



# LAVENDER NOTES

**Newsletter of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay**

**Volume VII, No.10 – October 2002**

*A Volunteer Services Program — project of The Tides Center*

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

## Lesbian Notions

### Lesbians and Gay Men Are Intimate Strangers

by Paula Martinac

There's a conundrum at the heart of the gay rights movement – gay men and lesbians are at once comrades and strangers to each other. Although we're both denied rights because of whom and how we love, for decades there's been a profound uneasiness between us. And the recurring question is, can lesbians and gay men ever really be allies?

The discomfort we feel with each other is often legitimate. Lesbians have been stung more than once by gay male sexism, and gay men have felt the wrath of lesbian indignation. Lesbians have seen gay men as painfully shallow, and gay men have found lesbians annoyingly PC. Although we've come together in times of crisis, like at the height of the AIDS pandemic, and even grown to love each other, we usually end up retreating to our separate spheres. Why? Because it's easier. For the same reason, some people never make lasting connections across race or class – it takes work to do so.

The separateness of lesbians and gay men struck me again recently while reading a new book called *The Soul Beneath the Skin: The Unseen Hearts and Habits of Gay Men*, by David Nimmons. From the title, it doesn't seem like a book a lesbian would want to read, especially given the photo of a bare-chested man on the cover. Indeed, if it wasn't written by a man I once worked with – Nimmons and I served on the board of the same gay organization in the early 1990s – I probably

would have passed it by, as I have many other written-by-gay-men-for-gay-men titles.

What's interesting about this book, though, is that Nimmons is trying to help gay men see and value their intrinsic good by outlining the many contributions they have made to society and could make to the concept of masculinity. Gay men, Nimmons points out, are much less violent than straight men,

show higher levels of altruism, and have distinguished themselves as caretakers. They've fashioned creative, nonconformist circles of friends and lovers and forged supportive relationships with women.

Some of what Nimmons describes makes gay men sound a lot like women, and that's a good thing in my opinion. Nimmons's kind of gay man is someone lesbians should want to get to know – the gay man who rejects the "bitchy queen" who lurks within to become a caring soul who helps craft a "durable truce across gender lines." That style of manhood is a far cry from what Andrew Sullivan, for example – who has also tried to call gay men to a new kind of masculinity – has espoused. In contrast to Nimmons, Sullivan actually blames feminists and lesbians for "emasculating" gay men.

But tellingly, although lesbians should have been an obvious readership for Nimmons's book, he doesn't seem to expect us to read it. In his introduction, he lists all the faceless people he saw as his audience – mothers and grandmothers of gay men, straight men teenage girls, curious neighbors, anyone with the tiniest shred of interest in gay men – and there's nary a lesbian among them.

That omission, however unintentional, speaks directly to the "disease" in the relationship between gay men and lesbians. It's easier for gay men to extol – as Nimmons does in his book – those stereotypical *Will & Grace* moments when gay men and straight women get

*'Lesbian Notions' on page 4*

## Welcome to Norma Ramos

We wish to welcome a new member to our Advisory Board – **Norma Ramos**, a social worker employed by the North Berkeley Senior Center. Norma has been most supportive of the LGBT group which continues to grow in numbers at that center.

## New Day and Time for Volunteer Powwow

Volunteers attending the monthly meeting with the Coordinator, Suzi Kalmus, please note that starting in October the group will meet at 9:30 A.M. on the second Saturday every month before the potluck at the San Leandro Community Church. Everyone is encouraged to stay for lunch. October meeting: **October 12, 9:30 A.M.**

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 California Endowment, Gateway Initiative of the SF Foundation, Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, Horizons Foundation, The Jay Cohen Philanthropic Fund, The Nathan Cummings Foundation, Royal Grand Ducal Council of Alameda County and "100 Lesbians and Our Friends." We acknowledge support from all our donors.



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is the newsletter of  
*Lavender Seniors of the East Bay*  
 1395 Bancroft Avenue  
 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.

