

Old Lesbians Organizing for Change



One More for the Record Books: 2011 Pacific Northwest Regional Gathering

By the Gang of Four

Wow! What an incredible weekend, one many Old Lesbians will never forget.

The Gathering officially kicked into gear with personal welcomes from the mayor of Tacoma, Marilyn Strickland, and out-Lesbian state legislator Laurie Jenkins delivering a message from Governor Christine Gregoire, as well as from herself. We were humbled to be welcomed to the land of the First Nations by Irene Fruzzetti of the Comanche Tribe.

Thursday was an evening of welcome and of honoring the founding mothers of OLOC who were present, Vera Martin, Ruth Silver, and Rosemary Hathaway, and honoring the oldest amongst us. There were more than 30 Lesbians in attendance who were 75 years and older, and each was recognized. The evening also offered an original piece written and presented by Elana Dykewoman. Under the direction of Marcia Perlstein, women from Puget Sound OLOC performed a dramatic reading of stories from the lives of Lesbians who have shared their life stories with the Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project. It concluded with "This is Your Life, Arden Eversmeyer," a surprise gift to her from the readers and director.

After a moving start to a challenging and inspiring weekend, Lillian Faderman delivered an impressive keynote address that had us scrambling to arrange for a transcript so it could be shared. From there, the weekend was filled with many highlights, too many to enumerate.

Of course, a few boundaries were pushed and barriers broken, making this Gathering a strengthening opportunity for all involved. The event was brought to a close by two powerful and inspiring contributions. Dr. Malka Golden-Wolfe helped us all understand the magnitude of what we had just accomplished by sharing in the Gathering, and we were sent away energized by the amazing women of Sista Drum.

We won't pretend it was perfect, but we know, without a doubt, it was successful. We wish you all could have been there! As we had anticipated, whenever the need was there, dozens of Lesbians pitched in to help the local team throughout the event, which only goes to prove what we suspected all along; OLOCers are incredibly generous.

It was a 50/50 weekend: Roughly half of the Lesbians attending came from the Pacific Northwest and roughly half had never been to an OLOC Gathering. The unofficial count

was that 201 Lesbians participated in the Gathering. Since we ran out of registration forms at the door, our guess is that there were at least a dozen more. But those are just numbers. The feeling of sharing three days with so many Old Lesbians who care deeply about our community and are passionately working toward changes that will improve our lives and the lives of others was truly indescribable.

(Gloria Stancich, 1933; Mary Henry, 1939; Margaret Purcell, 1951; and Deidre Knowles, 1947)



Nyla Dartt and Marcia Perlstein pose for a "Cheeky Old Lesbian" photo at the recent 2011 Regional Gathering in Tacoma.

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Two Bricks from OLOC for Museum

By Alix Dobkin, 1940

Last year, Ruth Debra, Susan Wiseheart, and I all toured the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis Tennessee.

To walk through the museum, taking it all in within a few hours, proved truly staggering and life changing. The accumulated words, pictures, videos, audios, and even environments (such as actually boarding the bus Rosa Parks rode and touching life-sized sculptured figures of people sitting in at a lunch-counter and of picketing Memphis sanitation workers and more) were profoundly affecting.

The museum provides a compelling journey, a primer in the courage and determination Black people have demonstrated throughout this country's history, a powerful sample of what they have endured, resisted, and overcome: a historical narrative that took my breath away.

The front of the museum is paved with bricks engraved with names of contributors to the institution. Last fall and winter, the OLOC Steering Committee put out appeals to our subscribers to help us raise money for one of the bricks. Thirty-seven individual OLOC Lesbians and one chapter (Bay Area California) responded with donations. I'm delighted to report that we raised enough money for two bricks, not one. We mailed a total of \$1000 to the Civil Rights Museum for our bricks, which will display the messages:

**Old Lesbians Organizing
for Change
Works for Justice**

**In Solidarity
Old Lesbians
Organizing for Change
Founded, 1989**

Good work, OLOC Lesbians, and a big thank you from the Steering Committee!

