

## Lavender Notes

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay a Program of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

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November 2023- Volume 29 Issue 11



## Pat Mullan: Jazzing it up!

Known for 25 years as the Art & Music Department's head librarian who brought live jazz music into the stacks at Berkeley's Main Library, trombonist and arranger *Pat Mullan, right*, keeps the good times rolling now that she's retired.

You can catch her at the Freight & Salvage on December 7 with the superb musicians of Melba's Kitchen, the 14-piece women's jazz band Pat co-leads with *Nzingah Smith, below,* a wizard on sax and flute



**Photo by Tim Burgess** 



**Photo by Sandy Morris** 

Pat began her music career playing piano, and added guitar with The Wayfarers, a folk group her friends Lucille, Mary and Gloria started. She was handed a trombone and played, self-taught, for four years of high school band and orchestra.

Pat left her hometown of Providence, Rhode Island, after college in Massachusetts, moving to Washington, D.C.

"In D.C., if you weren't already a lawyer, you'd become one by osmosis," she recalls.

But she found a different, more vibrant road.

"The Washington Area Feminist Theater there was terrific!," Pat says. "It was the early second wave; I built sets, helped with producing and the music end. What a heady time, all that woman energy!"

A trip with her parents to the Bay Area first gave her the California inkling – her mom's uncle, Father Joe, was a priest in Crockett, and the family visited him.

"He had a very sweet setup there," Pat grins. "He had a nice place and took trips into the Wine Country. We went to Carmel, and I'd never seen water that color before – turquoise! That was a great instigator to get me thinking about the West Coast."

In 1977 she moved to Berkeley, thinking she'd stay three years max. She loves it here, though, and never looked back.

"I started working with Berkeley Women's Health Collective, made some dear friends with that – it was a wonderful group of dykes," Pat recalls. "I had been tuning pianos as a career option, and one of my friends said, "You would like library school.' I thought I could use a job that was more stable, so I signed up at San Jose State. I had one great prof, I was lucky there, and got great jobs working with excellent dykes."

Next thing she knew, she was working in Berkeley!



Berkeley Main Library, 1992

"Once I was at Berkeley Public Library, I knew I'd found my spot," she says. "I was always grateful – we had to work our butts off for library funding, but we kept it. I loved managing Art & Music – it was like running an independent branch library, but without any of the building responsibilities. If something went wrong with the toilets or the AC, someone else handled it. I was able to hire independent characters to staff the department who had their own specific areas of expertise – film, art, music – so supervising was a dream. I did have ample opportunity to get into trouble and do adult programs and concerts in the library. I built that up slowly – it was very satisfying!"

Though Berkeley's far from Rhode Island, it's not surprising that Pat ended up in Queer Wonderland. Her parents, both first-generation Irish-Americans who'd raised her in a diverse – Irish, Italian, Jewish and Black – neighborhood, had always been on the queer side of the Kinsey scale.

"I knew early," Pat says. "I had a little girl friend, she was next door to us on vacation at Martha's Vineyard, and to me, 'she was the one,' as they say. I had great friends at the Y who were dykes – one in particular, the archery instructor, was a Polish girl named Helenka Markulewicz – woo hoo!" Pat's eyebrows wiggle. "She won all kinds of scholarships, beauty contests, Miss Rhode Island – I observed and thought that was weird, but she was making it even



On Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island, 1964

though she didn't have a family who could support her. The other gals had families with finances, so they didn't have to do that."

She recalls delightedly "being in heaven" going for fast drives in Helenka's Karmann Ghia.

Pat's friends at the Y gave her experience with people from many ethnic/religious backgrounds. She went to an all-girls Catholic school.

"That was a good thing; band, student council, basketball, state student council – I really enjoyed all of that. Unfortunately, the junior prom was a REQUIRED activity – not a date. It was awful, all of it was stupid. The music was bad, everything. I never did any more of that."

Pat felt hemmed in by Catholicism, the times and the culture. Both her parents' families were Irish Catholics from Glasgow who'd immigrated to Rhode Island.

