12 Noon • Monthly Potluck Meeting • Program at 1 P.M. • November 10

If your name begins with the letters A through H — Bring a Main Dish

I through P — Bring a Salad

Q through Z — Bring a Dessert

San Leandro BART station shuttle is available. Call voice mail day before: 667-9655 to arrange pickup.

(from page one)

Liberty and Justice for All

Hundreds of letters reached the Vatican, who in 1999 prohibited her from ever speaking of lesbian and gay issues again. With the support of her religious congregation and the help of canon lawyers and much prayer, Jeannine made what is called "a conscience decision," saying, "I choose not to collaborate in my own oppression." So it is that we were able to attend a workshop given by this courageous nun on how to form "a conscience decision" when necessary, even when it may not seem to be in line with papal edicts and pronouncements.

Jeannine Gramick was not the only controversial Catholic to present at the CTA conference. On a Sunday edition, on the front page, the LA Times ran a story, under the headline: "The Nuns Who Defied Vatican's Order To Be Silent," about a Roman Catholic monastic community practicing a 1500-year-old spiritual way of life, the Benedictines of Erie, Penn. In a radical act of conscience, the sisters and their prioress refused a Vatican order that they forbid their sister, Joan Chittister, a renowned feminist, author, and Benedictine nun for 50 years, to speak at a conference of the Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW!) group held in Dublin in late June, 2001. Rome (which had declared the ordination of women's issue closed for debate since the mid-1990s) inexplicably backed down. A papal spokesman stated that there are no plans for disciplinary measures in this case.

It became clear as we attended various workshops during this very full weekend that throughout its 25-year history the CTA has made it a point to provide a platform for Catholic theologians and pastoral leaders persecuted by the Vatican and the hierarchy. In one case, the Vatican felt pressured enough that they rescinded a priest's year-long excommunication. Chittister, who is 65, spoke to the CTA members at the close of the conference, stating that she acted in the Benedictine tradition against blind obedience. "I am honestly, genuinely committed to the notion that silence and silencing is not good for the church." We all cheered.

The membership of the CTA is a small percentage of the Catholics in the US, much less in the world. Still, we have the same overall purpose as Christians and non-Christians in this new millennium: the humanization of the human race whatever our differences, sexual orientation included. As Chittister puts it: "The question for the church is whether humanization of the human race will lead as well to the Christianization of the Christian churches. It's time to bring into the light of day the discussions that lurk behind every church door, in every seeking heart" (Joan Chittister, O.S.B., address to the Women's Ordination Conference, Dublin, June 30, 2001.) —Dot Hallinan

Questions or comments? Please E-mail me at DOROTHYHALLINAN@msn.com or call 925-829-7379.

Our Mailing List Lavender Seniors does not lend, sell or give away its mailing list to any outside organization.

Your support is crucial to enable the *Lavender Seniors* to continue its role as a vital resource to our community. Please take a moment and send your donation today.

Here's my gift of: \$10 _____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$75 _____ \$100 _____ other _____

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Please make checks payable to
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Lavender Seniors
1395 Bancroft Avenue
San Leandro, CA 94577

Thank you for your generosity!

☐ Please contact me about including Lavender Seniors in my will. ☐ Please contact me to volunteer.

Calendar of Activities

Senior Men's Afternoon

1:30 – 3:30 P.M.

2nd and 4th Thursdays

November 8 and 22

2712 Telegraph Avenue,
Berkeley

Co-sponsored by *Pacific Center*
and *Lavender Seniors*

East Bay Women's Support Group

Meets 2nd and 5th Friday
(November only)

November 9 & 30: 1:15 – 3 P.M.

Meets at *Pacific Center*,
2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley

Fellows of East Bay

Second Sunday, 5:30 – 8:30 P.M.

Social Club for mature men and their admirers. Monthly Potluck dinner and social held the second Sunday of every month at Oak Center Towers, 1515 Market Street, Oakland.

Bring food and drink to share and a \$4 donation.

Note on Author

Dot Hallinan, the author of the article on current policy towards LGBTs in the Catholic Church, is one of Lavender Seniors' earliest volunteers and one who has remained integral to our service project. She currently oversees the phone reassurance volunteers. (See *Liberty and Justice for All* on pages 1 and 4.)

Women Over Fifty and Friends WOFF

a social club for lesbians, has an active social schedule. Monthly potluck-planning meeting the first Saturday of each month at 6 P.M.

For information, contact Barbara Jue,
508 Broadmore, San Leandro,
(510) 633-0398.

Office Wish List

We need a decent **paper shredder** to destroy confidential papers.

Contact Nancy at the office number.

Searching for LGBT Poor People's Stories

Are you on welfare or have you ever been? We would like to hear your story.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Racial and Economic Justice initiative is looking for stories from gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered people of color and all queer poor who are on welfare or who were on welfare.

We are working on a welfare publication that will talk about welfare and welfare reform in general and also identify how welfare is a GLBT issue. Some examples are: Homelessness and Hunger in GLBT Community, GLBT Seniors Have No Access to Benefits, homeless GLBT youth, lesbian mothers, transgendered people who are harassed, GLBT immigrants, and many others like these. Therefore, we are trying to identify how welfare has been discriminatory. We are also looking for stories about how (the old) welfare helped people, but how the rules of the new welfare reform will hurt people.

Contact Ingrid at 212 604-9830 X25 or e-mail at iryveradessuit@ngltf.org.

A Lesbian/Gay Happening at North Berkeley Senior Center

Thursday, November 15: 1:30 P.M.

Film:

If These Walls Could Talk

Even if you've seen this film before, there will be an interesting discussion, so bring a friend and enjoy the film *and* the discussion.

The Royal Grand Ducal Council of Alameda County

Proudly salutes our *Gay and Lesbian US Military Veterans* with a "STARS AND STRIPES SHOW." When: Sunday, November 11 (Veterans Day), Show Time: 1700 hrs. (5 P.M. for civilians). Where to Report: Rainbow Room, Hayward. Officers in Charge: Royal Crowned Countess Marge Ramirez and World Ambassador Frank Salerno. So get into that uniform or wear red, white, and blue! Prizes, Raffles, Chow! A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the first GLBT veterans monument in Cathedral City, California.

The Royal Grand Ducal Council of Alameda County

in conjunction with Bill Baillee & Regent Grand Duchess X Mama Portugal (Don Silva) invite everyone to their 35TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY. Saturday, November 17, 2001 at the (newly reopened) World Famous Turf Club, 22519 Main Street, Hayward. Party at 7 P.M. Show at 8 P.M. No Gifts, please. *Donations to the charity will be greatly appreciated.* All entertainers welcome! Food - Fun - Auction - Raffle. 100% of the proceeds will benefit two charities: 50% to **Children with Aids** and 50% to **Project Open Hand**.