Special “Lavender Pioneers” Edition

Celebrating in Style!
Board Co-Chairs Frank Howell and Ina Mae Murri (far left) hosted the festivities at “Lavender Pioneers—A Celebration of Pride.” Co-emcees were TV personality Linton Johnson of NBC11-TV (immediate left) and comedienne Regina Stoops (not pictured). The event raised $5,000 for our programs.

Calendar of Events
(Note: monthly potlucks are held at 1395 Bancroft Avenue in San Leandro.)

△ December 13, Noon-2 p.m.: Lavender Seniors monthly potluck.
Featured guest: Ron Coulter, ventriloquist.
△ January 10, Noon-2 p.m.: Lavender Seniors monthly potluck.
Featured guests: Oakland Council Member Danny Wan and representatives of the Mayor’s Commission on Aging.
△ January 12, 1-3 p.m.: Seniors event at International Museum of GLBT History, 657 Mission Street, in San Francisco.
More information to come.

“Lavender Pioneers” honored

Nearly 100 well-wishers, including San Leandro Mayor Sheila Young, celebrated Lavender Seniors’ founders at a special November 22 event entitled “Lavender Pioneers—A Celebration of Pride.” Pianist/composer Mary Watkins and the Oakland East Bay Gay Men’s Chorus entertained with festive music.

The celebration continues with this edition of Lavender Notes, which features essays and photos from many of our founders. Because of page limitations, the remaining essays and photos will appear next month. Each founder received a small gift as a token of appreciation, with special awards going to Dotty Fowler and John Ellefsen.

The celebration was made possible with support from generous sponsors:
“Trailblazer”: David P. Bui, MD
“Leader”: Frank Howell
“Supporters”: Law Office of Barbara M. Beery, Marvin Burrows & Bill Swenor, Elizabeth Callaway Trust Services, Brendalynn R. Goodall, Ina Mae Murri & Stella Lopez-Armijo, and State Farm Insurance’s Castro Office in SF.

In-kind support was provided by Albertson’s on East 14th Street in San Leandro, Berkeley Bowl, Boacdia’s Books of Kensington/North Berkeley, Buffalo Bills Brew Pub of Hayward, Peet’s Coffee on Lakeshore in Oakland, San Leandro Community Church, Starbucks on Davis in San Leandro, Trader Joe’s of Fremont, and Trader Joe’s of Hayward. Thanks also to the planning committee: Marvin Burrows, Frank Howell, Suzi Kalmus, Ina Mae Murri, Joyce Pierson, Jeff Vessels, and Natalie Zarchin.

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay is funded by individual donors as well as Alameda County Area Agency on Aging, Alameda County Leather Corps., The California Endowment, City of Oakland, Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, The Horizons Foundation, The True North Foundation, Royal Grand Ducal Council of Alameda County, and The San Francisco Foundation. We gratefully acknowledge the support of all “Friends of Lavender Seniors.”
LA V EN DER N OT ES  |  D EC EMB E R 2 0 03

LA V EN DER N OT ES
is the newsletter of
Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

Mission Statement
The mission of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay is to
improve the quality of life of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and
transgender seniors (age 55 and older) residing in
Alameda and western 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, Dotty Fowler, & Natalie Zarchin, at-large

Next Advisory Board Meeting
December 9, 7 p.m., at our office. Interested persons are
welcome; public comments will take place at 7 p.m.

Staff
Jeff Vessels, MSSW, Director
Sizi Kalnus, Senior Services Coordinator
Peggy Moore, Outreach Specialist
Nancy Fugett, Administrator

Lavender Seniors welcomes all persons age 55 and older,
their partners, and guests. The cost of production and mail
makes it necessary to request a minimum $15 annual
donation to receive the newsletter. Visitors and others
may receive the newsletter for three months without
charge. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

When making a gift, please make checks payable to
The Tides Center / Lavender Seniors.