### Advisory Board

*Frank Howell & Ina Mae Murri,*  
 Co-Chairs

*Jeanine DeBacker,* Secretary

*Bobbie Jarvis,* Treasurer

*Meg Bruynell, John Ellefsen,*

*Eugene Marangoni, Norma Ramos  
 & Natalie Zarchin*

**Project Director** *Dotty Fowler*

**Site Coordinator** *Susan Kalmus*

**Administrator** *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.

[www.lavenderseniors.org](http://www.lavenderseniors.org)

## HAPPY OUTREACH RECIPIENT

During an activity at the Elder Conference held in Oakland in August, I announced that I was proud to be one of the founding members of *Lavender Seniors of the East Bay*! Later in the afternoon, another participant at the conference approached me with a story of her involvement with Lavender Seniors.

It seems she has a friend with a neuromuscular disorder. This friend was in need of services to help her get out more and become more involved in the community. On behalf of her friend, she called Horizons who referred her to Lavender Seniors. On a Friday she called the Lavender Senior outreach requesting help; on Monday she received a call back and the connection was made! Never, she stated, had she received such an immediate response from any group. Her friend is now a very happy recipient of Outreach Services from Lavender Seniors!!

Be Proud! Please get involved and committed! We need new members on our Advisory Board to assure the wonderful outreach program of Lavender Seniors is carried on in the future. Contact John Ellefsen or Frank Howell if you can find it in your heart to contribute your support and time to the Lavender Senior Board. You'll never feel more loved and appreciated.

—*Meg Bruynell*, Founding Member,  
 Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

## What to Store and Keep in Your Medicine Cabinet

by Larry Epstein

What do you keep in your medicine cabinet and where do you store your prescription drugs? According to the Food and Drug Administration, they should be kept in a cool, dark, dry cabinet because heat, humidity, moisture and bright light can affect them. Heat and humidity from showers and baths in bathrooms may cause harm. Of course, children should never be able to access them.

Here is a suggested list for your well-stocked medicine cabinet:

analgesic to relieve pain, antibiotic ointment to discourage infection, antihistamine for allergy symptoms, syrup of ippecac to induce vomiting decongestant for cold symptoms, antacid for upset stomach, fever reducers for adults and children, hydrocortisone to relieve itching and inflammation, antiseptic to help stop infection mouthwash and gargle personal prescriptions.

The following items can be stored in your bathroom cabinet as heat and humidity won't hurt them:

adhesive bandages and tape, gauze pads tweezers, thermometer, calibrated measuring spoon, alcohol wipes disinfectant, cotton-tipped swabs, stainless steel scissors, dental floss.

There is some uncertainty about how and where to dispose of old prescriptions or needles. Several pharmacies will accept the out-dated medications and dispose of them for you. The Alameda Waste Management Authority suggests you wrap them up and place them in with your garbage. You may call the Waste Management Program (800-606-6606) for further details.

**Be well!**

(Alameda County Advisory Commission on Aging – ACACA – Sept.– Oct., 2002)

### 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](mailto:hendriksen@aol.com)  
 510-652-6906



## Book Review

### Equality Practice: Civil Unions and The Future of Gay Rights

By William N. Eskridge – Routledge, Paperback

Within our community the controversy rages: Should we come on to the public as wanting only domestic partners legislation or should we pull out all the stops and demand marriage and all the heterosexual privileges? Do we expect too much too soon? William Eskridge continues his exploration of this question that he started in his previous book *The Case For Same Sex Marriage*.

Eskridge is the John A Garver Professor of Jurisprudence at Yale Law School. He was awarded the American Library Association's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Book Award for *Gaylaw*.

