



LAVENDER NOTES

Newsletter of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

Volume VI, No.9 – September 2001

A Volunteer Services Program — project of The Tides Center
• 1395 Bancroft Ave. • San Leandro, CA 94577 • (510) 667-9655 •

Senior Outreach News

Are you ready to gear up for the Fall activities that will renew our spirits for the ongoing outreach to isolated lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender seniors that we hope to reach in various parts of Alameda County? Summer is almost gone and I am hoping all of you had a healthy and enjoyable few months.

As reported last month, the new contract with the Alameda County Area Agency on Aging began July 1. I have sent in our first month's report for the friendly visits, telephone reassurance, and shopping assistance services. We currently have six senior participants receiving these weekly services thanks to our Volunteers! This work is the very heart of the Senior Outreach Services.

Our goal for this program year is to serve 27 LGBT Seniors and to provide community education about the presence of Lavender Seniors within the local mainstream health and social services. To accomplish these efforts requires training for existing volunteers and a more rigorous recruitment for additional volunteers. As I have said before in my monthly update, this kind of volunteerism can be a very satisfying experience and personally rewarding.

Since February 2000, the Senior Outreach Services have served 16 senior participants in their place of residence, including two Seniors living in assisted living center. Our community education panel volunteers have presented at 15 service provider agencies, reaching 96 individuals. We reached out to two Senior Centers, the North Berkeley Senior Center and the Emeryville Senior Center, offering information about serving LGBT seniors. The major ongoing challenge of serving LGBT seniors is that so many of us are unknown to our community. Too often a life-time of being closeted keeps us isolated from one another.

Being closeted, in combination with other old age related issues such as ill health, poor transportation, lack of family or other kinships, housing and financial limitations further complicate one's well-being.

'Outreach News' on page 4

20th Century Immigrant Experience

This month's mystery person was born in 1924 in Vienna. Her mother, who was born in 1894, was Lithuanian. At that time Lithuania was part of Russia; later, but before World War II, Poland acquired Lithuania. Her mother, Olga, was one of six children, a family of three boys and three girls. They had only one overcoat for the girls so each girl went to school every third day.

They lived in Vilna which was the seat of Jewish culture in Lithuania; it was called the "Jerusalem of Lithuania." Her mother was a teacher and came to Vienna with a group of seven to study with pedagogues in that city. Her mother met her Dad, Rudolf, in Vienna; he was also attending school there. His father worked as a shoemaker in Vienna and his mother began apprenticing at 11 years old to make artificial flowers. Mystery person was an only child; her father became a lawyer in Vienna. After that the family went back and forth between Vilna and Vienna; they spoke both Yiddish and German.

In 1932 Hitler began his ascent to power, which culminated in the actual take-over of the German government in 1938 by the Nazis. Antisemitism in Austria was especially strong and she later learned that all her relatives in Vilna were murdered by the Nazis and that her father's brother was murdered in Russia in one of Stalin's "retraining camps."

In 1938 a doctor in Chicago gave her family affidavits in support of their migration to the US. The doctor had to prove that he could sustain the would-be immigrants in this country. Having accomplished that, they came to the United States by ship in December 1938 and moved into rented rooms in Jewish Cooperative housing in New York.

go to page 3

*'20th Century
Immigration'*



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
Lavender Seniors of the East Bay
 1395 Bancroft Avenue
 San Leandro, CA 94577
 510-667-9655
 fax 510-667-9909
 lavenderseniors@email.msn.com

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.

Advisory Board

John Ellefsen, President
Frank Howell, Vice President
Ina Mae Murri, Secretary
Bobbie Jarvis, Treasurer
Meg Bruynell
Marvin Burrows
Eugene Marangoni
Natalie Zarchin

Project Director *Dotty Fowler*
Site Coordinator *Joyce Pierson*
Admin. Assistant *Nancy Fugett*
Editor *Bert Hendriksen*

