

Herstory of OLOC

OLD LESBIANS ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

1989 through 2007



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**OLD LESBIANS ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE
1989 through 2007**

Lesbian or lesbian? Old or old?

OLOC has adopted a stylistic format that includes always capitalizing the word *Lesbian* unless it is in a direct quote. They also apply this style to the word *Old* when it is used in part of the title *Old Lesbians*.

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This History is based on written records stored in OLOC's archives (committee meeting minutes, newsletters, correspondence and miscellaneous other documents). There are, however, some gaps in the records and a number of documents were damaged beyond recovery during a flood. Each piece in this history is the result of a coordinated effort between Arden Eversmeyer, Mary Henry and Margaret Purcell. The basic information was extracted from the records with the assistance of Margaret, who also did the layout work. Once a working draft was assembled, it was carefully reviewed by Vera Martin and Arden Eversmeyer, both Emerita Steering Committee Members, each having served 14 years. Collectively, Arden and Vera were there as participants and witnesses to the birth and much of the growth of OLOC. It is being published and distributed after careful review by Steering Committee members who are currently serving. **Note:** Many of the documents and photos found in the archives are copies of originals or taken from small group snapshots. Despite their lack of clarity, they were included. It was felt they made an important contribution.

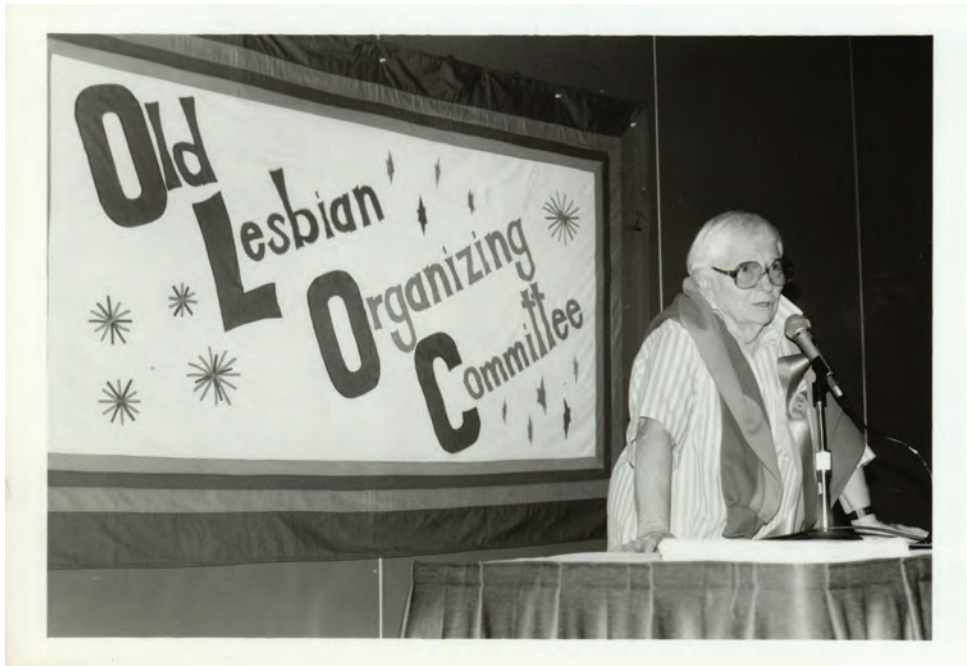
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever does.”

Margaret Mead

Two of the Oldest Photos in the Archives



Photo taken March 1990 in Santa Barbara, CA at the second official meeting of OLOC. Pictured standing left to right: Betty Shoemaker, Vera Martin, Gertrude Chasens, Ann Ramsey, Elaine Mikels, Shaba Barnes and Shevy Healey. Sitting: Barbara Kalish. Kneeling: Rosemary Hathaway.



Barbara Macdonald, delivering a keynote address at the National Lesbian Conference in Atlanta in April 1991.

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Numbered pages are followed by supporting documents.

Supporting documents are followed by index of women whose names or pictures occur in this publication.

Supporting Documents

(Support documents are located after the numbered pages. Multi-page supporting documents are both lettered and numbered; for example, B1 and B2)

Document	Document Title
A	First West Coast Conference By and For Old Lesbians Planning Committee Members
B1-B2	First West Coast Conference By and For Old Lesbians (1987) Presentations, Workshops and Presenters
C	The West Coast Celebrations II and Conference of Old Lesbians (1989) Presentations, Workshops and Presenters
D1-D2	Early OLOC Meeting Attendants
E	(Steering) Committee Meetings
F	OLOC Committees and Committee Members September 1990
G	Coordinator Position
H	Group Norms: Expectations for Our Behavior, Early Version
J	Incorporating OLOC, Early Notes
K	Early Financial Reports
L1-L2	Mail Depot Flow Chart (1994)
M1-M7	Newsletter Highlights
N	OLOC Brochure, First Version
P	Examples of First Cards Developed for OLOC (by Minnesota OLOC Chapter)
Q	Excerpt from the book Lambda Gray
R	Press release regarding a leaflet distributed at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Creating Change Conference in 1994.
S	Fundraising Example: Their Hands
T	Credit Page for <i>Facilitator's Handbook</i>
U1-U2	Table of Contents of <i>Facilitator's Handbook</i>
V1-V2	Guidelines (aka Policy and Procedures) Manual, July 2007
W	Ageism Graphic

Preface

Old Lesbians Organizing for Change deserves to have its story told. A prominent figure in the history of German feminism* once said “The history of all times, and of today especially, teaches that ... women will be forgotten if they forget to think about themselves.”

The simple act of telling the tale of the history of an organization like OLOC is, by default, subjective. Women who were there as it all happened can add what they remember and information can be sought in the records (minutes, newsletters, correspondence and such). But, no matter how care is taken, there will be inaccuracies. Each person’s memory of a given event differs slightly from that of the woman next to her. And minutes, newsletters and such were written by someone who may have heard what was said one way when what was really meant was something else.

Care has been taken to make sure this history is as accurate as possible in its facts and, more importantly, as accurate as possible in its portrayal of how and why certain events took place.

OLOC continues its fight to confront ageism on a daily basis, so its history is not over. We fully anticipate there will be a need to update this document on a regular basis for years to come.

*** *Louise Otto (1819-1895), German author, advocate for women’s rights and better education for girls; widely acknowledged as the founder of the organized German women’s movement***

From the First Old Lesbians Conference

by Buffy Dunker with Jennifer Abod

Among the participants at the First West Coast Conference of Old Lesbians (held in April in Carson, California) was Buffy Dunker, a lesbian feminist therapist who lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Buffy—a grandmother and great-grandmother who taught school for 24 years in Vermont—came out at the age of 72 in 1977. In the article below (an adapted transcript of a live interview by Jennifer Abod that was broadcast in May on "Say It, Sister," Boston's feminist radio program on WMBR-FM), Buffy describes highlights of the groundbreaking California meeting.

JENNIFER: Buffy, I've been waiting for quite a while to ask you what this old lesbians conference was like.

BUFFY: It was wonderful. It was very inspiring to see so many women over 60 having a good time and expressing themselves with a great deal of pride, a great deal of self-confidence. There were workshops, there was a wonderful dance on Saturday night, there were other kinds of entertainment, and always there was a feeling of intellectual and emotional stimulation.

There were about 200 women?

There were 200, of whom 40 were under 60; they had been specially invited by their older partners or because of some experience.



Buffy Dunker

Gay Environment, an organization in New York that is getting quite powerful in support of old lesbians and gays.

Were there other people of color there?

Yes, but few. That was the one flaw that I found in the conference: there was not enough diversity. There were a few Hispanics, and only two or four black women.

sional monologist, usually comic. There was Baba Copper, another powerful woman, a writer and an artist who has had essays in various anthologies. And there were Barbara Macdonald and Cynthia Rich, who were Cambridge residents when they wrote their book, *Look Me in the Eye: Old Women, Aging, and Ageism*. Barbara was a feminist theorist about

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West Coast Lesbian
Conference and Celebration - Los Angeles
April 20-21

WEST COAST CELEBRATION

FIRST WEST COAST

CONFERENCE

BY AND FOR OLD LESBIANS

FRIDAY, SATURDAY & SUNDAY
APRIL 24, 25, 26, 1987

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY DOMINGUEZ HILLS
CARSON, CALIFORNIA

West Coast Celebration II
and Conference of
Old Lesbians



August 4 - 6, 1989

Seven Hills Conference Center
San Francisco State University
800 Font St.
San Francisco, CA

The Beginnings

Two ground breaking conferences were held in California, in 1987 and again in 1989. These conferences appear to represent an historic first: a large event planned with the sole intent of providing an opportunity for Old Lesbians to gather and network.

The first event, held April 24-26, 1987 on the campus of California State University Dominguez Hills in Carson, CA, was entitled the *West Coast Celebration: The First West Coast Conference By and For Old Lesbians*. The conference involved the efforts of many outspoken movers and shakers in the community. (*Supporting Document A*) It was attended by approximately 160 Old Lesbians (women age 60 and over) and 40 younger women.

While a wide variety of topics were discussed in the presentations and workshops covered (*Supporting Document B*), ageism was clearly the overriding theme of the conference. The opening presentation, consciousness raising session and closing presentation each focused on aspects of ageism.

Those responsible for the 1987 conference described themselves and their event: "The Planning Committee for the First West Coast Celebration is a grass-roots group of Lesbians who began meeting one year ago. The purpose was to organize a Conference that would address the Issues of Aging and Ageism as it affects Old Lesbians, in the hope that this event would be a catalyst for change."

The West Coast Celebration II and Conference of Old Lesbians took place August 4-6, 1989 at the Seven Hills Conference Center on the campus of San Francisco State University in San Francisco, CA. Here is their statement of purpose for this event:

We are gathering together a second time for our personal and political empowerment and the celebration of our lives. We are inventing our own aging and sharing experiences for our mutual enrichment.

We refuse to lie that it is shameful to be an old woman. We are here to meet each other, build community and find new ways to combat ageism, sexism and racism.

We will celebrate our similarities to and differences from each other. We will rejoice in our herstory and affirm our connection with Mother Earth. We will celebrate our sexuality, creativity and spirituality by sharing our crafts, rituals, music, dreams and stories. We will dance our struggles and our victories.

All of us together! Let's Celebrate! We Are Here!

As with the earlier conference, this 1989 event was the product of huge amounts of energy from dozens of women. Many were involved with the first conference, others were new. It was attended by 202 women, including 46 younger supporters.

In addition to workshops and presentations, both conferences included a variety of additional opportunities for the participants to get together (dances, affinity groups, social hours, entertainment and speakouts). They also included art shows/exhibits.

At both conferences, participation in most of the workshops was limited to women 60 years of age and older. Some workshops were also further limited. For instance, a workshop on anti-Semitism was limited to Jewish women; *Being Single and Liking It* was limited to women who lived alone and were single.

The subject matter of some of the workshops and presentations at the 1989 conference involved ageism, but overall, the range of topics was rather diverse. (*Supporting Document C*) It was during this conference that OLOC was born.

There are several versions of how it all came about, each woman relating the event as they remember it happening. In her Oral Herstory, Jean Mountaingrove provided this account:

...the first one [conference] was in Long Beach [actually in nearby City of Carson], and that was just a lot of fun. ... Then, the next one was in San Francisco, and that's when OLOC began. ... I know we were having breakfast, and Shevy was there at the table, and three or four others, and we were talking about the meeting as it had gone so far. And it just wasn't being political enough. And I just sat back and said, 'Hey, we can do whatever we want. We can just call a meeting about that.' Why not? And so, I think they asked Barbara Macdonald to come sit with us. We went off. We called our own

little meeting, and I think there were about 20 women came, filled up the room. And it was then that it took off, that we were going to have an organization that would really speak to how we made a difference in the world, not just entertaining ourselves here.

And that was all – I was only a spark in that. But you know, one particular moment, I did that.

And then, these other people came in, and did the kind of work that I was not able to do. But I really appreciated that Shevy always seemed to be aware that I had made a contribution to the group.

In the first issue of the OLOC newsletter, it was stated that the informal caucus from which OLOC emerged was actually attended by 61 women and over 20 of those women volunteered to serve on the organizing committee.