We urge anyone who finds herself in Memphis to pay a visit to the National Civil Rights Museum. Along the left side of the entrance wall you will be greeted by a series of portraits of outstanding (mostly Old) Black women who played essential roles in the struggle for equality. They are excellent role models for all social justice activists.

OLOC Writers Featured in *Lesbian Connection*

OLOC encourages its supporters to subscribe to *Lesbian Connection*, which comes out in print 6 times a year and often features OLOC writers. The May-June, 2011, issue had material from Gloria Stancich and Mary Henry on the recent OLOC Regional event and also materials written by Charlotte Ellis from St. Louis, Sally Cohn from Portland, and Ruthie Berman from W. Palm Beach, FL. Contact *Lesbian Connection* at Elsie Publishing, PO Box 811, East Lansing, MI 48826, elsiepub@aol.com or 517-371-5257

Dealing with Stuff

A group at the Yellow Springs, OH, Senior Center, called "Older and Bolder: The Joys and Challenges of Growing Old," discussed what to do about sorting/removing all the stuff we accumulate. For a summary of this discussion contact Jan Griesinger – jan@oloc.org or 740-448-6424. Or go to these websites:

www.Discardia.com

www.Bookcrossing.com

www.flylady.net

OLOC Chapters & OLOC Approved Research

To find out about OLOC chapters, presently in California, New York, Ohio, Missouri, Oregon, Washington, and Colorado, look here:

www.oloc.org/about/chapters.php

Are you doing or wondering about participating in research? Check in with our Research Gatekeeper, Sharon Raphael, Sharon@oloc.org, or view our guidelines here: www.oloc.org/researchrules.php

For chapter or research information in print, phone 1-888-706-7506 and leave your name and address.

OLOC provides Old Lesbians with the chance to meet like-minded women in our common struggle to confront ageism, to share mutual interests, and to experience the joy and warmth of playing and working together.

First Same-Sex Marriage in NY

At 12:01 a.m. on July 24, 2011, history unfolded across New York State as hundreds of gay and Lesbian couples tied the knot. It was a jubilant day—especially for Phyllis Siegel, 76, and Connie Kopelov, 84, the first same-sex couple to wed in Manhattan. Phyllis and Connie were members of the original New York OLOC chapter.

News from Washington DC

By Mandy Carter, 1948

One of the exciting things happening on the Hill is the formation of a new Black Caucus—Hispanic Caucus—Asian Pacific Islander Caucus collaborative that was announced at last year's Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Week conference. They are recognizing the ever-growing people-of-color demographics and figuring out ways to work together.

Black Lesbians Organize

ZAMI, a National Organization of Black Lesbians on Aging (NOBLA) based in Atlanta, has a focus on Black Lesbians 40 and older. Sixty women attended a recent event. All are welcome! Even though the focus is Black Lesbians 40 and older, social events are open to all regardless of age, ethnicity, orientation or identity, unless otherwise indicated. For more information contact: Mary Anne Adams, madam04@gmail.com; 404-831-2743

"Feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women will have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels—sex, race, and class to name a few—and a commitment to reorganizing society...so that self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion and material desire."

bell hooks

Quoted in *Colonize This: Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism*, edited by Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman (originally in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 1984).

Letters to the Editor



On Ageism

For the past three days or so, thanks to reading the OLOC Reporter, I have been thinking about the way I have often used the word "elderly" as a medical social worker and it has not made me proud of myself, but I have changed!

Relying on my good old Wikipedia searches, I find that the word "elder" is a word that commands respect across cultures, often implying one who is superior to others. By contrast, "elderly" implies one who is in decline. I have been guilty of using that word in that manner for several reasons related to working in a medical field. No more! I have made the firm decision to avoid all adjectives related to age and stick strictly to the person's ability to function, which does not have anything to do with age, when I am communicating needs to other members of the interdisciplinary team or community service providers. Nothing like finding you have relics of ageism lurking in your brain.