"My parents were independently God-knows-what themselves," she recalls. "My father, Jim, had gay tendencies and my mother Kay acted like a dyke. I was VERY lucky, their only child."

Her dad would go to 7 a.m. Mass with her during Lent and Advent.

"But we still had a good time getting there and back," she says. "We'd stop at the beach and go swimming, then go see Mom, go back and sail all afternoon! Dad taught me to sail. Mom was a great role model, very independent. She worked at the YWCA full-time: with Protestants! How radical! She had two friends, Ethel and Elsie, who always sent Mom Christmas cards with pictures of them on vacation together – she kept up her friendship with them always.

"My mother grew up in a big family. The men in her family – her dad and brothers – were alcoholics, and she just let it be known she would NOT take care of them all and put up with their awful treatment. That was a big deal then; they ousted her from the family, but her father came around eventually. Grandpa liked me and was on his good behavior with me."

Pat's relatives were insatiable library users.

"When my grandmother arrived in Pawtucket in 1926 after the Uprising (in Ireland), she went to the library and asked for the addresses of her friends from the Old Country," Pat remembers. "My family was always reading; it hooked me – Dad would take me to the library with him every week."

After graduating from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, Pat went to England and taught sailing in the south coast town of Poole, Dorset. There she made friends who were more atheistic, and this helped her to loosen up and let go of the strictures of Catholicism.

"By the time I had moved to Washington D.C.," she says, "my parents had had enough of the church. Also, when the nuns started coming out ... watch out! Sister Mary Sharon, oops!"

Meanwhile, Pat had settled in the Bay Area, working at Berkeley Public Library.



Pat & Lucy enjoying the Arkansas woods, 1987

"When I first got here, I ran around with a lot of girls," she recalls. "I was very busy for a while. But I got lucky! I told Lucy (after our first date) that it would be three weeks before I could go out with her again – there were so many things I had scheduled. Many of our friends told us it wasn't gonna last; they said I was a runaround; that Lucy wouldn't put up with it. But it turned out that they were wrong!"

In 1984, Pat decided to tell her parents that she and Lucy were together. She was 30 years old.

"They already had the picture, of course. When I came out to them, they announced they were moving here. My father was greatly relieved, though taken aback that it had taken me so long to talk with him. They were completely accepting; my mother also relaxed when I told her that the library director was queer, in addition to my direct supervisor and the woman supervising her. They really wanted to know I would still have a job." Her parents moved to Albany.

"My father made such big changes at the beginning and the end of his life," she says. "from Glasgow to Rhode Island at age 6, then moving to California at the end of his life. They lived here 15 years, and it was great to hang out with them. They came to every show I did and were tremendously supportive of my work."

Her relationship with Lucy is a marvelous gift. "We're not married, and decidedly so, although we may have to at the final moment. This year we're coming up to our 40-year blowout! It's ridiculous – I cannot comprehend it. We never meant any of this, but here it is!"



(l-r) Mary, Pat, Lucy & Kay, 1966

To what does Pat credit their – initially – unexpected and delightful longevity?

"Our independent lives," she's quick to say. "Lucy is an avid outdoors person, religiously goes on big backpacking trips with friends. To feel like she's in the mountains, she needs to be in high altitudes, like the Dolomites (Italian Alps). I threw out my back in my 40s, so can't backpack – I'd rather sail and do other things. We come back and tell each other about everything. It's a great help to maintain our separate interests."

They're doing a lot of travelling this year to celebrate, in between Pat's music gigs and Lucy's obligations. In February they did a 100+ mile hike in nine days on Ireland's Dingle Peninsula.

"I probably worried too much about getting in shape," she says. "I'm not a big

athlete, but I didn't want to appear wimpy to Lucy's friends. It was a beautiful trip. Fortunately, they pooped out before I did!"

Upcoming 2023 trip plans include Oregon, Botswana and Italy.