The first actual meeting of OLOC (outside of the ad-hoc meeting at the 1989 conference) was attended by 16 women and took place in San Diego, CA on November 3 & 4, 1989. (*Supporting Document D*)

At that first meeting, there was a discussion about the name of the fledgling organization. Several alternatives were offered including OPAL, Old Politically Active Lesbians and COOL, Committee to Organize Old Lesbians. The group agreed that OLOC, Old Lesbian Organizing Committee, best described who they were, so that name and acronym was adopted.

The earliest Statement of Purpose, crafted at the first official meeting, read:

The OLOC [Old Lesbian Organizing Committee] is a national organization of Old Lesbians over 60 of all races formed to combat ageism within our own and the larger community; to rectify and disseminate information regarding other issues that affect our lives.

Other interesting discussions during the first meeting include:

- Regarding the role of women under 60 years of age in OLOC, the group concluded “Younger Lesbians are important to us as a vehicle to help reduce ageism.”
- Is OLOC a Lesbian feminist group? They concluded that the “most

important issue is ageism within the Lesbian community.”

- Concern was expressed regarding lack of diversity among the group.
- The group had \$610 in funds, most raised from donations during the second West Coast Conference.

By the time OLOC published and distributed its first newsletter (Spring 1991), the committee had further clarified their purpose and strategy, offering these statements to readers:

The group plans to meet quarterly, to develop a network system and continue working to eradicate ageism in our Lesbian and feminist communities as well as society at large. We are also concerned about other issues that affect Old Lesbians, especially racism, sexism, poverty as well as health, housing and the environment.

Small as our group is, we are becoming clearer that our need is to empower and nurture ourselves, to give voice to our grievances and our needs, to become a beacon of clarity and a focus for organization.

Even in the early years, staying focused on fighting ageism wasn't always easy and at times, it was necessary for the group to confront ageism taking place within its own meetings. In a meeting where she felt others were simply deferring to her instead of challenging her, Barbara Macdonald said “Why do you say this or that? Maybe it's out of respect. Well, I don't want it and you will not fossilize me!” She then went on to say “We are still learning how to express disagreement in a constructive fashion, how to be more nurturing of each other.”

From the beginning, OLOC has adhered tightly to 60 years of age as a minimum age for full involvement in the organization. That isn't to say age-limits haven't been a recurring theme. The Steering Committee would regularly enter into discussions about the age 60 or older requirement and, repeatedly, confirmed their desire to keep that age limit. However, a few notable exceptions were made over the years. In addition to allowing people under 60 to be partially involved as “supporters”, the SC also agreed that 60 would be defined as “when a woman enters her 60th year of life, defined as the day after her 59th birthday.

From the beginning, OLOC has always acknowledged the importance of

making younger women feel they too can work against ageism. Their support has always been appreciated; women younger than 60 were just not allowed to participate in OLOC activities. A 56 year old Lesbian and life-long activist attending the National Lesbian Conference in Atlanta in 1991 tells of wanting to hear a presentation being done by Barbara Macdonald. After being resoundingly turned away at the door, Gloria Stancich lurked around the corner until she saw an opportunity to sneak in, and in her own words, “sat in the back and tried to look as old as I could.”

Those structuring OLOC strongly felt women 60 and older had a common understanding and set of experiences and that they should take responsibility for speaking for themselves. Demanding to be heard (not talked about or spoken for) is a core belief of the organization. A frequent motto (borrowed from the disability community and used over the years) is “Nothing about us without us.”

What Followed OLOC’s Beginnings

After working through the endless details and issues that accompany establishing such an organization, OLOC came to define itself this way:

The purpose for which OLOC is organized is to educate the general public about the needs and concerns of women over age 60.

Given the nature of OLOC, that statement is rather vague, not even mentioning the word Lesbian. It was, however, the statement used when filing for incorporation. Not everyone involved in OLOC was comfortable being out as Lesbians, nor were they sure being a group of Lesbians wouldn’t open them up to further discrimination (in seeking non-profit status and such). In fact, OLOC was incorporated as an organization without a membership. The corporate attorney advised OLOC that as long as you have no “membership list”, the organization couldn’t be compelled to produce it. It could, however, have subscribers. Thus, OLOC adopted the term Subscriber for women 60 and older and Supporters for those under 60 who wanted to donate money and receive the newsletter.

For more clarification, OLOC further describes itself as follows:

OLOC, Inc. is the national organization of Lesbians of all races, age 60 and over, and will:

- Support, respect and empower Old Lesbians.
- Recognize and challenge ageism in our lives and in society.
- Celebrate our strengths, our talents, our experiences, and document our lives.
- Convene national gatherings for Old Lesbians.
- Encourage, establish, and support local groups and regional events.
- Provide educational materials and consciousness raising about ageism.

OLOC also formulated the following statement regarding its use of the term Old as opposed to older, aging, senior or any less definite terms...

Society calls us “old” behind our backs while calling us “older” to our faces. Old has become a term of insult and shame. To be old means to be ignored, scorned, invisible and expendable.

We refute the lie that it is shameful to be an old woman. We name ourselves Old Lesbians because we no longer accommodate language that implies in any way that old means inferior.

We call ourselves OLD with pride. In doing so, we challenge directly the stereotypes to empower and change ourselves, each other, and the world.

OLOC is an organization with clearly defined criteria for who can belong and a clearly defined mission. It is also an organization that is open to working toward its goals through a wide variety of means. As local chapters form, they are encouraged to work against ageism in whatever ways suit their needs and abilities. Some women are good at getting out there and picketing while others feel more comfortable confronting ageism within their own daily lives and families. Sometimes women just discovering OLOC have to first deal with their own internalized ageism and become involved in OLOC strictly for the support they feel knowing they aren't alone.

The Women

OLOC has always been a collaborative effort, one that depended on the time, passion and talents provided by many, many women coming together to make it happen. These women are really what OLOC is all about. Without them, it wouldn't have happened.

Literally hundreds of women have played important roles in the organizational history over the past 20 years. Each of these women is like a piece in a puzzle. Some have played a prominent, highly visible role... those pieces form the intricate design of the puzzle. Others have been the glue that held the organization together... they form the edge of the puzzle. And others have quietly gone about their work, doing what is required without being noticed... those pieces are the background of the puzzle. No puzzle is complete without all the pieces. OLOC exists because of the contributions of all the women.

Despite the fact that naming specific names brings with it the danger of leaving someone out that should have been included, a document about the history of OLOC would be incomplete without mentioning some individual women and their contribution.

(Listed in alphabetical order by first name)



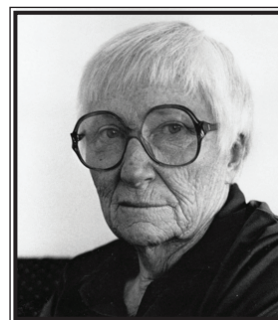
Annalee Stewart Speaker/workshop provider, developed strong local group in Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN; hosted two Gatherings; served eight years on the Steering Committee. (currently 79 years of age)

Arden Eversmeyer Operated the National Office; moving force behind the Oral Herstory Project; served 14 years, seven as Co-Director. (currently 77 years of age)



Barbara Kalish A founding mother, helped develop the original database; served four years on the Steering Committee. (currently 79 years of age)

Barbara Macdonald Never a Steering Committee member, but our mentor and guide. Her book *Look Me in the Eye* was a catalyst for the formation of OLOC. Recognized as a critical thinker on ageism. (deceased)



Deedy Breed Developed OLOC's first budget; designed the first Planned Giving Brochure; speaker; served seven years on the Steering Committee. (currently 85 years of age)

Elaine Mikels First editor of the *OLOC Reporter*; served seven years on the Steering Committee. (deceased)



Kittu Riddle Part of the newsletter group, a writer and mediator; contributed to the *Facilitator's Handbook*, served four years on the Steering Committee. (currently 89 years of age)

Pat Denslow A clear thinker and organizer, part of the newsletter group; contributed to the *Facilitator's Handbook*; served four years on the Steering Committee. (deceased)



Rosemary Hathaway Founding mother, first "treasurer", participated in developing the *Facilitator's Handbook*; served seven years on the Steering Committee. (currently 78 years of age)

Ruth Silver Founding mother, started the OLOC archives, contributed to the *Facilitator's Handbook*; served seven years on the Steering Committee. (currently 89 years of age)



Shaba Barnes Involved in the West Coast Conferences that pre-dated and led to OLOC; assisted wherever needed until she reached age 60 and could join; served four years on the Steering Committee; three as Co-Director. (currently 72 years of age)

Shevy Healey Founding mother, recognized leader, grass roots organizer, keynote/workshop speaker, contributed to the *Facilitator's Handbook*; served six years on the Steering Committee; retired after 1996 Gathering. (deceased)



Vera Martin Founding mother, OLOC's face to the world, speaker, contributed to the *Facilitator's Handbook*; served 14 years on the Steering Committee, seven as Co-Director; retired after 2004 Gathering. (currently 84 years of age)

Present 020C Apr 1992		
1. Madeline Strong	2	12-30
2. Madeline Strong	4-4-31	
3. Maribel Albort	7-16-25	
4. Barbara Macdonald	9/11/13	
5. Rosemary Hawthorn	12-4-29	
6. Patricia Cole	7/4/31	
7. Ruth Heidelberg	9/27/26	
8. Win Frederick	10/6/30	
9. Elaine Mikels	4/28/21	
10. Dorothy Hoogterp	10/21/16	
11. Irene Weiss	8/30/26	
12. Teddy Rossmore	4-16-31	
13. DEEDY BREED	10-19-22	
14. Sherry Healey	1/29/22	
15. Pat Colenan	6/26/25	
16. Ruth Silver	3/11/19	
17. Jettie Rouse	5/21/19	
18. Vera Martin	6/18/23	
19. Ann Ramsey	10/22/24	
20. Pat Denstow	4/30/18	

Sign in sheet at the April 1992 Steering Committee meeting held in St. Augustine, Florida.

Structuring OLOC

Steering Committee and Leadership

Early in the life of OLOC, it was decided that it was important to find women who were interested and who represented different geographic areas. Shevy Healey was heard to say more than once, "This must not be another California organization." Her vision was that OLOC represent Old Lesbians all over the United States, and to do that the leadership had to be geographically representative.

To accomplish this the first Mail Depot was in Chicago. When that did not prove successful, the Mail Depot was moved to Houston. (This ultimately lead to incorporating in Texas and the National Office being established in Houston.)

The first mention of a coordinator or leader of the Committee occurs in the minutes for the June 1990 meeting. At that meeting, Vera Martin was acknowledged as doing a great job as the coordinator and she agreed to continue to serve as such.

The term *Steering Committee* does not appear in meeting minutes or supporting documents until it was used as a salutation on a letter to other Committee members from Vera Martin and Shevy Healey in October 1990. Until then, the group was referred to only as *the Committee*.

There were times when the Committee was huge with as many as twenty women working together. Early on, there were no established criteria for selecting Committee members and a need became clear. An example demonstrating that point comes from the meeting at The Pagoda (in St. Augustine, FL), in April 1992. It was attended by over twenty women, several of them newcomers. Despite being one of those newcomers, Claudia Cole, from Florida, was swept off her feet by her experience and not only agreed to be on the Committee, but became Co-Coordinator (a title later changed to Director/Co-Director). Despite her enthusiasm, the responsibility was too great, and she never attended another meeting.

In 1993, requirements for serving on the OLOC Steering Committee were established: women interested needed to be a Lesbian, 60 years of age or

older, attend two meetings as a “participant observer” and sit for a final interview.

Several times over the years, without a selection criteria in place, there were women who would attend one meeting and never come back. Many of them had received financial assistance to attend the meetings, clearly pointing out a need to institute a method for selecting women to serve on the Committee. The following criteria were put in place to minimize attrition:

1. When an Old Lesbian expressed interest in serving, her interest was discussed at a Steering Committee meeting.
2. If the SC agreed the woman could make a significant contribution to the Committee, a formal letter of invitation, including the following items, was sent to her:
 - A. An application form asking her personal skills, general areas of experience, past experience working in groups using consensus in making decisions, ability to commit to two meetings each year (one in April and one in October), and the applicant’s reasons for wanting to be on the SC.
 - B. A document listing the procedures for becoming a member of the SC including: attending two consecutive meetings, submitting a personal bio, and a list of possible questions to be addressed during an interview held after the applicant’s second SC meeting.
 - C. A copy of the Statement of Understanding, spelling out the commitments an applicant will be making to OLOC. It was to be signed and returned with the formal application.
3. Once completed forms were returned, they were reviewed by the Steering Committee. If the SC was in consensus, the applicant was invited to attend the next scheduled SC meeting.

