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.

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‘20th Century Immigration’
**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

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**Rainbow Afghan**

A big, warm thank you to Peggy Alices for donating a beautiful handmade 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.

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**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.

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**Subscription Renewals**

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

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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 tran-
spires behind the closed doors in Wash-
ington. The justices hold their judicial cards close to the vest.

Joyce Murdoch, an editor at the Na-
tional Journal, and Deb Price, who
writes a nationally syndicated column
for the Detroit News, have made a gal-
lant attempt to pierce the veil. Court
documents on old cases are hard to lo-
cate, 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 attrac-
tion. Homosexuality is the “gay excep-
tion.” The court spent years attempting
to avoid the opportunity to confront lav-
ender 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 na-
ture.

But certain justices emerged as cham-
pions of gay rights, most notably Just-
ice William O. Douglas and William
Brennan. They set the stage for present
day advances in privacy rights and free-
dom of the press. In one arresting case
on homosexual pornography the govern-
ment advanced the argument that the
viewing of such material made psychi-
atriic 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 moral-
ity.

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

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 consent-
ing adults in private. This was a major
blow to the homophobic 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 liter-
ally 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 con-
stitute 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 prepos-
terous to call [them] politically unpopu-
lar.”

Murdock and Price survey the cur-
current crop of justices and observe a mixed
bag: Rehnquist, Scalia, and Thomas are
the hard core homophobes; the most lib-
eral 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 hu-
man 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. Hav-
ing stayed in close touch with other refu-
gees 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

$,50 for the book fee and $2.00 for the
diploma. Interested in science, she soon
finished at Hunter and secured an assis-
tanship 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 hus-
band 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

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 in-
vention in the 1850’s to the instant pho-
tos 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 hu-
man feelings that reach across time.
What a marvelous gift for inquiring
minds. Let your imaginations run wild.
Immigrant Experience
(cont'd from previous page)
worked for the Weizmann 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 "footwork" 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: gjpierson@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

¡Happy Birthday!
James Ortiz
September 3
Robert McKenna Jr.
September 5
Larry Butwinick
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 presenting dances exploring passion, intimacy and desire between women.
What Is Bisexuality/Bisexual Identity/Biphobia?

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 bisexualess are monogamous, some may have concurrent partners, others may relate to different genders/sexes at various periods of time. Most bisexualess 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. Bisexualess, despite the sexually inattractive 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 bisexualess or not. The only visible “bisexual coupling” within the monogamist driven heterosexual framework is three people, two of “same” gender/sex and one of the “other” gender/sex. This not only perpetuates the stereotype that bisexualess cannot be monogamous, but also in order to be bisexualess, one must have concurrent male and female lovers.

Bisexula 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.”


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.
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.

Mohtertongue Feminist Theater
Many of you have in the past enjoyed the performances of the Mohtertongue 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.

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