Founding Members

Carol Beth, Bill Baillie, Doreen Brand, Meg Bruynell, Marvin Burrows, Shirley Dennett, John Ellefsen, Dotty Fowler, Dorothy Hallinan, Beverly Hickock, Jerry Holmes, Frank Howell, Doris Fischer, Bobbie Jarvis, James Joslin, Barbara Jue, Barbara Konecny, Stella Lopez Armijo, Bonnie Jean MacKenzie, Donna Montgomery, Ina Mae Murri, Diane Nagy, Ray Robb, Camille Scontrino, Don Silva, Margaret Shepherd, Bill Swenor, and Natalie Zarchin

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. §

President's Report

Thanks to everyone who participated in the August Pride Picnic. An estimated 100 people attended, and as usual, there was enough delicious food to feed a gourmet army. The spot, the Mallard picnic area, turned out to be well shaded all afternoon, with a big grassy lawn and plenty of space to stretch out. I chatted with people there I hadn't seen for a long time. Thanks to GLOBE for keeping the annual picnic tradition going strong, and a special thanks to our own *Marv Burrows* for all the work he did on organizing the event. See you all again at the next August picnic!

I also want to personally thank the Lambda Youth Group and their director, *Christina Cappelletti*, for our August potluck program. Once again, I'm amazed at the social, political, and psychological distance we've come as LGBT people since the days we were young. Amazed also at how the fundamental issues remain the same: coming to terms with our real feelings and desires, coming out to family, friends, and peers, and the basic need we all have to live in a safe environment where everyone is treated with respect. The only mystery is: why do some people still find that "agenda" such a threat?

See you next month, when I'll report on the ILGA Gay Global Summit, the local LGBT Elders Conference, and whatever else comes up.—*John Ellefsen*

Rainbow Afghan

A big, warm thank you to Peggy Alices for donating a beautiful hand-made rainbow-colored afghan for a raffle at the August potluck. The raffle was won (honestly!) by John Ellefsen.

Best of all, \$159 was raised for Lavender Seniors, above and beyond our usual collection basket. John has already put the gorgeous afghan to good use to help keep his partner Mac cozy. Mac, you see, has a warm heart but poor circulation, so even during the summer he gets chilled.

Thanks again, Peggy, for a thoughtful and generous donation representing many hours of work and yards of yarn. We encourage other artists and crafts persons to donate their creations for occasional raffles such as the one we had in August. Contact any of the Board members or staff for further information.

Event

**Alameda County Leather Corps
and Dan Herrera present**

Beauty's Beach Blanket

Featuring Hunky Lifeguards and Bathing Beauties! Food, Entertainment, Auction, Raffle, and 50-50 Drawing.

95% of the proceeds will go to the Lighthouse Community Center in Hayward. The fundraiser will take place on Sunday, September 16, from 4:40 to 8:30 P.M. at the Bench and Bar, 120 11th Street, Oakland, one block from the Lake Merritt BART Station.

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

Courting Justice: Gay Men and Lesbians v. The Supreme Court

By Joyce Murdoch and Deb Price
Basic Books - \$32.50 - 2001

The Supreme Court stands majestic and aloof. Few of us know what transpires behind the closed doors in Washington. The justices hold their judicial cards close to the vest.

Joyce Murdoch, an editor at the National Journal, and Deb Price, who writes a nationally syndicated column for the Detroit News, have made a gallant attempt to pierce the veil. Court documents on old cases are hard to locate, so much of their information was obtained from former law clerks who wielded considerable influence over the minds of their employers.

Much of the legal interpretation is deeply subjective, for the Constitution says little about love and sexual attraction. Homosexuality is the "gay exception." The court spent years attempting to avoid the opportunity to confront lavender love in any form. The first major breakthrough occurred in 1957 when the court ruled that *One, Inc.* possessed the right to use the U. S. mails to send their gay magazine to the membership. The immigration service made unrelenting war on gays for years and only stopped the harassment in recent years. The third sex was classed as psychopathic by nature.

But certain justices emerged as champions of gay rights, most notably Justice William O. Douglas and William Brennan. They set the stage for present day advances in privacy rights and freedom of the press. In one arresting case on homosexual pornography the government advanced the argument that the viewing of such material made psychiatric therapy more difficult. Through the years the lower courts have evolved into a more sophisticated understanding of human sexuality. The highest court in the land is mired in 19th century morality.