There was so much work to be done by the Steering Committee, it was felt that it was important that an applicant had skills to offer. Women interested in and invited to serve on the Steering Committee did so first as “provisional” members. After attending two consecutive meetings and carrying out assumed tasks, they were then interviewed and, assuming everyone was in agreement, invited to serve as full SC members.

Because OLOC lacked a significant amount of money, for several years, there was no reimbursement for expenses. All members paid their own way. After a few years, with a little bit of money in the bank, a percentage of expenses could be reimbursed. Finally, after several fundraisers, all expenses could be reimbursed. Steering Committee members who were able to do so returned some or all of the expense money. They were able to do this in the form of a tax-deductible contribution.

Assuming a leadership role didn't always come naturally to women who had lived the bulk of their lives in a society that felt strongly a woman's place was in the home, either taking care of a husband and children or if they didn't have either of those, taking care of their aging parents. One innovative undertaking OLOC began to encourage and help develop leadership was to plan and host a Leadership Training Conference. Held in October 1994 in Houston, TX, attendance was limited to "those Old Lesbians who are willing to commit themselves to contribute to the future of OLOC in a local, state or national leadership capacity."

It wasn't surprising that Steering Committee meetings were often stressful. The committee was made up of strong women, many of whom had been marginalized much of their lives. There was a tremendous amount of work that needed to be done. It wasn't unusual for members to go home from a Steering Committee meeting with lengthy to-do lists. At times, these lists exceeded a full page of individual tasks, especially from the meeting preceding a Gathering. An intern program was developed and implemented in early 2000 to help alleviate those pressures.

Historically, the list of women who have served as what was first known as National Coordinator, a title later changed to Director, is short. For the first five years, Vera Martin ably held this position, a position critical to the successful formation of the organization. Arden Eversmeyer served as Acting Director in '96 and '97. Together, Vera and Arden continued as Co-Directors until 2004; they were followed by the team of Jan Griesinger and Shaba Barnes; when Shaba stepped down, Mina Meyer joined Jan and together they serve as the current Co-Directors.

(More about Intern Program on page 48), (SC meeting dates and locations, Supporting Document E)

Sub-Committees

Although seldom referred to as sub-committees, the Steering Committee quickly saw the need to separate duties and responsibilities into smaller groups. They simply referred to them by name to distinguish them from the SC. By 1990, they had established the following committees: Newsletter, Correspondence, CR (Consciousness Raising) Packet, Agenda, Publicity, Bylaws, Fundraising, Finance, National Lesbian Conference and Arrangements. (*Supporting Document F*)

In October of 1991, the committees were adjusted to reflect ongoing needs. They were comprised of: Newsletter, Interregional Communicator, Mailing List, Finances, Minutes Secretary, Coordinator, Mail Depot and Norms. It is noteworthy that during this meeting, it was decided that each committee would have a clear list of duties and responsibilities and that each committee would also submit a budget. It was at this point that the Finance committee began to establish protocol for all banking, bookkeeping, reports and such. Out of this meeting also came a list of duties of the Committee Coordinator. (*Supporting Document G*)

Over the years, committees continued to be formed, disbanded and redefined as needed.

On a number of occasions, there have been discussions to clarify the role/authority of sub-committees as opposed to the authority and responsibility of the Steering Committee itself. Minutes also reflect some interesting discussions drawing a distinction between someone speaking as a member of a subcommittee, or even the Steering Committee, as opposed to speaking for OLOC as a whole.

Consensus Process

The first mention of the term consensus is found in the minutes for the committee meeting held June 15-17, 1990. The discussion concerned participation of women under age 60. It was established that the issue would be decided using consensus. This motion was made and carried by consensus:

Members of OLOC be reserved for Lesbians 60 years and older, not just for us but of and by us; and Lesbians under 60 who have been with us since the beginning may remain with us as long as they care to do so.

Early documents also offered the following note regarding decision making:

*consensus: if none, then mediation
blocking for moral and ethical reasons only
agree to disagree*

In a document summarizing the decisions made by the Committee prior to April 1992, it was clearly stated that “Decisions are made by consensus by those present and are reported out in the minutes.” However, at that same meeting, it became apparent that a minority, even a minority of one, could hold up all progress by consistently voting against the will of the rest of the group. Toward the end of that meeting, it was suggested that the consensus process be modified to “consensus minus one.” But, in a practically no-win situation, the group realized they would need to reach consensus to make that change!

After a bit of wrangling, a change to consensus minus one was codified at the next meeting and remains in use today. It is explained as such:

The OLOC Steering Committee makes decisions using the process of consensus or consensus minus one. When a decision is required, SC members are asked to either agree or disagree with a proposal. Consensus is reached when everyone agrees. Consensus minus one is reached when all but one SC member agrees. If, for whatever reason, an SC member feels unable to vote yea or nay, she can abstain; she will be expected to provide an explanation to the rest of the Steering Committee. When a consensus or consensus minus one is not achieved, the item being discussed does not go forward.

Consciousness Raising

By the second meeting of the Committee, in March 1990, a commitment was made to set aside time at the beginning of every meeting for a consciousness raising (CR) discussion. The topic for that meeting was “What is the major concern in my life right now and how it is affected by ageism.”

At subsequent meetings during the early 90s, there were often CR sessions each day. For instance, in June 1990, the first day’s CR session topic was: How did you feel when you first came out? How did you feel when you

first experienced feeling/being old? The second CR topic was anti-racism. The next was about racism, class and the question “What do we hope for from OLOC?” And the last day of the meeting, the CR topic was: Ageism; particular acts of ageism each (woman) had experienced in the previous month or six weeks.

Within the first year or so of OLOC, it was quickly decided that the organization needed to produce materials to help others work on consciousness raising about ageism. Out of this came the concept of what was to become the *Facilitator’s Handbook*. (Discussed later in this document.)

In addition to frequently focusing on various aspects of ageism, consciousness raising sessions quite often dealt with racism and classism. Minutes from early meetings reflect that the issue of race, and why OLOC was not successful in their efforts to include women of color in their meetings, was discussed repeatedly.

Over the years, OLOC employed various strategies to encourage participation of minority women in OLOC in general and, more specifically, their involvement in the Steering Committee. At one meeting, the SC reached the following agreement: *OLOC sets an upper limit on the number of steering committee members and, as women of color are recruited [to serve], other [white] women will resign – [women resigning will come] first from those areas where there are two or more steering committee members.* Other examples of strategies mentioned in the records are: establishing a quota of 25% women of color on the SC; each SC member bringing one woman of color with her to the next SC meeting; and contacting women of color while they are in their 50s, not waiting until they were 60.

Despite exploring many avenues to change the racial and class makeup, the Steering Committee and the membership at large, has always been predominately white, middle class women.

CR continues to be an important part of every Steering Committee meeting with members taking turns leading the discussions.

Group Norms

Between the April and October Committee meetings in 1991, a lengthy letter was written by a committee member outlining her concerns about the manner in which members interacted during meetings. At the October meeting, considerable time and effort was devoted to developing a set of guidelines for how committee members should behave. At first they were referred to as “Expectations for Our Behavior” but they quickly became known as the Group Norms.

The purpose of the norms was “To form common understandings (ground rules) about what each of us can expect from interactions when we work together in our OLOC meetings.”

During a brain-storming session, the committee came up with a list of concerns which were then organized and prioritized. They agreed to form a sub-committee, consisting of Kittu Riddle, Ruth Heidelberg and Vera Martin, whose focus was to further develop the Norms and bring their work back to the whole committee. It was during this time that the term “vibe watcher” came into use. A vibe watcher’s job during an SC meeting was strictly to pay attention to the way things were said, interrupting when she felt comments were in some way inappropriate.

When the Group Norms sub-committee submitted their work to the Steering Committee (*Supporting Document H*) in April 1992, it became clear the whole group was caught in a Catch 22: they needed the group norms to be in place to guide the discussion about the proposed group norms! The Steering Committee was unable to reach consensus on accepting the proposed document as it stood; the alternative was to go through the document line by line. For those who had worked for months on the Norms, this was tantamount to starting over. But, as soon as the line-by-line review began, consensus was again blocked, and it became clear that the Norms were not to be adopted at that meeting. Further discussion of the Norms was tabled until the October 1992 meeting. It is interesting to note, that this also led to the first discussion of modifying consensus and changing to a concept of consensus minus one. That too was tabled until the next meeting!

Among items of business dealt with in the first morning of the October 1992

SC meeting was the agreement, by full consensus, to adopt the Group Norms as presented (suggested changes were penciled in the copies distributed). With minor changes over the years, the Group Norms are still in use by the OLOC Steering Committee.

Adjusting and Adapting

Key to OLOC not only surviving, but growing stronger, has been its willingness to regularly examine where it is as an organization, what is working or what is not and adjusting and adapting when needed, while most importantly, staying true to its mission.

Here is an example of a policy change: Almost from the very beginning, OLOC was recognized by the research world as a potential wealth of subjects for their studies. Early on, OLOC took a strong stand against participating in any research pertaining to Old Lesbians or ageism unless the research was being conducted by either an Old Lesbian or an old woman. They not only refused to participate if the researcher didn't meet OLOC's criteria, they encouraged other women to do the same. OLOC still feels strongly about the efficacy of such studies, but instead of not participating, they have enlisted the services of gerontologist/college professor Dr. Sharon Raphael. She now serves as the Research Gatekeeper for OLOC; all research requests have to go through Sharon who carefully evaluates both the proposed study and the researchers themselves.

That isn't to say coming to consensus on a change of policy or procedure came easily. Often a given change was suggested at meetings over a period of a year or two before it was agreed upon and implemented. In the end, the extreme caution taken when making substantive changes assured that any decisions were right for the long-term health of the organization.

Formalizing OLOC

Incorporating

The idea of pursuing incorporation was discussed at almost every Committee meeting during the first few years. A federal ID tax number and opening a bank account was first mentioned in the minutes/supporting documents in early 1990. At that point, it was decided to put off incorporating but to set up a bylaw committee. Shevy Healey had written to SCWU (Southern California Women For Understanding) to ask about them serving as a mother corporation for OLOC but had not received a response. Operation Concern later agreed to act as OLOC's fiscal agent, providing them the use of their 501(c)3 status in return for 10% of the monies. The committee then opted to open two bank accounts, one with Operation Concern and another alone.

In September 1990, the Bylaw committee consisted of Ruth Silver, Vera Martin and Renee Hanover, who served as the convener. The records for the October 1991 meeting refer to a bylaw team, consisting of Ruth Silver and Deedy Breed. They took on the following tasks:

1. Get copies of the by-laws of other non-profit organizations.
2. Check with a feminist attorney who will advise us about the necessary documents to file, the cost of filing, the advantages of filing in a particular state, etc. (Kittu will check with such a person in Texas.)
3. Check with more than one attorney and compare fees to get the best possible break on legal fees.
4. Be in touch with the Bay Area Support Team to make comparisons and be prepared to present all the data and recommendations by the next SC meeting.

Shortly thereafter, another document appears in the records relaying advice OLOC had received from a lawyer in Texas, Deb Hunt. She had worked with Arden Eversmeyer and an organization she was involved in called LOAF Lesbians Over Age Fifty. (*Supporting Document J*) It should be noted that Deb Hunt generously donated her services to OLOC.

The earliest references to a Board of Directors in the minutes actually seems

to precede filing for incorporation! At the April 1992 meeting, it was decided that “officers will be selected by picking names out of a hat – results: Arden, Irene, Claudia, Ruth H. and Maribel. Claudia, President; Ruth Heidelberg, Vice President; and Irene Weiss as Secretary/Treasurer.”