As years have passed, it's been interesting to reconnect with old friends. Mary and Gloria, who performed with her in the 1960s as The Wayfarers, got together with Pat and Lucy for a 50-year reunion at Gloria's home after the Newport Jazz Festival. Chatting over old times in the back yard, Pat's friends gave her an embarrassed apology.

"When we had gigs back then, they'd nag me about cutting my hair, try to dress me up and get me into makeup. And here they are telling me how sorry they are — 'we shouldn't have done that.' I didn't remember it, but it made a big impression on them. Their apology was just so heartfelt. It's interesting to see how people progress over the years. Me, I'm just grateful I've gotten through the crucible in one piece!" she laughs.

While she and Lucy sometimes consider relocating, they both find the political climate in the Bay Area comforting and, relatively speaking, safe.

Her own activist focus now is to hold the line resisting right-wing extremists who are trying to criminalize public librarians for providing access to the wide range of information that makes a free society meaningful.



Pat (I) at Berkeley Library Protest, 2015 (photo by Francesca Paris)

"Book banning has been going on since we were kids, but now the Right is much more insistent and organized. This is happening on the school board level, when MAGA types get elected and try to ban books and instruction. It is CHILLING. This is not a fantasy. We need people to stand up and shut it down – that is what provides hope. We have a lot to do."

Years after her own retirement, Pat helped lead a similar fight, banding together in

2015 with other library employees protesting a new Berkeley library director who was aggressively removing the depth of main library collections.

"It was a testament to the staff," she remarks, "that it only took 2 and ½ months to get rid of him. Getting him on channel 2 a little bit, that worked. It's crazy, but when it's over, you can laugh. You *have* to stand up, and still keep your sense of humor. Change can happen."

What is the message? "Register and VOTE!" she says. She writes letters for Vote Forward every election cycle.

Music has always been her passion. She first got into managing and promoting local jazz groups when she'd been listening to a lot of jazz – she heard Alive! and began doing PR for their gigs. Then, at age 35, Pat had a significant musical revelation.

"If sax is the easier jazz instrument that everyone wants to play, trombone

would be a better niche for me," she realized. "I'd get to play more! So I took lessons from Pat Crossen, a big bad butch trombone teacher, whose studio was a two-minute walk from the library. At lunchtime I'd be at my lesson or practicing in the studio. By the time I was 45, I sounded little bit less like a cow. I had a great time learning from her."



Pat & her trombone, SF Pride Marching Band, 1989

Soon, Pat was playing with the SF Pride Marching Band, the Alameda Jazz Band, the Montclair Women's Big Band, and the Junius Courtney Big Band. In the 1980s, Pat started managing Junius' 19-piece band. That began her "25-year run with the Juniuses. He came here from New Orleans in the mid '40s, worked as an auto detailer by day and played at night. They rehearsed weekly in his basement. I managed to get their band gigs at clubs, libraries, etc.

"I learned so much from Junius. I loved those guys. They were good friends – great players with terrific arrangements that were deeply Duke Ellington and Count Basie style. We had regular gigs until COVID. Some of the original guys had died, and I could see the end coming."

COVID also put a damper on LMNOP, the all-librarian piano, bass and trombone trio Pat started. Those instruments had to be played indoors. However, Trombonga, the all-trombone quartet she started 25 years ago, weathered the time's challenges.

"I call those guys my boyfriends," she jokes. "It was great during the pandemic, because trombone doesn't need mics – you can practice or play for an audience outside. It's mobile and safe."

Trombonga fuels her continuing obsession with the instrument, a great vehicle for her original arranging and composing.

She's back on the big band trail, too, with Melba's Kitchen, which won the Advancement of Women's Culture Award while headlining at the National Women's Music Festival in July. "It's great to highlight the work of these incredible Black women who composed and arranged for everyone in the universe, but rarely got any credit. Mary Lou Williams and Melba Liston were fantastic musicians."