The issue of same sex love became firmly imprinted in the public consciousness when the state of Vermont approved civil unions for the lavender sex. This naturally flowed from the U. S. Government census reports where we learn that 27.2 million homes in America are occupied by only one person. In the past thirty years the number of adults who never married has doubled. Children living with unmarried couples has increased fourfold. In the 2000 Census, same sex households were finally allowed to assert their sheltered existence. There were 594,391 of them. A number of gay and lesbian observers believe we should finish our homework before we swallow the monster in one gulp. At the national level we must do the following:

1. Repeal the sodomy laws
2. Pass ENDA (basic job protection rights)
3. Pass domestic partners legislation

The strategy seems to be: don't call it marriage; call it domestic partners.

The Christian Fundamentalists always drag out the old "slippery slope argument," i. e., if you allow **this** then all else will follow. The downfall of Rome will surely repeat itself. ("Why can't I marry my cat? Why not allow one man and a harem full of women?")

Eskridge explores the politics of the Vermont Civil Union law. The Vermont Supreme Court ruled in favor of the gay community but referred the case to the state supreme court. Many liberals compared the situation to Brown vs. Board of Education. The Civil Union Bill (H-847) was passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Dean. But many citizens of Vermont were opposed to the bill and some of the town clerks refused to register same sex couples. But some clerks were supportive and even stayed open late. 2,700 licenses were issued (2001); 80% of the couples were from out of state.

In Europe several countries have led the way in gay marital rights, with Holland granting full rights with no exceptions. Nations such as Norway, Sweden, and Denmark forbid adoption of children. But little progress has been made in England. Israel, South Africa and Canada are fairly progressive.

Eskridge draws an analogy between the civil rights struggles of the blacks in the 1960's and the present gay and lesbian dilemma. In 1967 (Loving vs. Virginia) the U. S. Supreme Court finally invalidated the miscegenation laws prohibiting inter-racial marriage. As is the custom of the times, the social prophets predicted the downfall of Western civilization. Apparently we have survived.

The battle is far from over, but William Eskridge has clarified the arguments and has helped to cast much needed light on a taboo-laden part of the forest.—*Frank Howell*, Reviewer

## APHASIA AWARENESS

What is *aphasia*? Aphasia is a term used to describe a loss in the capacity to communicate verbally and/or by written word. It does not include speech impediments due to loss of muscle control, such as slurred or garbled speech. Some types of aphasia allow the person to understand what is said, but prevent the person from being able to select and use the correct words to communicate with others (this is often called *expressive aphasia*). Any speech that is attempted is likely to come out very choppy. Global aphasia is more extensive, often affecting both the comprehension and expression of language.

Aphasia is caused by trauma or injury to the brain, such as a brain tumor, stroke, head injury, or infection. Stroke is the most common cause of aphasia in the United States, with approximately 20% of stroke victims developing some type of aphasia. Although an estimated half of those who show signs of aphasia do recover completely in a few days, a significant percentage are left with permanent deficits. In fact, there are more Americans with aphasia than multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, or Parkinson's Disease.

Though there are no medical/surgical treatments available, it is possible to use speech therapy to improve aphasia that has been caused by a stroke or head injury. For many sufferers, however, the main focus is on maximizing those language abilities that are still functioning, while utilizing other means of communication to compensate for lost abilities.

As you can guess, living with aphasia can be very frustrating. The **Aphasia Center of California**, housed at the Oakland Senior Center on Grand Avenue, was created to *encourage and expand communication and psychological well-being* for those with aphasia. For more information about their services, please call the Aphasia Center at (510) 336-0112.

(Emeryville Senior Center bulletin,  
June 2002)



## Alameda County Commission on Aging Senior Wellness Fair

The Health & Safety Committee, in collaboration with the Public Relations Committee, is sponsoring a free *Senior Wellness Fair* on Thursday, October 10, 10 A.M. – 4 P.M. at the Jack London Aquatic Center at Estuary Park, located at 115 Embarcadero East, in Oakland. The event will provide health and wellness information, focusing on vital benefits and services available to seniors, their families and caregivers.