At the next Committee meeting, held in Houston in October 1992, Deb Hunt gave a brief presentation reviewing the papers she had drawn up (the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws). With a few changes, it was agreed that she would file the paperwork for OLOC to be incorporated in Texas. One significant change was made: the positions of Co-Chair were substituted for President and Director. OLOC was incorporated in Texas in 1992.

It was agreed that “to give stability to the incorporating Board of Directors, that those Steering Committee members who have attended a minimum of four (4) Steering Committee meetings be the Incorporating Board.” Therefore, the Incorporating Board of OLOC consisted of the following nine women: Charlotte Avery, Arden Eversmeyer, Rosemary Hathaway, Shevy Healey, Ruth Heidelberg, Vera Martin, Elaine Mikels, Kittu Riddle, and Ruth Silver. The paperwork also reflected the following officers: Co-chairs: Claudia Cole and Vera Martin and Secretary/Treasurer: Rosemary Hathaway.

For those involved in formalizing the organization, the customary term “Board of Directors” carried with it too many connotations of patriarchy and hierarchy. However, to meet legal requirements for incorporating in the state of Texas, OLOC does have a Board of Directors. To accommodate OLOC’s way of functioning, it was decided that the Board would authorize the Steering Committee to conduct the daily business of the organization. The Board, which is typically made up of most of the sitting Steering Committee, has the responsibility of reviewing and accepting the work of the SC.

Banking

OLOC started with a simple checking account in California. (*Supporting Document K*) Since it was not incorporated and didn’t have non-profit status, they did business under the umbrella of another non-profit, Operation Concern, who acted as their fiscal agent (for a 10% fee). There it stayed until it was moved to Houston Texas in 1994 when Charlotte Avery took over duties as Treasurer. They were advised by attorney Deb Hunt that OLOC

needed their bank accounts to be in the name of the organization if they intended to incorporate later. An investment account was also added when several women donated monies for an endowment fund. Bank business is currently done in Ohio, where Jan Griesinger, OLOC Co-Director and bookkeeper, and Sally Tatnall, OLOC Treasurer, reside.

As the organization grew and managing the finances became a more critical task, additional oversight was put into place. The bookkeeper writes the checks. The treasurer signs them. This provides a balance insuring no one person could misspend the funds. A hired accountant does the monthly bank statement reconciliation and the annual tax return.

Every Steering Committee meeting includes a presentation and review of financial reports. Even after almost twenty years, careful budgeting is essential to the success and security of OLOC. Detailed budgets for the upcoming years are proposed to the Steering Committee by its treasurer at each fall meeting. Without fail, dealing with budgets and making sure any available funds are spent in the most efficient manner possible always entails a lengthy, sometimes rather passionate, discussion. That very passion, the deep concern that the SC does what is best for the organization and the women it represents, is another reason why OLOC continues to thrive.

Tax Exempt Status

After OLOC had successfully incorporated, Arden Eversmeyer's sister Floi Ewing completed all the paperwork involved in applying for tax exempt status. By early 1994, OLOC had its 501(c)3 tax exempt status. Tax exempt status is a valuable asset, allowing donors to make tax-deductible contributions.

Establishing a National Office

From its inception, there was a concern about OLOC being perceived as a California organization. To avoid reinforcing that perception, the Committee established their first mailing address in Chicago, IL. It was a post office box (PO Box 14816) and mail was picked up by a local SC member, Rene Hanover, then remailed to Vera Martin. This convoluted method continued for a year or two. Minutes from the October 1991 Committee meeting reflect that the mail depot “will be moved from Chicago where it didn’t work”. This account, written by Arden Eversmeyer, appeared in the *Reporter*.

You better watch your first step because you never know where it might lead you.... It all started with my partner Charlotte and I volunteering to take some of the burden off Elaine Mikels [then editor of the *OLOC Reporter*] by offering to prep and mail the newsletter once she had it ready to go. Since the newsletter was being mailed from Texas, OLOC needed a Texas address for return mail. And as long as OLOC had a Texas address, we went ahead and opened a Texas banking account. With a Texas bank account and address in hand, it only made sense to start the process to incorporate here. One more step and we sought non-profit status [actually tax exempt status, not non-profit] and next thing you know, Houston, Texas became the National Office!

Once a Texas mailing address was established (PO Box 980422, Houston, TX 77098), a “Mail Depot Flow Chart” was drawn up with detailed guidelines on how to deal with the variety of incoming mail including money, letters, requests, etc. This chart graphically illustrates how quickly dealing with incoming mail became a complex task that needed to be done efficiently if OLOC was to function smoothly. (*Supporting Document L*)

The National Office faced a monumental challenge in the summer of 2001 when tropical storm Allison hit the Gulf of Mexico, driving flood waters up the bayous into Houston. The storm then moved inland and stalled for five days, dropping nearly 37 inches of rain. As a result, the office, as well as Arden Eversmeyer and Charlotte Avery’s nearby home where the Oral Herstories were housed, was flooded. It took weeks and weeks of work to salvage as much of the paperwork as possible. While some documents were

lost, the vast majority of OLOC's paper history was saved and later moved to a more secure, second-story, climate-controlled storage space. (The Oral Herstory Project was also moved to the upper floor at Arden's home.)

Mailing List/Database

As mentioned earlier in this document, OLOC technically has no members. It does, however, have an extensive list of women involved in the organization, a list that needs management.

In the beginning, names of women who were (or might be) interested in OLOC came from lists of women who attended the West Coast Conferences. Barbara Kalish and Cristina Vegas managed the first mailing list. Over the next few years, various names were added to the list when women expressed an interest. Shevy Healey and Ruth Silver made it a point of adding names and addresses of women they met as they traveled across the country. By late 1991, the list had grown to 900 names. Because names were coming from various sources, a decision was made by 1992 to add "Return to Sender" to any mailings in an effort to clean up the mailing list. Later, after having received tax exempt status which saved a tremendous amount in postage costs, OLOC availed itself of "Address Service Requested". For a nominal cost, the post office would both forward the mailed item to a new address and notify OLOC of the change. This helped keep the database more accurate.

Over the years, the database was maintained by a series of dedicated women, each upgrading the list, making it more and more useful to the organization. In addition to facilitating the task of producing labels for mailings, keeping the list in a database format has enabled OLOC to easily access detailed information about its subscribers such as geographic distribution, age range, ethnicity, disability, (when that information was volunteered) longevity of their involvement in OLOC and more. It is currently being kept by a paid administrative assistant/coordinator who is, undoubtedly, adding her own improvements to the list.

OLOC
PO Box 980422
Houston, TX 77098
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Logo

The logo currently used by OLOC, was selected from a handful of suggestions and adopted in June 1995. Efforts to trademark the logo were begun by Arden Eversmeyer in early 2002. In October of that year, Linda Bogut, an SC member and practicing attorney, offered to take over the task. She researched the process and submitted the application, repeatedly answering additional questions and supplying more details. In a confluence of bad karma, Linda both fell ill and had a family emergency. During the confusion, a necessary step was not taken to complete the trademark process and OLOC was notified it would have to begin again. Not to be deterred, SC member Mary Henry took over the challenge, wandered through a maze of government paperwork, and successfully filed all the appropriate forms, only to be informed that it could take up to 18 months for the “case to be assigned”, the stage in the process where someone investigates whether or not the logo is unique and not already in use. Surprisingly, within 6 months, OLOC was notified that the logo was officially theirs.



Updated version of a very early design used first on the newsletter and later on T-shirts.



Outreach

Overview

Efforts to reach out to Old Lesbians across the country began as soon as OLOC was conceived. Minutes from the first organizational meeting held November 3, 1989, outreach was a large part of the discussion. Minutes reflect that the group came up with various ideas on how to start their outreach. Each woman attending committed to “reach out on a person level”; the group authorized one member to submit information about OLOC to a newsletter called *Visible*; and another offered to gather a list of publications that served the Lesbian community.

In 1990, despite having to spend a considerable amount of their time and effort on the challenges of structuring a national organization, OLOC made a concentrated effort to get the word out about their fledgeling organization. Together, they came up with a plan for their newsletter, distributing 500 copies of their first issue in Spring 1990. They quickly recognized the value of sending their newsletter to like-minded organizations and business and added them to the OLOC mailing list. And plans were begun to participate in, and if at all possible, be a visible presence at the upcoming National Lesbian Conference.

The minutes from the November 1990 Steering Committee meeting contain notes of a discussion about forming networks within various states and whether or not they should be called chapters. They were off and running!

A very important contribution to OLOC’s early outreach efforts came from Ruth Silver and Shevy Healey who were both integrally involved in OLOC from the beginning. In 1991, while OLOC was still struggling to get the word out about the organization, Ruth and Shevy embarked on a cross-country trip in a 28-foot RV. During this 22-month odyssey, they stopped various places to do presentations about OLOC. Readers of the OLOC newsletter were encouraged to contact Ruth and Shevy who, in turn, asked women to invite other Old Lesbians to come and meet them. Some of their stops included Olympia, Bremerton and Bellingham in Washington state, Minnesota, Nebraska, Michigan, Ohio, Florida, Louisiana and Texas. Adding outreach on behalf of OLOC to their travels (which they did at their own expense) made Ruth and Shevy OLOC’s first field organizers! Their travels helped expand the OLOC mailing list and make the organization known across the country.

A quick scan of the minutes of subsequent Steering Committee meetings clearly show that outreach has always been considered a high priority for OLOC.

Newsletter

From the first organizing meeting, it was decided that there should be a newsletter as a means to get word out to Old Lesbians around the country. Committee member, Elaine Mikels, volunteered to take on that task. The first OLOC newsletter was published and distributed in Spring of 1990. Elaine, from New Mexico, served as editor, which at that time, meant she had full responsibility for the newsletter.

Minutes from that meeting report the proposed name for the newsletter was *In the Name of Old Lesbians*. However it must not have been adopted, since the header on the first two issues both simply identified the document as *The Old Lesbian Organizing Committee Newsletter*. After two issues, the header was changed to read: *The OLOC Reporter, Networking and Fighting Ageism*. Since then, it has always been simply called the *OLOC Reporter* or *The Reporter*.

Within a year, OLOC had begun to develop a set of guidelines for their publication. After initially saying they would take paid advertising, a policy against any outside advertising was adopted. At the November 1990 Committee meeting, there was a discussion about who could contribute material for the newsletter. While some advocated that nothing written by someone under age 60 should be printed, consensus was reached that “at the very least the writers of articles will be identified by date of birth so that readers may judge for themselves the amount of life experience behind each article.”

By October 1991, the Steering Committee acknowledged that the newsletter was OLOC’s most important tool and they felt that OLOC needed a clear mission statement for the newsletter. Elaine Mikels had been doing all of the work on the newsletter including the gathering of information, writing of articles, setting up for printing, printing, establishing a database for labels, printing labels, and setting up for bulk mailing. The job was monumental. At this meeting, Elaine announced that while she would work with others, she was resigning as editor. To keep the newsletter in publication, a subcommittee was formed to make recommendations regarding newsletter policy, format and organization. They suggested a collective, not a single editor, should be involved with content, layout, costs, printing and distribution. The new collective was formed.

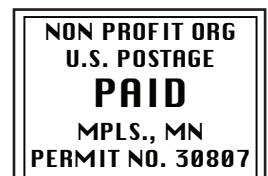
By 1992, *The Reporter* was being produced by the “Texas Collective”. It was made up of Pat Denslow (working with layout and design), Kittu Riddle (gathering the content), and Arden Eversmeyer and Charlotte Avery (who took responsibility for printing and distribution). They would meet every six months in San Antonio to discuss content and layout. Pat Denslow’s last issue as a member of the Collective was in March 1994.

In the minutes of the October 1992 Committee meeting, it was voted that the goal would be to produce two issues of the newsletter each year. Elaine Mikels expressed her strong feeling that there needed to be four issues. By 1994, the publication schedule of four issues a year was adopted.

Ruth Mountaingrove, of Arcata, CA, served as Editor of the *OLOC Reporter* from June 1994 through the September 1996 issue. During a discussion by the Steering Committee, the decision was made that the editor must attend Steering Committee meetings. Ruth was unable to make this commitment, so again, a new editor had to be found.