--Kris Wrenn, a 57-year-old supporter of OLOC

No more "guys"

It sure improved a bad day to read about others objecting to calling wimin "guys." There are so many alternatives; gals, y'all, you-all, youse, folks are ones that come to mind. Language is important in how we see the world, and I know for sure I'm not a member of "mankind" and I'm not a guy!

--Zana, 1947

Check This Out

For a great short interview with Sally Tatnall, OLOC Steering Committee member, see this YouTube link:

http://youtu.be/IKAr5quOt_I

Grassroots to Mainstream *By Jan Couvillon, 1940*

In 2005 I accepted the job of Activities Manager for New Leaf: Services for Our Community, Outreach to Elders Program (NLOE), the only LGBT senior program in San Francisco. I was the first to manage both the men's and women's programs in the 28-year-old nonprofit. I applied for the job to save the women's program, which was in shambles. The men's programming was fine. New Leaf, a substance abuse, mental health, HIV/AIDS nonprofit, had been known as a gay white male haven with few women using its services.

My first priority in NLOE was creating parity between the men's and women's programming and polling the seniors for their needs. Funding came from the Department of Aging and Adult Services and other funding streams.

Realization dawned on me that the senior program was not viewed as an important part of New Leaf when two different senior management people referred to the programs as "baby sitting" in front of me, and the CFO said NLOE was a financial drain on New Leaf.

In my polls, the seniors rebuked mainstream Senior Center models, saying they were not children and did not want to be treated as such. Not pabulum, they wanted a hand in running their own programs, self-esteem, and empowerment. They wanted an interactive model with separate groups for men and women and a few mixed groups. I listened and acted on their requests. In two years the programs went from 13 to 24 groups, which kept parity. I was being pushed by management to create more mixed groups (mainstream) and reduce the number of segregated groups. I began to hear the name SAGE. New Leaf went bankrupt in 2010; the NLOE program was in the black. NLOE was picked up by openhouse, which is following the SAGE (mainstream) model.

BayArea Intergenerational Meeting *By Natalie Zarchin, 1922*

The Steering Committee of the Bay Area Chapter hopes to organize an intergenerational meeting once a year, perhaps beginning next spring, aiming for equal numbers of young and old and including small breakout groups. The one in April of 2011 was successful and well-received.

Sad News; a Loss to OLOC *By Natalie Zarchin, 1922*

Doreen Brand, co-founder of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay, passed away in her sleep early July 26, 2011, from complications of ovarian cancer. She is survived by her long-time partner, Bev Hickok.

We hope to have a longer memorial for Doreen in the December issue of *The Reporter*.

Project Seeks Participants for Film on Black Lesbian Elders

Sinister Wisdom, a Lesbian journal, asks that if you know a Black Lesbian who was out prior to integration (1950s–1960s) and willing to tell her story in a new film, contact redbonepress@gmail.com or Lisa C. Moore, PO Box 15571, Washington DC 20003

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- www.oloc.org. E-mail: info@oloc.org
- Post Office Box 5853, Athens, OH 45701; 888-706-7506

This Newsletter Brought to You By:

Co-Editors: Jennice Thomas, 1940; and Susan Wiseheart, 1941

Proofreaders and Copy-editors: Malinda McCain, 1940; and Nancy Krody, 1939

Content Review: Alix Dobkin, 1940; and Jan Griesinger, 1942

Design/Layout: Margaret Purcell, 1951

The mailing crew and all of the writers and photographers.

Deadline for the next issue is Nov. 1, 2011. Submission guidelines: copy due by Feb. 1, May 1, Aug. 1, and Nov. 1. Limit submissions to 300 words. Contact us for a style guide. We may edit articles for clarity and length. Send articles to [OLOC](mailto:info@oloc.org): info@oloc.org or OLOC, PO Box 5853, Athens, OH 45701.

Available From OLOC:

OLOC T-Shirts • Denim Shirts • Sweatshirts

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(e-mail, phone, write or check www.oloc.org)

Surprised to Receive *The Reporter*?