Businesses will be in attendance to demonstrate their health and home safety products and services. Service providers will offer a variety of health screenings. Examples of other services available will include information on family and caregiver services, nutrition, accident prevention, Social Security, Medi-Cal information and application assistance and personal benefits analysis.

There will be entertainment and refreshments. Shuttle services from BART and several senior centers is being arranged. Call Delbert Walker (510-567 8051) or Charles McLain (510-530-2257) for additional information.

Lavender Seniors will participate in this *Wellness Fair*.

## Happy Birthday!

Gwen Kelly

Julie Lawyer

October 1

Michelle Hainline

October 2

Kenneth Hamilton

Bob Lindeborg

Ron Williams

October 6

Nate Herrington

October 7

Jeanine DeBacker

October 11

J.J. Van Dyck

October 16

Audrey Tillmann

October 20

Claire Jeannette

October 26

Shoshana Kobrin

October 28

Beverly Hickok

Jaye Scott

October 31

## Lesbian Notions

(concluded from page 1)

### Lesbians and Gay Men Are Intimate Strangers

together to compare moisturizers and kvetch about the men in their lives. It's easier for lesbians to raise their eyebrows over a book about gay men's soul-searching and head for the latest dyke romance novel. I'll admit that when I read the part of Nimmons's book in which he discussed his pretzel-like family cluster – lovers, ex-lovers, threesomes, fuck buddies, platonic friends, all entwined in each other's lives – my monogamous lesbian head hurt.

I believe, though, that lesbians and gay men making – and often having to remake – the effort to learn about each other's experiences is probably the best way to bridge the gap between us. Unfortunately, that's something we rarely choose to do and don't expect from each other. And, at the risk of sounding self-righteous, it's my experience that many more lesbians have familiarized themselves with gay male culture than vice versa.

But there are notable exceptions. I had a close gay male friend (he died in 1995) who had been a Fire Island party boy in the 1970s – someone a lesbian-feminist like myself would never, ever have hung with. When we met in 1990, he was searching for new meaning in his life, and he asked me to recommend some lesbian and feminist books, which he actually read and liked. His request both startled and touched me. Later, he returned the favor by lending me his favorite gay male porn, which I actually watched and liked. When the effort goes two ways, something positive can happen for everyone.

*Paula Martinac is a Lambda Literary Award-winning author of seven books.*

(*Bay Area Reporter*, July 4, 2002)

[Lavender Seniors' policy is to encourage participation by both women and men in the organization's activities. Sometimes challenging, it is the point of view of our Board that this policy continues. We are proud of our ability to support this effort in every way possible.]

## Cards and Stamps Needed

Peggy Alices tells us that she needs more get-well cards to send out to our participants. And stamps for the envelopes are also in short supply. We encourage all who are willing, to bring these items to the next potluck meeting so we may continue this aspect of our program for LGBT folks who may enjoy and who may be in need of our support.



**Saturday, 12 Noon • Potluck Meeting**  
**• Program at 1 P.M. • October 12 •**

*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.**

**Presentation of the Month:**

Our speaker will be **Ken Miller**, well known gay historian. He will share his perspective on **The Gay Movement Before Stonewall**. On a previous occasion, Ken shared intimate revelations on *Sex And Sin In The Catholic Church*. Ken once taught at Stanford University. We look forward to hearing him at our potluck meeting on October 12.

**Favorite Recipe**

Kimchi, also spelled **KIMCHEE**, is a spicy, fermented pickle that invariably accompanies a Korean meal. The vegetables most commonly used in its preparation are celery, cabbage, Chinese turnip, and cucumber. The prepared vegetables are sliced, highly seasoned with red pepper, onion, and garlic, and fermented in brine in large earthenware jars. Dried and salted shrimp, anchovy paste, and oysters are sometimes used as additional seasonings. During fermentation, which takes approximately one month depending on weather conditions, the kimchi jars are stored totally or partially underground in cellars or sheds built expressly for this purpose. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1999)