At this point, the Steering Committee also reviewed and modified the guidelines for content in the *OLOC Reporter*. In order to keep *The Reporter* for news, they decided not only would there be no outside advertisements, there would be no requests for responses to questionnaires, interviews for anthologies, research, and poetry. Essays and articles would be accepted only from Lesbians 60 years of age or older. Book and film reviews would be welcome. Submissions could be from 250 to 500 words long.

Pat Coleman, from San Francisco, CA, was Editor of the *OLOC Reporter* from December 1996 until June 1999. She became very ill right after the 1999 National OLOC Gathering held in San Francisco, and was, at that point, near death. In the emergency, Annalee Stewart, from Minneapolis, MN, agreed to take responsibility for the *OLOC Reporter*. Her first issue was March 2000, and she remained Editor through June 2005. Hers was the longest tenure of any of OLOC’s very capable editors. “The Minnesota Collective”, consisted of Annalee Stewart, Mary Henry, and Margaret Purcell. They updated the format and design of *The Reporter* with the September 2003 issue, giving it a more inviting look. Margaret assisted Annalee in learning some basic desktop publishing skills and later took



over that part of the newsletter production, leaving Annalee to concentrate on editing. As of early 2007, Margaret continues to do the desktop layout for the *OLOC Reporter*.

One of the women attending the 1996 Gathering was Dr. Jean Eckerly. Shevy Healey was impressed with what she had to say and encouraged her to submit an article to be published in the newsletter. Her article transformed into a very popular column which appears in most issues. Dr. Jean Eckerly's column, *The Medical Corner*, addressed medical concerns specific to women, especially Old Lesbians.

Cam Jancek, from Pinole, CA, followed Annalee Stewart. She edited the *OLOC Reporter* for just over one year, through the June 2006 issue. Upon Cam's resignation, the Steering Committee agreed to share responsibilities for the newsletter until a new editor was found.

After a brief period in which there was no "editor" as such (duties were shared between various members of the Steering Committee), beginning with the June 2007 issue, Susan Wiseheart, agreed to take on the position.

Almost every year, the Steering Committee devotes time to discussing *The Reporter*, staying mindful of both its content and the process of bringing that content together. (*Supporting Document M: Highlights from various back issues of the OLOC Reporter*)

Brochure

The first OLOC brochure, designed by Gertrude Chasens of Ohio, was introduced in March 1990. By the fall of 1991, it was modified and the Committee had come up with a plan on how to use a brochure. Their decision was to include a copy with the next issue of the newsletter. At that meeting, the Committee agreed to print several thousand copies. Brochures were distributed at dozens of events every year and continue to be a effective form of introducing OLOC to new groups of people.

(*Supporting Document N*)

Regional Organizing Efforts

OLOC was breaking new ground by forming an organization focusing on the needs of Old Lesbians. Getting the word out to women would have been difficult enough, but organizing Old Lesbians from all over the country, many of whom had, or still were, leading closeted lives was more than difficult. It was a huge challenge. Succeeding in that challenge on a shoe-string budget complicated the matter even more.

Various approaches were taken to organize local groups. Extensive lists were developed that outlined a network of contact women and Steering Committee members volunteered to oversee efforts in given states or regions. While each concerted push to organize local groups had moderate success, lack of adequate funding always undermined the efforts.

Another factor that held back early organizing efforts was a lack of clarity as to what the national organization had to offer local women. Much of the passionate understanding of what OLOC stood for and what it wanted for Old Lesbians everywhere was in the heads and hearts of the dedicated women serving on the Steering Committee and serving on the SC was no small job, leaving little time for going out personally to talk to local groups of women.

Out of this frustrating situation came an innovative answer: since members of the Steering Committee were unable to spend enough one-on-one time with local women to build the understanding and enthusiasm needed to form strong local chapters, it was decided the Steering Committee would produce written materials that would lay that groundwork for them. At first, the Steering Committee had rather modest goals... they would produce and distribute materials for a workshop on ageism. Before long, plans had expanded and the Committee took on production (from beginning to end) of a 180+ page handbook consisting of a series of workshops with additional materials.

The handbook was designed to enable a facilitator to lead a group of Old Lesbians through a series of six sessions. Sessions were designed to encourage a deeper understanding of ageism in general, but also an understanding of how ageism (as well as sexism and homophobia) sends its tentacles deep into many aspects of an Old Lesbian's life. (*Section on the Facilitator's Handbook page 49*)

Between the handbook, the newsletter and a concentrated effort to stay highly visible, speaking publicly whenever possible, OLOC began to have some success organizing local chapters.

When several local groups did form, meeting and taking actions on a regular basis, there were concerns on the national level regarding oversight of the groups. Concerns led to spending time establishing clear guidelines that would cover the relationship between local groups and national OLOC. For the most part, what local groups were doing or saying hadn't caused any concerns. But since the potential was there for a local chapter to take actions that might in some way jeopardize the national organization's tax exempt status or in some other way negatively impact on its reputation, it needed to be addressed. That need was clearly illustrated when a local chapter in San Francisco, Bay Area OLOC, began doing business under the name OLOC and had their own steering committee, newsletter, and bank accounts. Bay Area OLOC was, in many ways, what OLOC wanted: a strong local chapter providing a highly visible presence to its geographic area. The time and effort by the SC to craft guidelines for the relationship between local chapters and the national organization allowed the relationship with Bay Area OLOC to become a testing ground for those guidelines.

Over the years, local chapters have come and gone. It was, in some ways, inevitable. Often the cohesiveness of a local group relies on the dynamic leadership of one or two individuals. Since all of the women involved are at least 60 years old, many of them 70+, health issues often became a precipitating factor in key women leaving the local groups. For a few of the groups, the loss of one or two key women meant the end – others regrouped and continued onward.

Notable examples of groups that have stayed active for years are [San Francisco, CA] Bay Area OLOC, Northern Colorado OLOC, Portland [Oregon] OLOC and Minnesota OLOC. More recently, local chapters have coalesced in New York City, St. Louis, Ohio, Southern California, Hudson Valley NY, Northern Alabama, Washington DC and the Puget Sound area of Washington state.

Whether it happened with intent or by happenstance, national OLOC has allowed local chapters to tailor the structure and activities of their local groups to the abilities, opportunities and interests of the women involved. Allowing this freedom to local chapters has resulted in some valuable exposure and interesting

projects. Who better to know about opportunities to spread the word about OLOC than the women living in these communities.

Here is an example of how letting local groups direct their own efforts pays off: Members of the Colorado chapter were actively involved in Project Visibility. PV's goal is to make sure the administration and staff at facilities (such as extended care or retirement homes) are sensitive to the unique needs of LGBT people requiring their services. To that end, a training video was produced. Much of it was comprised of interviews with local people. Kathy Glass and Carmah Lawler, a long-time couple involved in OLOC, were interviewed in the film and Emily Lewis, another OLOC woman, has been working to promote the use of the film and speaking about the subject wherever possible.



Another example: Since OLOC had for years spoken out against the proliferation of commercial greeting cards that were ageist and often sexist as well, the MN OLOC chapter worked with national OLOC to design, produce and sell a set of 4 black and white age-positive, woman-friendly greeting cards. (*Supporting Document P*). They then went on to produce several other sets on their own.

(Pictured left: cover of local GLBT magazine in Minneapolis featuring Annalee Stewart and Jo Hiner)

Old Lesbians everywhere have benefited from local chapters increasing OLOC's visibility all across the country. Representatives of local chapters have marched in parades, lobbied their legislatures, given interviews in magazines, radio programs, newspapers and even television.

In the past few years, OLOC has been able to secure grants specifically to fund local organizing efforts and there are great hopes that these renewed efforts will result in strengthening existing chapters and forming new ones. In 2006, Sally Tatnall, with the assistance from Alix Dobkin, has taken a leadership role in field organizing for OLOC.

NOTES ON NLC PLANNING MEETING

Fourteen gathered informally at Shevy Healey and Ruth Silver's new home, 1998 Robin Ridge Drive, Walnut Creek on Saturday, November 10, 1990: Vera _____, Pat Durham, Mary Flick, Dottie Fowler, Rosemary Hathaway, Ren Henerlau, Pat Kemper, Joan Miller, Ruth Morales, Kate Rosenblatt, Kay Wiley, Natalie Zarchin, and Ruth and Shevy. Shevy said she had sent out 106 invitations to this meeting and the response was a gratifying 30-something percent.

Rosemary acted as chair and Joan volunteered to take notes.

ORIENTATION

Rosemary: Front & center! We will go as we came. I am here for the energy, go in presence at the National Lesbian & Gay Health Committee working group.

group saying why
ians make a
help get

Shevy: We need to show it in both places, because people come and go in the video room, just hang out there.

Dottie: Do we have a name for the video? We need one ASAP. We need a main slot for the video.

Who? Call it "Nine Old Women"?

Natalie: Love it!

Ruth: How about "Late Bloomers" for a workshop? Lesbians who had kids.

Shevy: But nobody's leading it. There's no substance.

[Are the following suggestions or ideas we have already?]

Old Lesbians and Sexuality
Our Aging Bodies -- Jeanne?
Myth of Agism and How It D----
Community after Sixty
Coming Out as an Old Lesbian
Lesbian Rel [?] in Agists
Loss and Mortality
Internalized Agism

Jeanne Adleman is not going [to Atlanta?].

Rosemary: If we're gonna be there we gotta make a presence. I am so boggled right now by the way my life is going.

Natalie: A MotherTongue presentation:

Shevy: I'm really anxious about this--I want us to do entertainment--MotherTongue, GLOE show, etc. It's very important and the most outrageous educational forum we have.

Rosemary: I will.

Shevy: We'll have to work out how to make that happen.

Ruth: I'll be thinking about doing that one about coming out late.

Dottie: It can also be a model on how to do consciousness-raising in your community.

Shevy: Appoint one person and then people to fill the slots. They're really anxious for our input. I suggest you do both-- MotherTongue right through and also as a discussion workshop before 30-50 people.

Rosemary: Then we send it to [Vera??].

Major Events

During two very busy, tumultuous decades, OLOC participated in several notable events. Here are some examples:

National Lesbian Conference in April 1991

As soon as members of the Steering Committee heard plans were underway for a nationwide event just for Lesbians, they wanted not only to participate, they wanted to play a highly visible role in the event. To make sure that would happen, Vera Martin represented OLOC on the National Lesbian Conference Steering Committee.

Under Vera's leadership, OLOC was not shy about what they wanted – they wanted a highly visible presence throughout the conference. While they didn't get everything they wanted, OLOC did provide a keynote speaker, get separate space to caucus, and gave three workshops. The NLC also as well as had one day designated an Old Lesbian Day of Celebration.

Some of the workshops presented by OLOC were:

Lesbian Relationships in an Ageist Society by Vera Martin

Ageing and Stereotype by Rosemary Hathaway

The Myth of Ableism and How It Disempowers Us by Shevy Healey

In her role as a keynote speaker, Barbara Macdonald gave an impassioned presentation that put Lesbians of all ages on notice: Old Lesbians were not to be dismissed as a political force in their community.

An article in the publication *Amazon Times* about the Conference portrayed the overall event as being one step from chaos. Yet the same article made the following statements about OLOC and their involvement in the NLC:

They were organized, efficient, clear, intelligent and everything they did was a reminder of the best in Lesbian feminism.

They did a fishbowl about ageism for the NLC, attended by perhaps a thousand lesbians.

They were a vocal and visible presence at workshops and plenaries. Barbara Macdonald's speech was a stinging critique of the Lesbian professionals' role in the de-politicization of Lesbian/women's/feminist issues.