Signed articles represent the opinion of the authors and not
necessarily those of Lavender Seniors. Inclusion of a name
in this newsletter does not necessarily indicate a person’s
sexual orientation or gender identity.

What We Do ...
Founded in 1994, Lavender Seniors of the East Bay provides the following:

▲ The Oakland Outreach Project, to improve access to health and human services to LGBT seniors in the African-American, Latino, Native American, Asian, and Pacific Islander communities.

▲ Friendly Visitors Program, to match volunteers with isolated, frail LGBT seniors for social support, light household and shopping assistance, and telephone assurance.

▲ Speakers Panel Program, to educate service providers and urge them to change policies and practices to make services more accessible and culturally appropriate to LGBT seniors.

▲ Potlucks on the second Saturday of each month, to provide a safe and welcoming social environment and information from invited speakers.

▲ Monthly discussion groups, co-sponsored and hosted by the Pacific Center.

▲ Monthly newsletter, Lavender Notes.

▲ A website at www.lavenderseniors.org

To get involved as a participant or volunteer, contact us today at (510) 667-9655 or info@lavenderseniors.org

Newsletter editor sought
Lavender Seniors seeks an editor for its monthly newsletter, Lavender Notes. The editor should be interested in LGBT senior issues and have experience and skill in layout using any one of the most common computer programs. The editor’s chief responsibility is laying out the newsletter using provided materials. The Director suggests edits and has final authority over content. The newsletter editor is a volunteer position. Interested persons should contact Jeff at (510) 667-9655 or jeff@lavenderseniors.org ▲

New Grants!
Lavender Seniors has just received word of two new grants to support our programs: an award of nearly $50,000 from The California Endowment, and a $3,000 award from The Horizons Foundation. We greatly appreciate this support, which is essential to improving the quality of life of LGBT seniors in the East Bay!

Our Founders
Carol Beth
Doreen Brand & Bev Hickok
Meg Bruynell & Bobbie Jarvis
Marvin Burrows & Bill Swenor
Shirley Dennett & Dee Nagy
Gerson Goodkind
Jerry Holmes &
Bonnie MacKenzie
Barbara Joe & Barbara Konecny*
Stella Lopez-Armijo &
Ina Mae Murri
Alan Pardini
Ray Robb
Margaret Shepherd*
Natalie Zarchin
(*) deceased

Bill Baillie & Don Silva
Larry Battwinick
John Ellesen
Doris Fischer*
Dotty Fowler
Dot Hallman
Frank Howell
Jim Joslin
Ruth Michaels
Berni Miller
Donna Montgomery
Grant Peterson
Mel Scontrino
Jim Silva
By John Ellefsen

I heard about the first public meeting of Lavender Seniors in November 1994 from a public service announcement on KPFA. At the time, I was 61 years old and just beginning to come to terms with my status as an aging gay man. As a newcomer to the 1990s gay scene (after 3 marriages and parenthood) I didn’t know any other gay men my age or older, and no lesbians of any age. I thought that this would be a great opportunity to see what others in the older gay community were like and what they were doing. I had also been inspired by attending the April 1993 Gay March on Washington to become more politically and socially active in the LGBT movement as a whole.

At that first meeting in an empty room at the Bayfair Mall, I was mighty impressed with everybody’s interest and enthusiasm in starting a grassroots local organization. Moreover, the even balance between men and women boded well for a spirit of cooperation and learning from each other. I also liked the simplicity of our opening efforts at organizing: a monthly potluck and newsletter. I volunteered to be on the Steering Committee—later Board of Directors—right away. It had been a long time since I’d been on any kind of committee. More important, I’d never been on one that was dedicated to the issues that had become the main focus of my political interests, namely, gay issues. Some of my fondest memories of the early years of Lavender Seniors are those Steering Committee meetings, which took place while “breaking bread” together in a restaurant. In a way, we had it easy: no large amounts of money to raise, just figuring out how to make our potlucks and newsletter as interesting and attractive as possible.