In most cases involving gay rights the voting in court is close. *Bowers vs. Hardwick*, the classic case study in homophobia was lost by one vote. The

BOOKS

Book Reviewer: *Frank Howell*

Georgia police accidentally entered a private home and discovered two men engaged in an act of sodomy. But this incident revolved around two consenting adults in private. This was a major blow to the homophile movement.

The one bright spot in recent years was *Romer vs. Evans*. Right-wing groups in Colorado were determined to make any kind of gay political activity illegal. Basic human rights were literally submitted to popular vote. Justice Kennedy from Sacramento, a Reagan appointee, stated the case persuasively when he wrote, "a bare desire to harm a politically unpopular group cannot constitute a legitimate government interest."

Justice Scalia ranted and raved in opposition. He compared homosexuals to murderers, polygamists, and animal torturers. "It is nothing short of preposterous to call [them] politically unpopular."

Murdock and Price survey the current crop of justices and observe a mixed bag: Rehnquist, Scalia, and Thomas are the hard core homophobes; the most liberal members are Stevens, Souter, Ginsburg, and Breyer; and the two swing votes are Kennedy and O'Connor. The Bush nominees will be crucial in the coming years. The work of the human rights activist is never done!§

20th Century Immigration

(from page one)

Mystery person was 15 years old and, although she spoke English which she learned in Vienna, she was shy in school and didn't talk for a long time. She graduated from high school at 16. Having stayed in close touch with other refugees who were connected to the Labor/Zionist movement, that is where she met her future husband. Her mother died in 1939 of breast cancer, leaving her alone with her father who traveled, lecturing on Jewish history and folklore.

At 16 she entered Hunter College which was free at that time; it cost only

Affectionate Men: A Photographic History of a Century of Male Couples

By Russell Bush

St. Martin's Press - \$25.00

Picture books are wondrous things that transport us back in time and place. The photographs offered here range from the campy to the studious pose. The entire history of the camera and its effects are explored here from the invention in the 1850's to the instant photos of today. The collection actually stops in the 1950's.

We can never imagine what thoughts and emotions coursed through the minds of these men. Some were probably not even gay; others were simply clowning around. But they all express deeply human feelings that reach across time. What a marvelous gift for inquiring minds. Let your imaginations run wild. §



\$.50 for the book fee and \$2.00 for the diploma. Interested in science, she soon finished at Hunter and secured an assistantship at MIT for two years.

She had a relationship with a woman when she was 18 which lasted five months; she saw a psychiatrist who told her "You will outgrow this." She married at 21 and in 1949 she and her husband decided to go to Israel. They stayed two years and she gave birth to a son in the kibbutz. Her husband was involved with the Socialist/Zionist Union and she

continued on page 4

Immigrant Experience

(cont'd from previous page)

worked for the Weitzmann Institute, doing research on contagious organisms. They returned to the US in the 50's and took up residence near New York city with, by this time, their two sons. Her husband worked at various jobs and she started attending Columbia University, specializing in microbiology and biochemistry; five years later she received her Ph.D. However, they were "impoverished." Her husband took a job working in Detroit and came home once a month.

Mystery person, in her 40's started to develop hypertension. She moved to Detroit to be near her husband, went to work at Wayne State University as a research associate and in the 70's adopted an 11-year-old Korean/Caucasian girl named Sandy. The marriage, however, had started to fall apart and they separated. Later she married again, to a bisexual man, and they moved to California with full knowledge of each other's sexual orientation. She returned to lesbianism and joined the GLOE program. In 1988 her second husband died as a result of a routine operation and neglect at a hospital in San Francisco. She picketed on the street in front of the hospital for a year to protest this treatment. This, as you may have guessed by now, is Ruth Michaels.

Ruth contributes to the Lavender Seniors as a member of the program committee which is much appreciated by our advisory board and staff. She has lived in Berkeley for many years, is active at the North Berkeley Senior Center, the Coalition of Jews for Justice, the Holocaust Survivors group and the Mothertongue Readers Theatre. All of her children are engaged in the helping professions in different parts of the country. Her oldest son lives in the East Bay with his two children — the younger son is a social worker in Boston and her daughter works as a respiratory therapist in Las Vegas.

Thanks, Ruth, for bringing to Lavender Seniors your knowledge, experience and support.