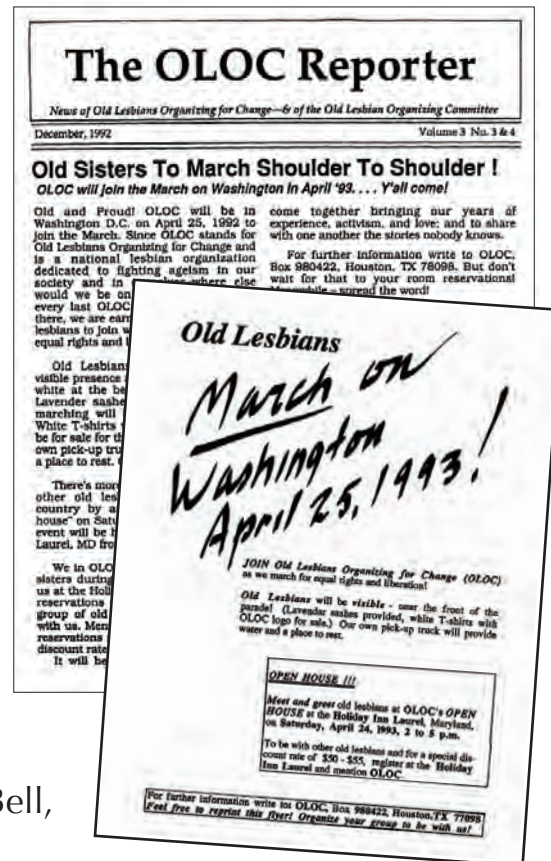
The presence of those 200 or so old Lesbians has changed forever our idea of what an old Lesbian is like. We won't think old Lesbians are "sweet" ever again.

March on Washington

The historic April 25, 1993 March on Washington (MOW) was an incredible opportunity for OLOC to increase its visibility and it did just that with vigor and aplomb.

While making plans for participating in the event, it came to the attention of Arden Eversmeyer that the only paid person working for the MOW was a woman from her own community, Houston. Working on the belief that you won't get it if you don't ask, Arden contacted the event planner, Deborah Bell, letting her know that OLOC planned to attend. As an accommodation to the physical limitations of some of the Old Lesbians, Arden requested "preferred placement" in the line-up of contingents in the march itself. This resulted in OLOC practically leading the march, preceded only by the flag bearers.

You can imagine the attention the group garnered as sixty Old Lesbians, many of them over 70 years of age, marched down Pennsylvania Avenue chanting "Two, Four, Six, Eight! How do you know your Grandma's straight?"



At the end of the parade route, OLOC was also afforded prime seating near the podium for the rally that followed. Combined with OLOC's hard-to-miss bright white clothing and purple sashes, the OLOC women were hard to overlook.

When all was said and done, OLOC had learned a valuable lesson. Don't wait for someone to ask you what you want... be pro-active and tell them what you expect.

As empowering as participating in the March was, OLOC was saddened to realize that not one Old Lesbian was included in what turned out to be an eight hour long rally that followed the March, nor were any of their specific concerns addressed in the political platform that grew from this huge event.

Reactions were also mixed when a photograph of OLOC women proudly marching with their banner appeared in a book chronicling the event entitled *One Million Strong, The 1993 March of Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights* by Cece Cox, Lisa Means and Lisa Pope. It was a great picture, well placed in the book. But the caption beneath the photograph practically made OLOC's case regarding ageism for them. Instead of pointing out that a large group of Old Lesbians, representing an even larger organization, had gathered there in Washington to increase awareness of the importance of fighting against ageism, what the authors of this book seemed to feel was notable was what the Old Lesbians were wearing and that they, of course, had time enough on their hands to sew!

The caption reads: *As a group, members of Old Lesbians Organizing for Change were the most sensibly dressed marchers, wearing loose-fitting shirts and pants, straw hats, and comfortable walking shoes and carrying parasols. Their banner? Quilted and appliqued, of course.*

Participation in The White House Conference on Aging

The White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA) is an important event that takes place once a decade. The conference makes recommendations to the President and Congress for national policy on aging and the elderly. In 1995, Bill Clinton's administration convened a WHCoA. Until the 1995 conference, issues relating to the well-being of Old Lesbians (and gay men) had never been included.

The vast majority (2250 out of 3000) of the delegates to this monumental event are people invited by state governors and members of congress. OLOC was fortunate in having two powerful Old Lesbians attend, both appointed by powerful women. Del Martin, at age 74, was nominated by Senator Diane Feinstein and her partner, Phyllis Lyon, at age 70, was nominated by Representative Nancy Pelosi. Del and Phyllis introduced a resolution that, in their own words, "would ensure lesbian and gay visibility and sensitivity in future conference events and made policy recommendations."

Despite being elated at Old Lesbians being included in the WHCoA, everyone was somewhat disappointed that it was only two Old Lesbians out of 2250 delegates.

The resolution that was passed read:

Encourage civic, social and religious leaders to sensitize their communities and organizations to the subtlety of racial, age and sexual orientation discrimination and the social and financial costs of such practices.

In a letter to William Blancato, the Executive Director of the White House Council on Aging, Vera Martin wrote:

As old lesbians, we experience at least two forms of discrimination every day, against old people and against lesbians, and we are hard put to separate them out.... We sincerely and earnestly hope that the WHCoA is inclusive in its report and recommendations to President Clinton, so that he can show himself to be a serious challenger to bigotry." Vera's letter also detailed specific recommendations for how to implement the resolution that was passed.

Golden Threads Celebration in 1995

In 1995, Golden Threads (a social organization for Lesbians fifty and older) invited OLOC to be a part of their annual Celebration. This was the first time OLOC had worked in tandem with another recognized group to produce an event. Deedy Breed coordinated OLOC's participation and OLOC presented workshops (attended by around 75 women), held an open SC meeting and assisted with the Saturday night event. The big Saturday night function was attended by many well-known Old Lesbians (including Ruth Ellis) and was filmed, becoming the basis of the documentary *Golden Threads* (released in 1999). The documentary was described as follows:

Profiling the life of 93 year old lesbian activist Christine Burton, founder of a global networking service for mid-life and elder lesbians, this documentary by Lucy Winer and Karen Eaton exuberantly overturns our most deeply rooted stereotypes and fears of aging. By adding the wry and introspective narrative of the director undergoing a mid-life crisis, the film generates a groundbreaking, intergenerational dialogue about sexuality, life choices, and aging. At a time when the media commonly sentimentalizes, dismisses or altogether ignores the old, *Golden Threads* offers an urgently needed antidote.

Session A

Ageism, What Is It? - Trinity Room

What issues do Old Lesbians face for ourselves when we buy into the media's "better", especially in a society that workshop will discuss and confront. Healing is encouraged.

Kittu Riddle is the Inter-regional Lesbian Organizing for Change).

Dealing with Diversity

This workshop is an effort to understand and to help us overcome differences and opportunity to gain a better understanding of racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, class and ethnic backgrounds and

Deborah Bell is a Lesbian Activist with years of experience working on Houston, TX.

The OLOC Reporter

News of Old Lesbians Organizing for Change - & of the Old Lesbian Organizing Committee

December, 1995

P.O. Box 980422 • Houston, Texas 77098

Vol. 6, No. 2

REPORT FROM BEIJING

By Barbara Macdonald

Everyone wants to know, "How was Beijing?" Actually Cynthia and I weren't in Beijing — we were in Huairou, about an hour's drive North, at the NGO (Non-Governmental Organizations) Forum.

Huairou is a small city in a vacation area, where large hotels, surrounding a lake, were emptied for us. The hotels were about eight miles from the center of the city when the Forum was held, but the bus service to and from the Forum was

On arriving, I was given a schedule of the 3000 workshops to be held in the ten days of the Forum. Glancing through the schedule, it was clear that the greatest concern of the NGOs was the violence against women worldwide, and second, women's concern about the disastrous impact on women of GATT and NAFTA and the exploitation of poor women by transnational corporations.

It was not possible to attend the NGO Forum without a sharpened awareness of men's hatred and contempt for women and the global impact of their violence in 100,000 Comfort women and the Philippines, still seeking apology for being forced into conditions of slavery in the 1930s; the through the Pacific war military bases

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Reporter



Old Lesbians Speak Out: A Perspective on Wisdom and Wellness

Journal of the
Gay and Lesbian
Medical Association



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Medicine

Wednesday, November 03, 2004

Vera Martin

Rosemary Hathaway

Shevy Healy

Kathleen

Examples of speaking opportunities: Kittu Riddle at Texas Lesbian Conference in 1992; Barbara Macdonald in Beijing in 1995; Shevy Healey at the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association Conference in 1999; and Vera Martin, Rosemary Hathaway, Shevy Healey (as well as others) at the National Lesbian Conference in Atlanta in 1991.

Organizing across the Divides of Race,
Nation, Poverty & Sexual Preference

S.F. Historic Domestic Partnership Legislation

Lesbian Relationship in an Ageist Society

Ageing & Stereotype

The Myth of Ableism & How it Disempowers Us

Lesbians: Our Risk of Cancer

Lesbianism & the Persian Gulf War

Safe, Consensual: S/M Lesbians
Building Community

Lesbianism/Lesbian Liberation: The Inextricable

Ongoing Outreach

Speaking Opportunities

A major form of outreach for OLOC, especially during its early years, was taking advantage of various opportunities to speak publicly. These opportunities ranged from talking to small groups in a private home, doing a radio interview during National Women's Week to being a keynote speaker at a national event.

It quickly became clear early on that if a presentation was to be done on ageism or anything else regarding Old Lesbians, OLOC needed to be aggressive and insist that Old Lesbians take an active role in the presentation. In 1994, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon attended the American Society on Aging national meeting only to report back that the speakers and presenters were almost all young people, some of them straight, all talking about what they perceived to be the needs of Old Lesbians!

For almost a decade, Vera Martin, Steering Committee Co-Director, served as the primary voice of OLOC, speaking on behalf of the organization in a wide variety of venues as well as doing interviews for print and radio.

Providing speakers for events taking place all over the country became a challenge, especially economically. But OLOC always strove to send a representative whenever possible, sometimes at the expense of the individual speaker.

One of OLOC's most effective speeches wasn't actually a speech... it was a group presentation. Using a fishbowl conversation format, a group of OLOC women, sitting in a circle, formed the fishbowl, and began a discussion about ageism. Listeners outside the circle were allowed to interrupt. At times, an open fishbowl format was used where one chair was left empty and anyone could sit in to contribute. OLOC employed this format in several large venues including the National Lesbian Conference in Atlanta, an NGLTF Creating Change Conference and others.

With continued financial restrictions, the OLOC Steering Committee had to

focus its energy on speaking opportunities that gave OLOC more bang for the buck. The SC had repeatedly sent speakers to do presentations for the American Society on Aging and, in evaluating their effectiveness, decided to cross ASA off the list. It was felt that ASA didn't hear what was being said, often relegating OLOC to situations where they were "speaking to the choir", with only other old gay men and Lesbians attending. OLOC has continued to send representatives, either to speak or simply attend, to the annual Creating Change Conference sponsored by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Several times, OLOC has made an effort to form a speakers bureau. This was done with the intent of both identifying women willing and able to speak on OLOC's behalf and to minimize the transportation costs of sending a speaker to an event. Although several women volunteered, an ongoing bureau has yet to get going.

With or without a formalized Speakers Bureau, various women continue to speak on OLOC's behalf on a regular basis all over the country. To list all the speaking opportunities OLOC has taken would be impossible. They number in the hundreds. Suffice it to say they have varied widely, both geographically and in what was presented.

Fighting Against the Tide

OLOC's involvement wasn't always welcome at events, even events sponsored by the GLBT community. Some doors were opened reluctantly, but others had to be forcibly knocked down. As often as not, people's reluctance to hear what OLOC had to say proved the point OLOC was trying to make: You aren't listening to us. You are speaking about us and speaking for us.

On numerous occasions, OLOC surprised, maybe even shocked people... not all Old women were sweet, cute, nurturing or nice. Some were demanding, sometimes strident, and insistent that they could, and would, speak for themselves.

Here are just a few examples of OLOC fighting against the tide:

NOT "Meeting the Needs of Lesbian and Gay Elders"

Several OLOC members were included on panels at a mini-conference sponsored by the American Society of Aging entitled *Meeting the Needs of Lesbian and Gay Elders*. It was billed as an opportunity for "younger gay people who come behind us to know they can survive... They need to sit down and talk to us and find out how we survived." But that isn't quite how the event turned out. Shevy Healey pointedly told the audience. "I am the THEM everyone has been discussing, a 72 year old lesbian. Almost never at ASA do the old speak for themselves. It distresses me to have young people speaking for me and my age group." She went on to chastise the ASA for promoting an image of Old people as needy, sick and inferior. At another panel at that same event, Vera Martin told them "Here I sit [on this panel] with others who are younger than my grandchildren."