When it was first suggested that we needed to develop service programs for LGBT seniors, I was a bit resistant: it sounded too much like work! But I was soon convinced of the necessity and value of such a goal, and by and by volunteered to be part of the Lesbian and Gay Senior Services Collaborative and, later, to serve on the Alameda County Advisory Commission on Aging as a representative of Lavender Seniors. Eventually I was talked into trying my hand at writing grant proposals. More work, to be sure, but at least, when successful, the benefits obtained were tangible. Currently I’m on a “sabbatical” to attend to other personal priorities, but from the beginning to the present day the women and men of Lavender Seniors have been a great inspiration to me. And, as a totally unforeseen benefit, my habit of going with a fellow Lavender Senior after our monthly potluck to the Turf Club in Hayward, led me, at the ripe age of 64, to meet my life partner, Daddy Mac Fincham. Just one example of the way that one of the goals of Lavender Seniors—to reduce isolation—actually works in our daily lives like the widening ripples of a stone dropped in the stream of life! ▲

By Dotty Fowler

From about age ten on I couldn’t understand how I fit in this world because unlike other girls I was so attracted to girls.

It turned out that most of my life has been about resisting convention, figuring out ways to challenge "the rules." In the 70's - after the amazing changes of the 60's - along with many others I joined the emerging communities of gays and lesbian feminists here in California. As I began to age and after the integration period of the 80's some of our group began to see that there were no services in the East Bay for elderly LGBTs so we decided to organize.

We met for the first time in an empty storefront donated to us in an indoor shopping mall full of various businesses. I remember worrying that people who came looking for the meeting place might never find it so we quickly made some signs which read "Lavender Seniors - this way" knowing that those who understood the code words would find their way to that meeting. As many did.

Now almost 10 years later it’s clear that there is a need and we have brought to life a full-blooded entity born out of daring to challenge "the rules." ▲
Why did YOU get involved in Lavender Seniors? Other Founders speak....

Ina Mae (right) and Stella (left) met through mutual acquaintances at the Gay/Lesbian Pride Parade on June 29, 1980. They began to date and moved in together in September 1980.

Ina Mae had been active in various Lesbian organizations and introduced Stella to them. They attended rap groups at Pacific Center and made friends and had social activities with them.

Ina Mae heard about the study concerned with various senior groups which were underserved in Alameda County. She was instrumental in working with Alan Pardini, Dotty Fowler, and Natalie Zarchin in finding the first meeting place for the planning of what would become Lavender Seniors. Ina Mae has served on the committee which had been called the Organizing Committee, the Board of Directors, and the Advisory Board, serving in all positions except Treasurer.

Stella has been the one in the background helping with fund raising, collecting money at the potlucks, film festivals, street fairs, selling raffle tickets — and never letting anyone say “no.” Together, they have been a good team for the betterment of Lavender Seniors for the life of this organization.

Marvin Burrows and Bill Swenor

Why did Bill and I get involved with Lavender Seniors? It’s a hard question.

We think it was a way for us to meet more people our age and a way to get involved within our own community.

The potlucks still remain our favorite activity.

Natalie Zarchin

The need for a community of peers has always been important to me, and I first got involved in 1982 when I started working with Gay and Lesbian Outreach Program in San Francisco.

The opportunity to participate in establishing similar services in the East Bay, where I live, appealed to me, and when a proposal was made to establish such an organization in 1994, I was eager to join with others to work on the project.

It was been a very gratifying experience to see our organization grow and achieve recognition from foundations and government agencies and to observe the impact we have made on the lives of GLBT seniors who benefited from our services.
More reasons to get involved.... Words of wisdom from our Founders

Frank Howell
I became involved with Lavender Seniors to help combat homophobia and ageism in both the gay and straight worlds.

Also, it is important not to become isolated from the community at large.