Melba's Kitchen - deYoung Museum, 2022

Front row: Nzingah Smith, Cynthia Mah, Georgianna Krieger, Jeunesse Monroe-Speed, Brenda Thompson.

Second row: Debra Temple, Candace Sanderson, Sue Leonardi, Pat Mullan, Jessica Hom.

Back row: Deborah Tisdale (partially hidden), Susanne DiVincenzo (bass), Nancy Geimer, Renaye Brown

"Music is such a wonderful thing to be involved in," Pat says. "I'd see how some of my library colleagues who quit or retired would just be at a loss. While subbing or volunteering can be great, I find music is a terrific outlet –

hanging out, producing, organizing. Lucy is a terrific support and very good advisor to me in all this; I tend to blather, and she just cuts to the point." Pat has ongoing aims, musically.

"Trombone is an athletic instrument, you have to be in shape to play and it takes a lot of doing, but my plan is to keep up. Junius was able to play trumpet until he was 83. In my next life, I hope I can come back as a trombonist!"

Come hang out and enjoy the jazz!

For those who might want a more in-depth exploration of the band, here's a great article. Melba's Kitchen to honor Melba Liston at Freight & Salvage (berkeleyside.org)

More information about the 2015 library protest is available at Berkeley library director admits vast discrepancies in numbers of weeded books (berkeleyside.org)



Have you moved out of the area, do you want to get in contact with other Lavender Seniors near you or someone you have lost contact with? **Email us** and we will try to help out. No information will be shared without your specific permission.

## LAVENDER SENIORS FRIENDLY VISITOR PROGRAM HAS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE.

Volunteers with the Lavender Seniors Friendly Visitor program are background checked, interviewed and trained, after which they are matched with a senior to visit regularly, usually for a couple hours each week. Visitors can share stories, chat about mutual interests and current events, and if both are willing and able, volunteers can take their seniors out for a walk in the park, a bite to eat, a cup of coffee, shopping or maybe a movie or a trip to the museum.

We ask volunteers to make a commitment of at least six months.

If you are in need of a Friendly Visitor, we can help with that too!

Please contact us at <a href="mailto:jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org">jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org</a> and we will be in touch with you soon. Thank You!



Join us this month for lunch and a great program Featuring Healthy Ageing Coach, Author & Guinness World Record Holder, Holly Reese!

RSVP Required - lunch provided for registered guests.

Here is the RSVP link for November Lunch Bunch: https://forms.gle/sqAtEAZaFzwXy1989

For more info please call 510-781-2926 or email: jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org



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# SOCIAL SENIORS - LAST FRIDAY cancelled for November...due to holiday



Plus National Queer Theater Festival?

### Update on LGBTQ+ "Cats" at Ground Zero?

A quick review of last month's announcement about a group of LGBTQ+ seniors possibly attending a ground-breaking performance of queer "Cats" opening next June is in order. Here's an update.

Lavender Seniors received some good and interesting news as the newsletter was going to press. To review, the one-time Artistic Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Bill Rauch, was recruited as Artistic Director of the Perelman Performing Arts Center at Ground Zero in Manhattan. He was well-known to many Lavender Seniors as the man who pulled off the first all-gay production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Oklahoma."

That same Bill Rauch (an openly gay man with husband and two children) has negotiated to produce an all-LGBTQ "Cats" for six weeks next June and July. It is an exciting accomplishment to not only have the vision, but the persuasive skills to be able to pull off another first in LGBTQ+ musical theater. He has informed us in an e-mail last week that – if our group comes during the previews the week before the production opens on Thursday, June 20th, 2024 – he will "go out on a limb and say that I would try to get you all free tickets to the show." That would certainly assist some LGBTQ+ seniors in seeing first-hand this second permutation of a successful Broadway musical into an LGBTQ-focused musical in a now-hallowed place in America, Ground Zero.

Because of this offer, we have decided to try to make this happen during the last preview, Wednesday evening, 19th June (also Juneteenth holiday in 45 states and a "Day of Observance" in California). We are searching for reasonable "senior-hostel" types of accommodations for this time, the week before NYC Pride June 28-29th.