—Dotty Fowler

Outreach News

(from page one)

The essence of the Older Americans Act community senior services is to provide support services to help older adults, 60 and over, to maintain independence in their homes and to help prevent unnecessary or premature institutionalization. Senior Centers, Meals on Wheels, Information and Assistance, Paratransit, In-Home Services, Legal Services, Case Management, etc. are all designed to assist seniors. The federal funding that comes to the local level relies heavily on the local support of volunteers to do much of the "foot work" of serving the needs of the many diverse senior groups.

Social isolation is a major problem many elders face and in the LGBT world, isolation is compounded by homophobia — from society and from our own personal internalization. The policy of Lavender Seniors is not to "out" any person who either receives our services or participates in our social activities. All knowledge regarding the senior participants is kept confidential; we do not give out names to anyone. Respect for privacy is a number one priority in our Senior Outreach Services.

If you are interested in learning more about being a volunteer in your geographic area, please contact me at (510) 667-9655 or e-mail: gpi6rson@aol.com. The next Volunteer Training will be held on Saturday, September 15, 10 A.M. – noon, followed by a complimentary lunch.

—Joyce Pierson
Outreach Coordinator

For New Volunteers Special Outreach Volunteer Training

Saturday, September 22
10 A.M. – Noon

1395 Bancroft Ave., San Leandro

Regular Monthly Volunteer Meeting
Thursday, Sept. 6, Noon – 2 P.M.
Brown Bag Lunch – Beverage and
Dessert provided

(No Saturday meeting this month
except for new volunteers on 9/27.)

¡Happy Birthday!

James Ortiz

September 3

Robert McKenna Jr.

September 5

Larry Buttwinick

September 6

Linda Spencer

September 9

Donna Montgomery

September 11

Kathy Carnahan

September 16

Chester Curtis

Alan Pardini

September 19

Frank Hoveland

September 20

¡Feliz Cumpleaños!

The Purple Moon Dance Project presents

The Tenth

Fort Mason's Cowell Theater

Friday & Saturday, September 7 & 8
at 8 P.M.

Tickets & information call 415
441-3687 or ticketweb.com

\$21 advance/\$25 door
(senior discounts)

Artistic Director: Jill Togawa

Collaborating artists: Alena
Cawthorne and Arisika Razak

**Celebrating 10 years of present-
ing dances exploring passion,
intimacy and desire between
women.**

What Is Bisexuality/Bisexual Identity/Biphobia?

By Lani Ka'ahumanu

Bisexuality is the capacity for emotional, romantic, and/or physical attraction to more than one gender/sex. I use gender/sex with the understanding that every biological sex can present as any gender. Sexuality, biological sex, and gender are fluid. Thus far, the language is inadequate to express our new understandings on these issues. Therefore, in some instances quotes are used with certain words (i.e. "opposite"), to highlight areas where language is problematic.

A person who self identifies as bisexual affirms complexity and acknowledges a reality beyond the either/or dualities of heterosexism. A bisexual identity speaks to the potential, not the requirement, for involvement with more than one gender/sex. This involvement may mean sexually, emotionally, in reality, or in fantasy. Monogamy and non-monogamy are relationship choices regardless of sexual identity. Some bisexuals are monogamous, some may have concurrent partners, others may relate to different genders/sexes at various periods of time. Most bisexuals do not have to be involved with more than one person at a time in order to feel fulfilled.

Identity has nothing to do with sexual behavior or experience. Bisexuals, despite the sexually insatiable stereotype, may or may not be sexually active, may or may not have been sexual with more than one person, or may never have been sexual at all. As with all sexual identities, whom one is, or is not having sex with, or whether one is being sexual or not, has nothing to do with the validity of a self-professed identity. A lesbian is still lesbian, a gay man is still a gay man, and a heterosexual remains a heterosexual whether they are being, or have ever been sexual, or not.