**Ken Hamilton's KIMCHEE**

- 1 large head Bok Choy (Nappa) cabbage, salt
- 4 green onions and tops, cut in 1-1/2" long, sliced thin
- 1 large garlic clove, minced
- 1 dried hot red chile crushed (1-2 tsps red pepper flakes)
- 1 tsp. Grated fresh ginger root

Cut cabbage in 1" x 1" pieces. Sprinkle 2 tbsp salt on it, mix well, let stand 15 min. Wash salted cabbage 3 times with cold water; add onion, garlic, chile, ginger and 1 tsp. Salt and enough water to cover. Mix well, cover and let stand for a few days. After 3 or 4 days, taste every day; when it is acid enough, cover and refrigerate up to two weeks. Makes about one quart.

*An Oldster's Lament*

*The Golden years have come at last  
 I cannot see ~ I cannot pee  
 I cannot chew ~ I cannot screw  
 Or do the things I used to do  
 The Golden years have come at last.  
 My hearing stinks ~ my memory shrinks  
 No sense of smell ~ I look like hell  
 My roller skates I had to sell  
 The Golden years have come at last  
 Those Golden Years can kiss my ass !*

**Family Memento**

"My sister, 'Dirty Doris,' sent this to me. She does calligraphy easy as we wink!"

Contributed by *Larry Butwinick*

**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 \_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to  
**The Tides Center/Lavender Seniors**  
 and mail to:  
 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.



## Community Listings

### Lavender Seniors T-shirts

On sale at \$10 each  
and

### Beanie Babies

On sale at \$3 each

*Available at monthly Potluck . . .  
or call the office at 510 667-9655*

### 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.

**October 13**

### East Bay Women's Support Group

Meets 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Fridays each  
month

**October 11 and 25: 1:15 – 3 P.M.**

Meets at *Pacific Center*  
2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley

### MasQUEERade Ball 2002

Saturday, October 26  
7:30 – 11 P.M.

Hayward City Hall Rotunda  
(Right next to Hayward BART)

*Food, Dancing, Costume Contest*

Proceeds benefit the

Lighthouse Community Center

\$25 advance, \$30 at the door

More information: (510) 881-8167

### Women Over Fifty and Friends WOFF

Meets Saturday, October 12

Pot Luck is at 6 p.m.  
(meeting follows)

San Leandro Community Church  
Fireside Room  
1395 Bancroft Avenue  
San Leandro

Hosting:

Cam & Cheryl (530) 432-4860  
Iris (510) 841-4776

### Senior Men's Afternoon

1:30 – 3:30 P.M.

2nd and 4th Thursdays

October 10 and 24

2712 Telegraph Avenue  
Berkeley

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

### Messages

of cheer and faith  
will be gratefully received by

### Eduardo Majul

3145 Cesar Chavez street  
San Francisco 94110  
415 647-5373

Eduardo suffered a heart attack on  
August 16 and is now recuperating from  
bypass surgery, at his sister's home.

### Informative Websites

The National Council on the Aging, [www.BenefitsCheckUp.org](http://www.BenefitsCheckUp.org) helps you find senior programs that may pay for some of the costs of prescription drugs, health care, utilities or other essential items of service. An online questionnaire will create a personal benefits listing describing the services available, and a listing of local offices and phone numbers to contact.

The Department of Labor's site [www.govBenefits.gov](http://www.govBenefits.gov) connects you with federal benefits you may be eligible to receive through the completion of an online screening tool.

Social Security's site (FirstGOV for Seniors) can be accessed at [www.seniors.gov](http://www.seniors.gov) which links to all government sites that provide services to seniors as well as to all 50 states and the services they offer.

And if you want to know how to use the Internet and access all these great sources of information, SeniorNet offers an online tutorial on how to do just that! The free, self-paced course contains four lessons and can be accessed at [www.seniornet.org](http://www.seniornet.org).