One of the new reasons for choosing the 19th June date for attending the final preview of queer "Cats" has to do with being informed that the National Queer Theater Company (who knew there was such a thing?) is also holding a festival in one of the smaller theaters in the complex that weekend (21st-23rd June). That would mean that those interested in attending the "Criminal Queerness Festival" focusing on what LGBTQ+ artists and performers have to deal with in countries where homosexuality is illegal. For more information about this festival: <a href="https://www.nationalqueertheater.org/criminal-queerness-festival">www.nationalqueertheater.org/criminal-queerness-festival</a>. This would allow for a "free day" on Thursday for seeing other plays, sight-seeing, etc., resulting in need for three nights of accommodation, although clearly nobody would need to stay the whole three nights.



Cats - Perelman Promo Photo

Anyone seriously interested in joining this Lavender Seniors excursion should contact JohnDavid@LavenderSeniors.org, since we have informed Bill Rauch that we would expect a maximum of 8-10 people to attend, so would likely need to close it off at ten, so as not to take advantage of Bill's generous offer. Participants would need to be booking airfare and accommodations soonest, in order to minimize cost.

Editor's Note: New York City has currently banned any private accommodations - like AirBNB or VRBO - unless they are for more than 30 days, an apparent concession to the hotel/motel lobbying efforts there. The AirBNB route might have to be switched to Jersey City, some East Coast natives have advised.



# Archiving/Celebrating Lavender Seniors History

As you may notice on the newsletter masthead, this month begins Lavender Seniors' **29th** year of service to the LGBTQ senior community of the East Bay. Therefore, we might want to begin planning the "Pearl" celebration of our 30th anniversary year in November 2024. Since both the 20th and 25th anniversary celebrations took a year to organize, anyone interested in helping put such a celebration together is encouraged to contact **JohnDavid@LavenderSeniors.org**.

Meanwhile, beginning last month, we added a feature called "Twenty Years Ago" that takes one look at the history of this nearly 30-year-old organization. We have included here a link to the November 2003 newsletter, so people can see the politics, the humor and the pioneering events that were happening already two decades ago. Each month from now on, we will attach the "20 Years Ago" issue of *Lavender Notes*.

As mentioned last month, some stalwart Lavender Seniors volunteers have begun the process of scanning, naming, filing and archiving available newsletters from the past. Those completed to date appear already on the website: <a href="https://lavenderseniors.org/newsletter/">https://lavenderseniors.org/newsletter/</a>, where you can click on any year, then each month, to access those available to date. (All interested volunteers encouraged to help in this somewhat tedious task!)

Unfortunately, there are a number of missing *Lavender Notes* issues; for example, five months' issues in 2001 (i.e., March, April, May, August & October) seem to be missing, though we have complete copies of all of 2002 and 2003. Repeating the overline on last month's story: "Calling all Hoarders!" We're hoping that some of the folks involved from the beginning – or early on – may have copies of those missing issues from 1994-2014 that could be scanned for permanent archiving. Anybody finding past issues of these irreplaceable historical documents is urged to notify either <a href="JohnDavid@LavenderSeniors.org">JohnDavid@LavenderSeniors.org</a> or by phoning (510) 882-2286. We will be happy to pick up any copies a hoarder might have, scan and archive them, then return them to the person (hoarder or otherwise) who provided them.

Here's the link to the "20 Years Ago" issue from November 2003 for a stroll down memory lane:

https://lavenderseniors.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Vol.-9-11-November-2003.pdf.

You may be pleasantly surprised to read the issue's opening headline about a long-standing tradition:

November 22 "Lavender Pioneers" event to celebrate founders

There's lots of news about legends in the organization – nice to remember our history!

# Well Connected Enriching lives and supporting well-being.

(FORMERLY SENIOR CENTER WITHOUT WALLS)

Community Phone Calls

This award-winning program offers activities, education, support groups, and friendly conversation over the phone or online.