You are probably receiving a sample issue because you attended the Regional Gathering in Tacoma or because you signed up to help OLOC with the upcoming Gathering in Boston. If you want to continue, use the subscription form in the back of the issue. And welcome!

OLOC Looking for Ideas for Allies

If you know of an organization that we may not know about that includes Old Lesbians, do let us know. Send contact information and a little about it. We are expanding our efforts to be allied with other groups working for social justice and would like your suggestions. Send to info@oloc.org or to our post office box.

Research about Old Lesbians

By Sharon Raphael, 1941

Paige Averett, Intae Yoon, and Carol L. Jenkins (School of Social Work, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC) have published articles on their research about Old Lesbians. OLOC members helped to produce this research and are also referenced quite frequently. You might be interested in looking up these articles:

“Review of the Literature on Older Lesbians: Implications for Education, Practice, and Research” in the Journal of Applied Gerontology. “Older Lesbians: Experiences of Aging, Discrimination and Resilience” in the Journal of Women & Aging. “Older Lesbian Sexuality: Identity, Sexual Behavior, and the Impact of Aging” in the Journal of Sex Research. If you would like a copy of an article, e-mail to susan@oloc.org or sends a note to the post office box.

Write for *The Reporter*

The Steering Committee is committed to increasing the diversity of Old Lesbians in OLOC. Just reminding you that if you are in a group you feel is not represented enough in the Reporter, please write for it and encourage your friends to do so too. It could be you are a Lesbian of Color (Latina, Asian, Pacific Islander, Indigenous, Native American African-American, Black etc.), were raised in poverty, consider yourself working class, have a disability, are in the old old age range or one of many other possibilities.

Your story and thoughts would enhance the quality of the Reporter. Your story and/or thoughts are important to us. Please write.

The Reporter to Add New Health Feature

We are interested in publishing brief stories about your experiences with specific physical challenges, such as hearing loss, or problems with mobility or eyesight. If you want to write something to share with others in OLOC, send a few paragraphs and a way for folks to contact you if they want to hear more.

Tita Caldwell (1931) Titacal@aol.com sent in this item: “A neighbor invited me over to watch ‘The Freedom Riders’ on television with her. I was going to go, until I remembered that she has good hearing and I need closed captioning. A lot of my friends who hear well don’t know how to use it on their sets and find the captioning distracting. So I automatically said ‘No, thank you,’ not realizing until later that this is a way of isolating yourself.”

Do you have stories about how you deal with hearing loss that you would like to share? If so, please send them or stories about any other health issues.

OLOC is now an affiliate of Wolfe Video. You can order a Wolfe Video by using our link and we will receive cash from Wolfe to support our work. Thank you to those of you who have used our link to order from Wolfe. <http://tinyurl.com/3unluzx> will take you to their site. Once there, you can move around, order what you want, and OLOC will receive some money. Wolfe Video is Lesbian-owned-and-operated.

Dayton and Columbus Chapters Marching in Pride

*By Karen (Morgan) Kronenberger, 1947
(With thanks to Jan Griesinger)*

Dayton

On June 4, 2011, at Cooper Park next to the Historical Marker for Lesbian author Natalie Barney, ten Old Lesbians gathered in 90° heat to celebrate Gay Pride in Dayton, Ohio. We greeted each other, visited the porta-jane, and rakishly adjusted our ball caps in preparation for the parade. Posters supporting Old Lesbians hung around every willing neck. Too eager to wait for the parade, several of us started educating pockets of swarming allies and smiling supporters about the mission of OLOC. At parade time, the OLOC banner and an Old Lesbian puppet charged from Cooper Park to the Courthouse Plaza. The oldest person marching was 79, and the youngest supporters were in their 50s. We collected addresses for the newsletter and distributed flyers. We all worked the crowd, proclaiming that OLD is in, "Look at us, we are OLD and here." We drew applause from bystanders.