Donna Montgomery
I walked into my first potluck in January 1998. It was my first step out of a dark, tightly closed closet.

The next potluck, Ina and Stella and I discovered we lived just blocks apart. They became my mentors and best friends. Ina suggested sitting on the Lavender Seniors Board as a good way to learn about the gay community, and I did.

Lavender Seniors became a non-profit organization and began their outreach programs. I became a founding member. I represented Lavender Seniors on the Safety Committee of the Alameda County Area Agency on Aging (AAA). I brought back pertinent information to the group. It was a growing step for me to be openly gay. I also sat on the Board’s Nominations Committee.

In 2000, I met my future partner. We had a commitment ceremony surrounded by our Lavender Seniors friends. I moved to live in an earthship in New Mexico. Kay and I started a Lavender Women’s Potluck in Taos.

I feel like I received more than I gave. Lavender Seniors is such a good group.

Shirley Dennett and Dee Nagy
Our reason for getting involved with the Lavender Seniors was to foster a relationship with our own community and to enjoy a warm, safe place where friendships blossom and individuals feel someone cares.

This caring atmosphere means happier people, as is demonstrated by all the smiling faces we see at the monthly potluck luncheons.
Ray Robb

I was introduced to the Lavender Seniors approximately seven years ago after my lover died. My dear friends Diane Nagy and Shirley Dennett were the ones who brought me to the monthly potluck.

I think the Lavender Seniors are doing great things with their many programs, and I am proud to be a part of them.

Happy Birthday!

DeWitt Hoard
December 2

Richard Riffer
December 3

Fred Schadick
December 4

Tory Becker
December 5

Carl Pearson
December 6

Hope J. Green
December 7

Nance Rogers
December 8

Carly Rivers
December 9

Charles Graff
December 10

Mel Scontrino
December 11

Jim Junkin
December 13

Joyce Pierson
December 15

Bonnie MacKenzie
December 20

Tom Eyre
December 22

Bobbie Jarvis
December 23

Brenda Crawford
December 24

Gerson Goodkind
December 24

John M. Rasche
December 25

Robert Cornwall
December 28

Become a “Friend of Lavender Seniors” today!

Your support is crucial to Lavender Seniors’ continuing role as a vital resource to our community.

Become a “Friend of Lavender Seniors.” Please take a moment and send your gift today. Your annual giving entitles you to a subscription to our monthly newsletter, Lavender Notes.

Here’s my gift of: $15 $25* $50 $100 $250 $500 Other:

(* Please give this amount or more if possible.)

Name: ________________________________

Address: ________________________________

City/State/ZIP: ___________________________

Home Telephone: ________________________

Email Address: __________________________

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

☐ Please contact me about participating in your programs and/or volunteering.

☐ Please do not list me in Lavender Seniors publications as a “Friend of Lavender Seniors.”

Lavender Seniors never lends, sells, or gives away its mailing list.

Please make checks payable to:
Tides Center / Lavender Seniors

and mail to:
Lavender Seniors of the East Bay
1395 Bancroft Avenue
San Leandro, CA 94577

Thank you!
**Monthly Potluck**
**Saturday, December 13**

*Meal at Noon  ▲  Program at 1 p.m.*

*Your name begins with the letters*
A through G — bring a Dessert/Fruit
H through M — bring a Main Dish
N through Z — bring Salad

Shuttle from San Leandro BART station is available. Call Lavender Seniors one day ahead to arrange pickup: (510) 667-9655

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**Year-End Cheer!**

This month’s potluck will feature plenty of year-end, holiday-season cheer. Our featured guest is Ron Coulter, ventriloquist.

Again this year, we will also play the “Greed Game.” Bring a gift of under $10 to swap, plus a non-perishable item (such as a canned good or toiletry item) to donate to San Leandro Community Church.

Come join the fun!