Integral to this dynamic is the automatic assumption people can be defined by the gender/sex of their current or potential romantic interest. For example: two women are assumed to be lesbians in a "lesbian" relationship; two men are assumed to be gay in a "gay" relationship; and a man and woman are assumed to be heterosexual in a "heterosexual" relationship. However, any, or all of these people could be bisexual. And depending upon monogamy and non-monogamy agreements and choices, any, or all of these folks could have sexual behavior with more than one gender/sex whether they identify as bisexual or not. The only visible "bisexual coupling" within the monogamist driven heterosexist framework is three people, two of "same" gender/sex and one of the "other" gender/sex. This not only perpetuates the stereotype that bisexuals cannot be monogamous, but also in order to be bisexual, one must have concurrent male and female lovers.

Bisexual people cannot be defined by their partner or potential partner, so are rendered invisible within the either/or paradigm. This invisibility (biphobia) is one of the most challenging aspects of a bisexual identity. Living in a society that is based on and thrives on opposition, on the reassurances of "balanced" polarities of dichotomy affects how we see the world, and how we negotiate our own, and other peoples lives to fit "reality."

Most people are unaware of their homosexual or heterosexual assumptions until a bisexual speaks up/comes out and challenges this assumption. Very often they are then dismissed, and told they are "confused" and "simply have to make up their mind and choose." For bisexually identified people to maintain their integrity in a rigid and slowly changing heterosexist society they must have a strong sense of self, and the courage and conviction to live their lives in defiance of what passes for "normal."§ Portions previously published in "A Bisexual Identity Has Never Spread HIV" in the National Lesbian Bisexual HIV Prevention and Education Manual, 1995, and from conversations with Gerard Palmieri, Dannielle Raymond, Loraine Hurchins and Cianna Stewart. More information: aloha2@mind spring.com, or 415-821-3534.

Changing the World, Building New Lives:

1970s photographs of Lesbians, Feminists, Union Women, Disability Activists — & Their Supporters

By Cathy Cade

September 15 through November 17

at the *Photolab Gallery*, 2235 Fifth Street, Berkeley

Reception for the Artist

Saturday, September 15

5 P.M. – 8 P.M.

Lab and Gallery hours: Mon. to Fri. 8:30 to 6:30, Sat. 9 to 3 P.M.

In the 1970's women were demonstrating for gay rights, in defense of Yvonne Wanrow and Inez Garcia, and to end Somoza's dictatorship in Nicaragua. Women were becoming auto mechanics and welders. Nurses and stewardesses were on strike. Lesbian mothers, disabled women and their supporters were in the streets

defending their rights to raise children. The Berkeley/Oakland Women's Chorus was singing songs of revolution and witches.

These images and more were captured by Cathy Cade, a participant in many of these movements. Most of these 40 photographs were published in local and national movement media.

With great warmth, Cathy shows the interrelationships of the different struggles for justice and social change.

Venue is wheelchair accessible.

Calendar of Activities

Presentation of the Month:

James Keller

His topic will be: **In and Out of the Closet in Modern Poetry**

James Keller is a poet, writer, world-traveler, and teacher par excellence.

Saturday, 12 Noon • Monthly Potluck Meeting • Program at 1 P.M. • September 14

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

I through P — Bring a Main Dish

Q through Z — Bring a Salad

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

Senior Men's Afternoon

1:30 – 3:30 P.M.

2nd and 4th Thursdays

September 13 and 27

**2712 Telegraph Avenue,
Berkeley**

Co-sponsored by *Pacific Center
and Lavender Seniors*

Wish List

In the Lavender Seniors office we need an adding machine with a tape.

Please contact Nancy in the office if you have one to donate. Phone 510 667-9655 and leave a message.

Fellows of East Bay

Second Sunday, 5:30 – 8:30 P.M.

A 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.

Mothertongue Feminist Theater

Many of you have in the past enjoyed the performances of the *Mothertongue Feminist Theater Collective*. We are now presenting our two new scripts: **Sisters and Reflections and Many Faces** – both works in progress.

The performance will take place Tuesday, September 11 at 7 P.M. at the "Venue 9 Theater" on 9th Street between Folsom and Bryant, San Francisco. \$10 sliding scale. For more information please call Ruth Michaels at 510 644-0480.—*Ruth Michaels*

East Bay Women's Support Group

Meets 2nd and 4th Fridays each month

Sept. 14 and 28: 1:15 – 3 P.M.

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

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.