Columbus

On June 18, 2011, six OLOC women marched in the Columbus parade, and two rode the Trailblazer's float for those seventy and older. This parade is the biggest in Ohio. The crowds were huge, and even though rain threatened, it did not dampen our spirits as we paraded from Front Street to Goodale Park. We were greeted with many cheers, smiles, and thumbs up as we passed the crowds and handed out literature. The most interesting comments were from anti-gay right-wing Christians hooting from the side. One man said, "There's nothing worse than wrinkled Old Lesbians." Apparently some Christians don't understand the concept of honoring your elders. We were welcomed at an AARP booth at the festival where we met and greeted the crowds.



Pam Jackson at Dayton Pride

Riding on a Float at Columbus Pride *By Gail Dunlap, 1937*

The crowd was like the sunshine, so warm and welcoming. The children waving and shouting brought tears to my eyes, and I got choked up a couple of times. The experience began to feel empowering, really good. I never expected such an exuberant response, so lavish and overflowing, such bright and smiling faces. And I could remember how it was long ago in NYC, those first PRIDE parades and the anger and violence, especially when we passed St. Peter's Cathedral, and the creepy fear I felt at exposure, a fear I was familiar with most of my life because I knew from childhood that I was really different from the other girls and that I better keep my head down and stare at my feet. But on that day in June 2011, in Columbus, Ohio, at the age of 73, my fear turned into smoke and blew away, and I could look straight out into the eyes of the others and hold my head high and even wave and even make the V sign, peace and victory and love.

It might just be an honor to grow old in a world of gay pride.



OLOC members at Portland Pride 2011

Portland OR Pride *By Betty Marino, 1939*

About a dozen Portland OR OLOC members participated in Pride Fest 2011 in June. Some rode in a convertible; others marched with "Old and Bold" signs on their backs. A crowd estimated at 25,000 of young, old, gay, and straight people lined the parade route in downtown Portland to celebrate. Many young folks gave us a very warm reception and called out, "Thank you! Thanks for paving the way!" as we passed. We all had a wonderful time and a very heart-warming experience to remember.

Below: Hudson Valley OLOC Chapter members at New Paltz, NY, Pride. Alix Dobkin, Ginny Apuzzo, Virginia Moore, Anna Mae Schuler, & Suzanne McHugh



St. Louis Pride *By Charlotte Ellis, 1943*

On Sunday, June 26, several OLOC members took part in the St. Louis Pride Parade. Our local SAGE group had chartered a trolley and invited OLOC and Prime Timer members to ride. Unfortunately, none of our members were up to walking in the parade so our banner was carried by some younger interns from SAGE. There was a lot of cheering and that made us feel good. The trolley carried signs that said things like "Golden Oldies" and "Aging with Pride." Since we were close to the beginning of the parade, we were able to get off the trolley and watch most of the rest of it.

Hudson Valley OLOC Celebrates Pride *By Alix Dobkin, 1940*

In New Paltz NY, on Sunday, June 5, the OLOC-HV (Hudson Valley) chapter marched in the 7th Annual LGBTQ Pride March, sponsored by the LGBTQ Community Center in Kingston. Our banner was greeted by cheers and whoops. Long accustomed to the word "Lesbian," enthusiastic crowds on the sidelines often expressed surprise and occasional shock (as usual) to see the word "Old."

Cleveland Pride *By Judy Benson, 1946*

Nineteen parade participants, three shuttle drivers, one behind-the-scenes volunteer, and two add-ons who joined from the spectators made up the Old Lesbians Organizing for Change crew at Cleveland Pride on June 25, 2011. OLOC has been a presence at Cleveland Pride in previous years, but this was the first time we attempted to provide a very small rowboat float and an entourage of cars, including a sporty Miata with an Old Lesbian and her mother. Cars and boat displayed posters sending out messages about Old Lesbian pride and a myriad of social justice issues.

Before the parade I was surprised at the number of young people who took pictures not only of us but also of the many messages. As the march began we were well received as always, and cheers went up when spectators heard our chants and read our slogans. The next day I was touched when I checked Facebook. A large number of Pride albums featured OLOC. I didn't even know many of the young Lesbians posting on Facebook. Since I am a FB friend of Pride and albums were tagged to Pride, I was able to see them. Maybe our popularity with the young is because we are a sign of hope for them personally and not just the Old Lesbians they know. Negative messages about aging affect everyone. Everyone felt more hopeful about her own aging journey seeing Old Lesbians participate in the fun and chaos of Pride. OLOC: It's not just for Old Lesbians anymore.