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Meg Bruynell and Bobbie Jarvis

Meg and BJ met in November 1974 when they were both invited to attend a shower given for a mutual gay friend. Both Meg and BJ were ending their relationships and attended the shower with other dates. They met again December 7, 1974, at the commitment ceremony for their mutual friends. They exchanged telephone numbers and addresses, sent Christmas cards to each other, had a dozen phone calls and arranged for their first date.

Their first date was dinner at Stuart Andersons “Black Angus” (dutch treat) and a movie (Towering Inferno). BJ had purchased the movie tickets early (Meg was impressed). By March 4th, they both knew they had finally met the “right one.” BJ sold her home in East San Jose, and with her son, Jeff, moved into Meg’s Fremont home (where they still live.)

Meg was a psychiatric technician working for the State of California at Agnews State Hospital and later studied to become a Developmental Specialist. BJ was the controller for a graphic arts firm in Santa Clara. She had a small income tax practice that she ran from her home.

By 1984, her small practice had quadrupled and they decided it was time for her to go into that field on a full time basis. They rented a one room office, bought new computer equipment and upgraded software. By 1987 the business had doubled and they moved into their current location. In May 1989, BJ was admitted to practice before the IRS and designated an Enrolled Agent. Meg joined in the tax business part-time, until retiring from 29 years in State service and joining BJ full time in 1990.

Meg saw an item in the Daily Argus about a group meeting for elder gays and lesbians. Meg and BJ attended the formative meeting. While neither ever denied they were lesbians if asked, they were not overtly “out,” had never participated in a group (much less an activist group!), but felt that the time was right! The rest is “herstory”!

From participating in potlucks, attending Board meetings and workshops, representing the Lavender Seniors at a PFLAG meeting, or calling Bingo for some other elders, each event made them feel better — better about being lesbians as well as better about “giving back” to a community in need.

The Lavender Seniors has been an unqualified success and the friends made from this association will be friends forever. We truly feel that “We are Family!”

We love you all and are very proud to be “Founding Members” of the Lavender Seniors of the East Bay! ▲
Community Listings

East Bay Women's Support Group
Meets 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month, 1:15—3 p.m.

December 12 and 26
Meets at Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley
Co-sponsored by Lavender Seniors and Pacific Center

Seniors Men's Afternoon
2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month, 1:30—3:30 p.m.

December 11
At Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley
Co-sponsored by Lavender Seniors and Pacific Center

Senior Support Group at Lighthouse Community Center in Hayward
Meets 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month, 5—7 p.m.

December 9 and 23
Co-leaders: Frank Howell and Fred Fanuelos
Call Frank for more information: (510)489-0932

Fellows of East Bay
2nd Sunday of each month, 5:30—8:30 p.m.

December 14
Social Club for mature men and their admirers. Monthly potluck dinner and social held at Oak Center Towers, 1515 Market St., Oakland.
Bring food and drink to share and a $4 donation.

David P. Bui, MD
Eye Physician & Surgeon

2241 Central Avenue, #A
Alameda, CA 94501
Tel: 510.522.0377
www.alameda.eyemd.org

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* Individuals and non-profit organizations who have made an annual contribution of $25 or more are entitled to discounts of 50% on classified ads and 20% on ads of other sizes. Lavender Seniors reserves the right to accept or reject any ad submitted.

Join the Chorus for its holiday concert celebrating the joys of the season and the families we create around us.

December 13, 8 p.m.
Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, 3534 Lakeshore Ave., in Oakland
Tickets:
$12 in advance or $15 at door

(800)706-2389 • www.eastbayvoice.org/tickets • www.oebgmc.org

The Royal Grand Ducal Council of Alameda County presents...

"A White Christmas"
Sunday, December 7, 4 p.m.
Club Rumor, 22554 Main St. in Hayward

Hosted by:
Royal Grand Duchess 7 & 10
Mama Portugal
Royal Grand Duchess 11
Deena Jones Cartier

Food—Raffle—Auction—Show