Researcher Thwarted

A researcher who had been asked to present a brief on the needs of Old Lesbians reported that she hadn't been able to get Lesbians over 50 in the Atlanta area to answer her questions. Turns out, Barbara Macdonald had told them not to participate. She was quoted as saying on OLOC's behalf that "young people cannot conduct reliable research on old people any-more than heterosexuals can conduct unbiased research on homosexuals." Similar struggles took place between OLOC and the NGLTF as well as other organizations.

Challenging a Book and a Review

When the book *Lambda Gray* (edited by Karen Westerberg Reyes, an editor of *Modern Maturity*) was published in 1993, it was billed as being the “Practical, Emotional and Spiritual Guide for Gays and Lesbians Who are Growing Older”, Barbara Macdonald, on behalf of herself and OLOC, took the author to task. Starting by asking why such a book would be written by a straight woman, Barbara went on to challenge use of a wide variety of contributors, most of them under 60 and characterized the book as a collection of essays that describe aging, not the oppression of ageism. Barbara pointed out many inaccuracies including crediting the ground-breaking book she herself had co-authored, *Look Me in the Eye* to another author!

Barbara Macdonald did, however, concede that one chapter was worthy of being in the collection, even though it was written by two young (younger than 60) Lesbians, gerontologists Sharon Raphael and Mina K. Meyer.

In a review of the book published in *The OLOC Reporter*, Barbara said “To have OLOC recognized and to have its goals understood and valued by two gerontologists who share our vision is exciting. Raphael and Meyer trace the history of our movement with care, acknowledge as younger lesbians, how painful it was to be shut out, and then generously confirm our work.” (*Excerpt from Raphael and Meyer chapter, Supporting Document Q*)

Barbara Macdonald went on to lambast both a gerontologist, Margaret Cruikshank, who reviewed the book and *The Lesbian Review of Books*, which published that review. Barbara was incredulous when Cruikshank, who was well aware of OLOC and the work it had done, went on to tell us what she thinks Old Lesbians should be doing... “We need radical old dykes who dispute every tenet of gerontology”, making that suggestion sound like it was a brand new idea.

Refusing to Go Away Quietly

The following account appeared in *The Reporter* in 1994:

Last year OLOC met with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) after their conference in Durham, NC. We were delighted by their warm enthusiastic comments: 1) NGLTF agreed that OLOC should conduct staff training of their National Staff; 2) NGLTF agreed to hire at least one part-time staff person over 60 years of age

who was familiar with issues of Ageism to represent OLD Gays and Lesbians. OLOC was to provide a job description; 3) NGLTF agreed both to organize on AGEISM and to include the issue of AGEISM in all future Creating Change conferences. What happened? Exactly nothing – in all three categories.

The Steering Committee agreed that action needed to be taken so a leaflet was developed to be handed out at an upcoming NGLTF conference saying “The pattern of NGLTF cordial promises combined with total disregard of them is a glaring example of what we mean by AGEISM. A smile and a pat on the head does not equate with a seat at the table.” (*leaflet press release, Supporting Document R*)

OLOC sent a letter to NGLTF stating their intentions. They received a response that offered an apology, explained that the executive director was resigning (to go back to school) and proposing that OLOC do a workshop at the upcoming conference. Shevy Healey let them know on OLOC’s behalf that “in spite of the gesture, to prepare an event and to arrange transportation and scheduling among our widely separated members at less than two weeks notice is logistically impossible”. She also went on to say “OLOC is not in conflict with our brothers and sisters in NGLTF. She is only persistently knocking at their door!”

OLOC members did go on to pass out hundreds of flyers to people attending the NGLTF Creating Change Conference in late 1994 and got lots of positive feedback.

After two years of putting OLOC off, Ruth Silver and Shevy Healey were able to do an all day training. OLOC characterized it as groundbreaking in that OLOC was training a “powerful” national organization, that of the 17 people in attendance, none of them over 50 years of age.

OLOC has always seemed comfortable in its role as outspoken Old Lesbians. Anna Quindlen once said:

The suffragettes refused to be polite in demanding what they wanted or grateful for getting what they deserved. Works for me.

It seems to work well for OLOC too.

Advertising and Publicity

Working hard to make certain news about OLOC was mentioned in as many print venues as possible has been very effective. Over the years, this has ranged from articles in local, mainstream newspapers to interviews on GLBT television programs to letters about OLOC submitted to *Lesbian Connection* to feature articles in small magazines. Some of the local chapters have successfully garnered quite a bit of exposure in their own areas. For instance, the MN chapter of OLOC has twice been the cover story in the local GLBT magazine, been invited to do an hour-long program each year on an alternative radio station, been interviewed on local GLBT television programs, sponsored recurring events at a local bookstore, and more. Other chapters have been highly visible at marches and other public venues.

The high cost of paid advertising has always been prohibitive for OLOC. Instead, it focused on making sure it was listed as a resource in a wide variety of directories. When possible, OLOC has also negotiated exchange ads: OLOC will print an organization's ad in a Gathering program booklet in return for an ad in their publication. (Since advertising is not accepted for the newsletter, exchange ads have been limited to Gathering program books.)

Word-of-mouth has been the most effective, and most cost-effective, way to spread the word about OLOC. In addition to capitalizing on opportunities to speak publicly at a variety of public forums, OLOC women have marched in parades, held their banners at political events and, in the case of a performer such as Alix Dobkin, promoted OLOC from the stage.

Some Old Lesbians have felt safest leading relatively isolated and invisible lives. Locating these women for whom OLOC would be especially relevant has always been a challenge – finding an advertising venue that would reach these women has proved even more challenging.

Website

OLOC contracted for the domain name OLOC.org in November 1998. By the year 2000, OLOC decided they could no longer afford to ignore adding a website to help in outreach. It was one tool that could reach Old Lesbians that weren't comfortable being out in their communities or with their friends and families. The first version, designed by Yolanda Retter, was simple but functional and it got them started. The need for a more sophisticated website that would grow with the organization sent Arden Eversmeyer on a search. Despite strong feelings that they wanted the site designed by an Old Lesbian, none were found that had both the skills and time to devote to OLOC. Undaunted, Arden located a gay man, Doug Upchurch, who was willing and able. He designed and maintained the website for OLOC for several years.

In October of 2001, the Steering Committee began a discussion regarding the purpose, aims and goals of OLOC's website. It was felt that to make use of it, OLOC needed to be clear what it wanted to accomplish with it. As a result of the discussion, it was decided that the website would include a history of OLOC, a feature about the Oral Herstory Project, information about any materials OLOC has for sale, the reading and video lists Sally Duplaix had compiled and other material. At this point, OLOC also made sure they had an email, info@oloc.org, to be used for inquiries coming from the website.

Later, an OLOC Steering Committee member, Mary Henry took over the maintenance and made some design changes. It was also updated (by an outside consultant) in early 2007. Work on the OLOC website continues on an almost daily basis and it has proven to be a very effective tool for reaching Old Lesbians as well as many other interested people.



OLOC 1996 BANQUET AND DANCE

FRIDAY, AUGUST 16, 1996
 7p No Host Bar/8p Dinner
 9:30 Entertainment/10p Dancing
 Radisson Hotel Metrodome
 615 Washington Ave. SE
 Minneapolis, MN 55414
 \$25.00 (All proceeds go to OLOC)

OLOC

Billie Harris
 and
 Mothertongue Feminist Theater Collective

Ticket # 111

Name _____
 Address _____
 Phone # _____

Ticket # 111

vegetarian chicken dinner circle meal choice

DOWN HOME ENTERTAINMENT

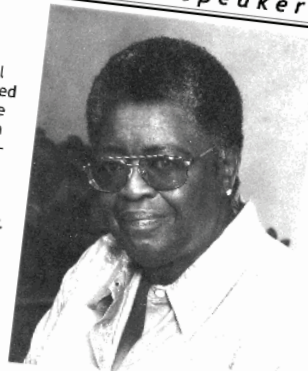
1. "Scottie" Scott - Xena the Warrior
2. Jeanne Walton - story teller
3. Sandy Tate - monologue
4. Laura Mallory and Hazel Lee - gospel music
5. Beth Barfield and Lynn Morgan - comedy
6. Beverly Todd - poetry
7. Ida VSW Red - poetry
8. Janice Ives - cow moo
9. Hazel Lee - poetry
10. Tobl Hale - lip sync
11. Pauline Bart - poetry
12. Janny McHard - singer
13. Rosalie Banks - dancer
14. Lileth Rogers - poetry
15. Antonia Matthew - poetry
16. Pat Rutherford - poetry

Marlene Feingold and Steele

Keynote Speakers ... Keynote Speakers

Shaba Barnes

Shaba Barnes, 68, retired to New Mexico from Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in W. Los Angeles, CA. She worked for many years with New York Telephone company and United Airlines. An African American, she is a human rights/community activist. She is an AARP volunteer, Civil Rights Program Manager for African Americans at Cibola National Forest, Sandia Ranger District, and member of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Multicultural Council, Inc. She enjoys speaking to children in public schools, writing, and is in the process of moving to the Superstition Mountain Resort in Apache Junction, AZ.



Cynthia Rich

Cynthia Rich (b. 1933) is co-author, with Barbara Macdonald, of *Look Me in the Eye: Old Women, Aging and Ageism* (Spinsters, 1983, 1991, 2001). Her other works include *Desert Years: Undreaming the American Dream* (Spinsters, 1989), an eco-feminist account of six years she and Barbara spent in a trailer on the Anza Borrego desert, and *Beyond My Mother's House* (forthcoming), which combines a memoir of Barbara's early years, their love letters, and an account of their final years together. A lifelong activist, Cynthia is cofounder of the Old Women's Project in San Diego, which works to "raise awareness of old women's issues, to make visible our stake in issues of social justice, and to combat the ageist attitudes that ignore, trivialize or demean us."



OLOC 2006 NATIONAL BANQUET • CONGRATULATIONS
 (DETAILS ON BACK OF TICKET)
FEATURING FOLKSINGER/SONGWRITER ALIX DOBKIN

\$50

TICKET

National Gatherings

Planning national conferences where Old Lesbians could get together is an important aspect of OLOC. Key to every Gathering is that it is planned and executed by and for Old Lesbians. With only one or two exceptions, every presenter has been a contemporary of the women in the audience. To participate in a Gathering, a Lesbian must be at least 60 years old (during that calendar year). Younger partners and assistants could attend but not participate in discussions.

Part of Shevy Healey's (one of the founding mothers) vision was that OLOC not follow the patriarchal pattern typically used in workshops and similar events. OLOC intentionally eschewed a format where women would have to choose between three or four good workshop topics. The sentiment was that if OLOC selected panel topics with care and filled them with qualified, interesting presenters, all of the women attending would benefit.

Programs offered during the first few Gatherings were all done either as presentations or panels, with everyone sharing the same experiences. Scheduling also allowed an opportunity for small group discussions of what was presented. At the most recent Gathering, OLOC added smaller workshops to the mix, with women selecting which one to attend.

As soon as they had successfully held their first national Gathering in 1996, Old Lesbians began to press for another. Since the vast majority of the work would fall on the shoulders of the Steering Committee, it was determined they would plan to repeat the event every three years. After the third Gathering, the Steering Committee agreed to try going to an every-other year schedule. OLOC continues to hold national events on even years. They have also begun to encourage and assist local chapters in planning regional events.

What goes on at a National Gathering? Lots! From the beginning, Gatherings have offered an interesting mix of educational and thought-provoking panels and workshops. Some of the Gatherings had a specific theme. Ageism was always a major focus but other subject matter has also included housing for Old Lesbians, challenging racism, grieving, dating, the butch/femme dichotomy, spirituality, activism, legal issues, addictions, politics in our community as well as many others.

OLOC is very aware that many Old Lesbians (more than other women their age) have limited financial resources. OLOC has always been committed to raising as much funding as possible to minimize some of the costs for everyone attending and also to provide scholarships to those who couldn't afford to come otherwise.

Planners of the first Gathering worked hard to develop an egalitarian format that did not include a keynote speaker or any other "expert", instead, relying on the experience of the women attending as the well of information that was to be shared. They felt it was important that no one was given more credence than anyone else.