Terry Baum for Mayor

Terry Baum, 1946, is running for Mayor of San Francisco—the only Lesbian in the race. She's also the only artist and the only Green, endorsed by the Green Party. There hasn't been an elected Lesbian in the city in years. And, although she sees herself as a very long shot, she wants to share her vision with the people of San Francisco.

San Francisco Bay Area News *By Lynn Brown, 1943*

Our San Francisco Bay Area OLOC has decided to become Community Partners with the Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project (QWOCMAP) because every year they produce an amazing three-day FREE event for our community at Brava Theater. I have been going to see these films for six of their seven years and have witnessed the production of more and more amazing and quality films.

The Project is under the artistic direction of Madeleine Lim, who has worked to maintain this program partly through her film connections with San Francisco State University. The Project itself leads many young queer women of color into self-esteem and heroic expressions of their lives.

This Festival usually precedes the Frameline Film Festival and fits snugly into the Queer Arts Festival. There is usually a live panel on Saturday afternoons, and this year the participants were fantastic: Erika Huggins, Sam Canyon, Olga Talamante, and Jewelle Gomez, with Kebo Drew orchestrating. They were called "Thinkers and Troublemakers," and all are activists who have been challenged with finding their place in the mélange of race, equality, gender, and sexuality. Their words were heart-opening and deep. On many evenings over 100 women were turned away for lack of seating.

Next year there will be double the seating (750 seats) at the Yerba Buena Theater and IT WILL STILL BE FREE. Did I mention that the late afternoon and evening programs all feature delicious food served by volunteers? The volunteer staff is awesome and so supportive of the Old Lesbians who show up. Disabled women can come in when they arrive without waiting in line.

Community Partners have visibility in QWOCMAP's program presentations. We wanted to show our support of women of color and increase our diversity, which we know is an important issue for National OLOC as well.

OLOC is supported in part by grants from the Arcus Foundation and the Carpenter Foundation

SAGE Expanding Women's Programming

By Felicia Sobel, 1944

SAGE (Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders) has established the position of Women's Programming Coordinator in its New York City Community Services Department in recognition of the need for more women's events. I filled this new part-time position on June 1st and welcome the opportunity to broaden activities for New York's Lesbian-bisexual community. The major challenge, in addition to overseeing current recreational, educational, and community-building programs, is to offer groups, events and activities that reflect the extraordinary breadth and diversity of the interests, talents, experiences, knowledge, and aspirations of New York women.

Founded in 1978 in New York City, SAGE has grown both locally and nationally, with Manhattan offices in Greenwich Village (at the LGBT Center), where I work, Chelsea, and Harlem, and some 20 affiliates across the country. Among the organization's broad array of advocacy and services efforts are technical and assistance training programs. It opened the first LGBT Elder National Resource Center in 2010 (see *The Reporter*, December 2010 issue).

I have found OLOC such an important forum in which to address ageism, lesbophobia, and sexism in others as well as in ourselves. And I see my role at SAGE as offering another opportunity to help heighten consciousness. In August I began a new SAGE discussion group for women 55 years of age and older, which I facilitate and call "Our Evolving Lives." At the risk of glorifying old age, I feel that by aging thoughtfully, we gain insight into the lessons we've learned and the values we've crystallized, which in turn broadens our vistas and emboldens our lives.

Mary Beth Brindley Honored

Mary Beth Brindley, Portland OR's OLOC chapter coordinator, was honored by Multnomah County during its National Older Americans Month in May, 2011, as one of the LGBTQ community's pioneering citizens. The Board of Commissioners recognized her for her significant achievements, including co-founding the OLOC chapter, as well as Senior Housing and Retirement Enterprises and Elder Resource Alliance (which have since merged to become Gay & Grey). Congratulations, Mary Beth!