#### Just a few of the things offered:

(The times are no longer listed in the generic catalog, once you have signed up you will get a link to a catalog with times in your time zone)

### LGBTQ Chat Wednesdays, 11/8, 11/22, 12/13,12/27

This group is intended for participants who identify as LGBTQ, and is an opportunity to connect with others socially in a supportive environment, where participants can share individual and collective experiences. We will create an inclusive place to share our stories with each other and build a sense of community. Facilitated by Kay George

### Coping Skills Workshop Tuesdays, 11/14 – 12/19

Learn about different coping strategies to decrease emotional distress and improve overall well-being. Topics include managing change, developing routines, sleep hygiene, communication skills, resilience training, relaxation techniques, mindfulness, and more! Each week we will discuss different coping tools. You will be encouraged to practice weekly to figure out what works best for you! Facilitated by Paige Naylor, PhD, Clinical Psychologist

View the Current catalog of community phone calls here. Check the website for more information. To participate in these or other Well Connected telephone activities, or to learn more about their programs, call 877-797-7299 or email coviaconnections@covia.org.



Out Standing Seniors - Hayward - Sponsored by Pacific Center Nov 7 & 21 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. (1st & 3rd Tuesdays) Hayward Senior Center

also on Zoom on the 1st Tuesday.

email outstandingseniors@pacificcenter.org for info.

A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources,

information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome

**Rainbow Seniors** 

Nov 14 & 28 12:30 p.m. (2nd & 4th Tuesdays)

San Leandro Senior Community Center

email rainbowseniors@pacificcenter.org for info.

A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.

Older & Out Therapy Group - Online - Sponsored by Pacific Center Meets via Zoom Tuesdays 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Please email olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org for more information. No drop-ins. Intake is required for attendance.

Free therapy group for LGBTQIA+ community members age 55+

Life after 40 - Gay & Bisexual Men's Group Meets virtually every 3rd Tuesday at 7 p.m.

A support group for men over 40.

Older & Out Therapy Group - Oakland - Sponsored by Pacific Center In-person at Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

Wednesdays 1:15pm - 2:45 p.m.

Please email olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org for more information. Intake is required for attendance.

Free therapy group for LGBTQIA+ community members age 55+

Living OUT in Livermore - Sponsored by Pacific Center Nov 1 4:00 - 5:00 p.m. (1st Wednesday)

Meets via Zoom email livingoutlivermore@pacificcenter.org for info.

A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to safely share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.

Tri-Valley Rainbows - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Nov 16 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. (3rd Thursday)

Meets via Zoom email trivalleyrainbows@pacificcenter.org for info.

A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.

Oakland Third Friday Lunch Bunch

Sponsored by City of Oakland Aging/Adult Services, Lavender Seniors of the East Bay & Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

Nov 17 12:30 - 2:30 p.m. (Third Friday)

North Oakland Senior Center

This month's program: ('Holly Reese' - see info above)

**Social Seniors** 

Sponsored by Oakland LGBTQ Community Center and Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

No November gathering.

The Watermark

1440 40th St, Emeryville

cancelled for November due to the holiday

Older & Out Therapy Group - Berkeley - Sponsored by Pacific Center In-person

at N. Berkeley Senior Center Fridays 1:15-2:45 p.m.

Please email olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org for more information. Intake is required for attendance.

Free therapy group for LGBTQIA+ community members age 55+

### Lavender Seniors of the East Bay a Program of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center Advisory Council

Dr. John David Dupree Beckie Underwood Jessie Spivey Barbara Jue

# Lavender Seniors of the East Bay a Program of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

Mailing Address: 490 Lake Park Ave. #10530, Oakland, CA 94610-8019

Website: http://lavenderseniors.org

Newsletter Editorial Board: Beckie Underwood John David Dupree

Contact





Lavender Seniors | Oakland LGBTQ Community Center, 490 Lakepark Ave. #10530, Oakland, CA 94610

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