Arden Eversmeyer Receives Honor

On August 11, 2011, the Montrose Counseling Center in Houston TX held a ceremony to honor Arden Eversmeyer for her many accomplishments on behalf of Old Lesbians. She was cited for her work with OLOC's Lesbian Herstory Project, her advocacy for MCC's SPRY (Seniors Preparing for Rainbow Years) programs, and her founding of LOAF (Lesbians Over Age Fifty). The celebration honoring Arden included the naming of a room after her in the Montrose Counseling Center.

More info from <http://tinyurl.com/3wlfxuo/> Or you can request a print copy from Susan, susan@oloc.org, or drop a note to the OLOC post office box.

The Sister Witch Conspiracy

Sonia Johnson has a wonderful book called *The Sister Witch Conspiracy*. "A marvelous lost world; a sisterhood of beings powerful beyond imagining; a secret so subversive it meant death if discovered; courage great enough to believe and to pass down through hundreds of generations of women...the truth of who we once were, of who we most amazingly still are." The book is dedicated to Mary Daly. It is available only directly from Sonia (\$16.95) to 233 E. La Huerta, Green Valley AZ 85614.

sonia-johnson.com
soniajohnson3@gmail.com

The Ongoing Adventures of Virginia and Suzannah

By Virginia Mollenkott, 1932

As a resident in an old-age community (average age: 85), I can testify that silence is the rule among Old Lesbians and gays. My partner Suzannah and I come out constantly to everyone we meet over dinner and elsewhere, but in almost three years nobody has reciprocated except one gay male. When a woman died here, her obituary stated that she shared an apartment with her "good friend so-and so," but the obituary was removed within 12 hours from the memorial book in our clubhouse. I wrote to the "good friend" with my condolences and came out to her, hoping we could befriend her in her bereavement, but she never responded. So I think she was the one who removed her partner's obituary so rapidly, out of fear that even "good friend" was saying too much. (Obituaries usually stay in the memorial book for at least two weeks.) If there are only three Lesbians and gay men in a population of almost 2000, I would be very surprised. But since I was 35 before homosexual acts were decriminalized, and grew up in a fundamentalist family besides, I understand where the fear comes from. We who know that God loves what She has created need to be compassionate, not judgmental, toward those who are still living in fear.

PS: Outside our apartment door, in June I decorated our shelf with rainbows and the statement "June is diversity month." I included the "Love thy neighbor" list: "thy Jewish neighbor, thy Muslim neighbor, thy gay neighbor, thy transgender neighbor," etc. I added a few categories and, by accident, saw one of the security guards standing in front of it for the longest time, obviously pondering the message.

Mission Statement for OLOC

Old Lesbians Organizing for Change is a national organization for Old Lesbians age 60 and over and will:

- Promote Old Lesbian Pride.
- Educate, support and empower Old Lesbians.
- Challenge ageism in our society and educate the general public about the effects of ageism and oppression.
- Celebrate our strengths, our talents, our experiences, and document our lives.
- Convene National Gatherings of Old Lesbians.
- Encourage, establish, and support local chapters and regional events

Marriage Vows

Congratulations to Ruth Berman and Connie Kurtz on their recent marriage and to Mina Meyer and Sharon Raphael for their 3rd anniversary of marriage and of 40 years together.

Civil Rights Expanded

By Louise Luczak, 1951

On July 19, 2011, Cleveland OLOCers Leslye Huff and Amina Ostendorf got the city of East Cleveland to pass an expansive civil rights ordinance—covering sexual orientation, gender identity, race, etc. This is a big deal!

Contact List for Current Steering Committee Members

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Alix Dobkin, 1940, Woodstock, NY

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Tita Caldwell, 1931, San Francisco, CA
Ruth Debra, 1944, Palm Springs, CA
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Sally Tatnall, 1937, Cleveland Heights, OH

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The Travel Directory has been discontinued due to very little use. Thanks to those of you who have been listed or who have bought a copy.

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