By the time the second Gathering rolled around, OLOC had conceded that a keynote speaker, or two, wasn't a bad idea after all. Since then, keynoters have always been a highlight for Gatherings. The 1999 Gathering's keynote speaker was Shevy Healey, a driving force and founding mother of OLOC. The program for 2002 included two keynote speakers. Cynthia Rich, one of the writers of *Look Me in the Eye, Old Women, Aging and Ageism* (co-authored by she and her partner Barbara Macdonald. The second keynote speaker that year was Shaba Barnes, a well-known human rights/community activist. Alix Dobkin, folksinger and long-time activist was a keynote speaker in 2004. And in 2006, a dual presentation on racism was given by Mandy Carter and Suzanne Pharr.

In addition to panels, discussion groups and keynote speakers, under the leadership of Marlene Feingold, Gathering attendees experienced "Down Home Entertainment", a collaboration of the talents of many of the women attending including singing, story-telling, poetry, comedy and more. Each Gathering has offered a banquet, dance and an entertainer (always a Lesbian, usually old).

After the 2002 Gathering, Annalee Stewart volunteered to spearhead an effort to document the process of producing a gathering. To that end, she and her crew created a how-to manual filled with sample documents and time lines. Her head still reeling with the myriad of details she'd had just dealt with as the local site coordinator in Minnesota, she named the manual OLOC. Her use of the acronym stood for something a little different than expected. It stood for Order Leaps Out of Chaos. Although it has become apparent in planning and executing subsequent Gatherings that each city, each site and each set

of workshops offered its own unique challenges, Annalee can take credit for calming at least a bit of the chaos. (Note: After the first Gathering in 1996, Vera Martin devoted a considerable amount of her time constructing a similar set of instructions; unfortunately, the complete manual was lost but many of the individual documents that had been included were used in the later version.)

Scheduling and site selection of Gatherings has always been a challenge. The first three Gatherings all took place in late summer to make use of dorm rooms and meeting spaces at colleges that were not in session at the time, effectively holding down costs for participants. Minneapolis was selected for the first Gathering partly because site planning assistance was offered by the fledgling GLBT studies program that had just been established there. San Francisco was selected because a large percentage of the OLOC constituency lived on the west coast. OLOC then returned to Minneapolis in 2002, both because of continued site assistance and support of a large local group of OLOC women.

The third time might be the charm in some endeavors, but that didn't prove true when trying to meet the needs of a hundred Old Lesbians while housing them in a dorm rooms. Many of the women had to insist dorm personnel "de-bunk" the beds. Given the challenges dorms presented to those that were differently abled, OLOC decided it was time to give a hotel a try. Arden Eversmeyer had attended several large Lesbian events at a hotel/conference center in Houston and was willing to do much of the ground work for the 2004 Gathering if it met there in Houston. When she was able to negotiate a reasonable price, the deal was done and OLOC met there in October of that year. Of course, hotels present their own challenges too! A hundred Old Lesbians trying to use the same bathroom between speakers (or having to walk a considerable distance to find another) was just one of the problems. But, by switching to hotels, OLOC was no longer restricted to dorm availability when selecting dates and locations for the Gathering.

Participation in Gatherings has ranged from just under 80 women (the year following 9/11 and the downturn of the stock market) to 175. Geographically, Old Lesbians from all over the country (and a few from outside) attend with heavy representation from the host state/area and California. Age-wise, women from 60 to 89 have attended (with a few younger partners tagging along.)

OLOC has held the following National Gatherings:

- 1996 Minneapolis, MN
1999 San Francisco, CA
2002 Minneapolis, MN *Old Lesbians Offering Community*
2004 Houston, TX *Our Legacy, Our Commitment*
2006 Durham, NC *Leave No Old Lesbian Behind*
and in the works as this is written...
2008 Los Angeles, CA *California Dreaming: Building a
Better World for Every Old Lesbian*

Registration:		Date & Time: 8/15-1:00pm to 5:00pm
		Location: Centennial Lobby
		Needs: 2 Tables and 4 Chairs

Room Rental:	Date	Location	Time	Charge
	8/16-17	MOOS TOWER Large theater	8:30-9:30am, 1:30-2:30pm	
	8/18	MOOS TOWER Large theater	8:30-9:30am	
	8/15-18	Centennial Great Hall	All meal times	
	8/16-18	Centennial: Total of 13 "break-out" rooms:	All day	
		7 House Lounges, B-51, B-71, B-75, B-37, C-125, C-160		
	8/16-18	Centennial: Additional 5-6 meeting spaces	All day	
	8/16-18	Centennial: Great Hall (CENTENNIAL)		
Room Rental Subtotal				CHARGES TO BE ARRANGED

Other Services:	Audio/Visual and Media charges to be arranged.
Other Services Subtotal: CHARGES TO BE ARRANGED	

BILLING SUMMARY:	Subtotals--	Room/Board: 11,873.75	\$20,650.00
This does NOT include any additional fees for damages, lost keys, additional services, catering, etc.	Food Services:		0.00
	Parking: 220.00		165.00
	Room Rental:		0.00
	Other Services:		0.00
	ESTIMATED TOTAL BILL: 12,093.75		\$20,815.00

COLLECTION:		Internal Journal Voucher (IV) To:		Department:		Womens Educational Action Group	
Account String:	Fund	Area	Org	SubOrg	Fund	SubOrg	Job
							Reptg

IV Notes:	
XX CASH PAID BY: XXGROUP Individuals On Arrival	
\$ 5,936.87 DEPOSIT, DUE IN HOUSING SERVICES BY: 7/20	
Cash Notes: Balance due will be billed after check-out.	
Please make all checks payable to the University of Minnesota and send to Housing & Residential Life, Attn: Ar	
210 Delaware St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455.	

Date: 7/11/96	Signed: [Signature]
---------------	---------------------

7/20/7/30|x|

A page from the contract with the University of Minnesota for facilities for the first Gathering in 1996.

Fundraising

“Money makes the world go ‘round” is more than a quaint, lyrical saying... it’s a reality, especially when it comes to a small organization. Compared to many, OLOC has been extremely fortunate in that so many of the women involved in the day to day operation of OLOC have also been willing to donate not only their time and passion, but often their expenses. It is impossible to put a dollar value on all the donated plane trips, hotel rooms, printing, phone bills and such. Suffice it to say, OLOC wouldn’t be what it is today without the generosity and dedication of many, many Old Lesbians.

OLOC’s first funds, \$610, came from donations collected at the 1989 West Coast Conference. Ann Ramsey and Muriel Fisher assumed the responsibility to “manage monies.” The first financial statement on record reviews the finances from the beginning to date, October 1991. (*Supporting Document K*)

When structuring the organization, it was determined that OLOC would need to rely on several sources for the necessary income: memberships (aka subscriptions), appealing directly to interested women, encouraging planned giving, seeking out major individual donors and applying for grants.

Memberships (Subscriptions)

In their first newsletter, OLOC stated that “Contributions for travel expenses to the OLOC meetings, reproduction of newsletter and postage for mailings will be appreciated.” They also included a line on the last page that read “I want to receive the newsletter. Enclosed \$ ____ for a donation.” By the time they put out their next newsletter, they thanked donors, saying “The more organized we get, the more we will be doing and that costs money!” and they added a suggestion for monthly pledges. It was a couple of years before OLOC specifically said membership cost \$10. Shortly thereafter, they established a scale of \$10 for women 60 and older and \$15 for younger women, termed supporters.

Consistently, OLOC has always let women know they could receive the newsletter whether or not they could afford a donation. OLOC also has a long-standing policy that all donations will be acknowledged with a letter of thanks from the Steering Committee.

In the early 90's when OLOC began seeking to incorporate, the term membership was changed to subscriber (to avoid having a membership list that could be requested by any governmental or outside entity.)

Funds raised from memberships/subscribers have always been a significant portion of its budget. However, as a source of income, memberships have always failed to meet expectations. In any given year, OLOC has never received memberships/subscriptions from more than 50% of the women receiving the newsletter.

It became apparent that many women regularly sent in a donation without indicating whether it was for membership or in response to a fundraising appeal. To avoid the confusion this caused, it was decided that any donation, no matter the amount, would add a year onto that woman's subscription. While this change in record keeping complicated the issue of what appeared to be low subscribership, it actually recognized the importance of every dollar that came to OLOC.

Of course, over the years, subscriber/supporter fees have slowly increased to their current level, \$25 to \$50 (sliding scale) for subscribers and \$30 to \$60 for supporters.

Direct Appeals

A variety of approaches have been used in appealing directly to women on the OLOC mailing list for additional financial support. Appeals started with simple letters stating OLOC's case and need. Later, OLOC sent out invitations to a non-party or non-cruise, essentially asking women to send OLOC the money they would have spent if they had gone to the event. As a fundraiser one year, OLOC mailed each person receiving the newsletter two anti-ageist cards with envelopes for their use, asking for a donation in return. A card was designed featuring a close-up photograph of Shevy Healey and Ruth Silver's hands. (*Supporting Document S*)

OLOC tries to send out a fundraising appeal twice each year. Funds raised most often went into the general fund but occasionally, appeals designated that money would be used for a specific project, such as scholarships for Gatherings.

Planned Giving and Major Individual Donors

In 1996, OLOC received the first of several large gifts from individual donors and decided to establish an Endowment Fund. Steering Committee member Betty Shoemaker gave \$1000 and challenged others to match it. The first bequest came from the estate of Ibby Stevenson after the 1999 Gathering.

The fund was in part inspired by the following quote from the book *Look Me in the Eye: Old Women, Aging and Ageism* written by Barbara Macdonald and Cynthia Rich:

It's time to refuse to let men define either the social world of old women or our life process. We need to build a vision of our own – one that goes beyond either a commercial exploitation or the patchwork “solutions” of family. We need to reclaim the value and meaning of our entire life spans up to and including death.

Steering Committee member Deedy Breed used her financial experience to develop a Planned Giving brochure and work with potential donors on how they could give, including options such as donating stocks and leaving money to OLOC in a donor's will.

Funds raised from such gifts have provided OLOC with a much appreciated security blanket. Some major donations are earmarked specifically for the Endowment Fund with the principle going untouched; others have been given to be used at the discretion of the Steering Committee.

Grants

Applying for grants from various foundations has always been a focus of OLOC's fundraising strategy. Identifying potential granting organizations and writing the required grant proposals has been a large undertaking that has basically fallen onto members of the Steering Committee. OLOC has successfully secured grants from several organizations including the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, the Uncommon Legacy Foundation, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, the Gill Foundation, the Woodbury Fund, Philanthrofund and others.

Over the years, several women have written grant applications on behalf of OLOC, many of them successful. But as anyone who has ever written a grant application can attest, it is a time-consuming task that demands great attention to detail and presentation. In 2003, the Committee gave serious consideration to hiring a professional grant writer, but it quickly became apparent that the costs were too high.

Most grant proposals have been written asking for funding for specific projects. Successful grant proposals have requested funds for the Arden Eversmeyer Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project, for financial assistance for low income and women of color to attend national OLOC events, to expand field organizing and upgrade of the website.

In addition to grants OLOC has received in response to having submitted a proposal, OLOC has also received several “directed” grants. These were funds donated directly to a funding organization (in this case, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice) with the provision that it be passed along to OLOC, usually earmarked for a specific purpose.

Other Fundraising

Last, but certainly not least in importance, there have been a few interesting individual fundraising events. In 2001, a fundraiser was held in Houston to raise money in support of the Oral Herstory Project. It brought in just over \$3000 and the money was designated to hire a part time office assistant for OLOC. Up until then, Arden Eversmeyer was responsible for most of the office work of the organization. Hiring an office assistant allowed Arden to concentrate her efforts on the myriad of details necessary to collect and complete each Oral Herstory. (*section on Oral Herstories on pages 55-58*) Annalee Stewart, an OLOC Steering Committee member from Minnesota, was given a Power of One Award from a local GLBT foundation. With it came a \$1000 donation to the organization of her choice, which, of course, happened to be OLOC. And when Mina Meyer, an SC member from California turned 65, she threw herself a big birthday party, encouraging all her guests, in lieu of personal gifts, to donate money to OLOC.

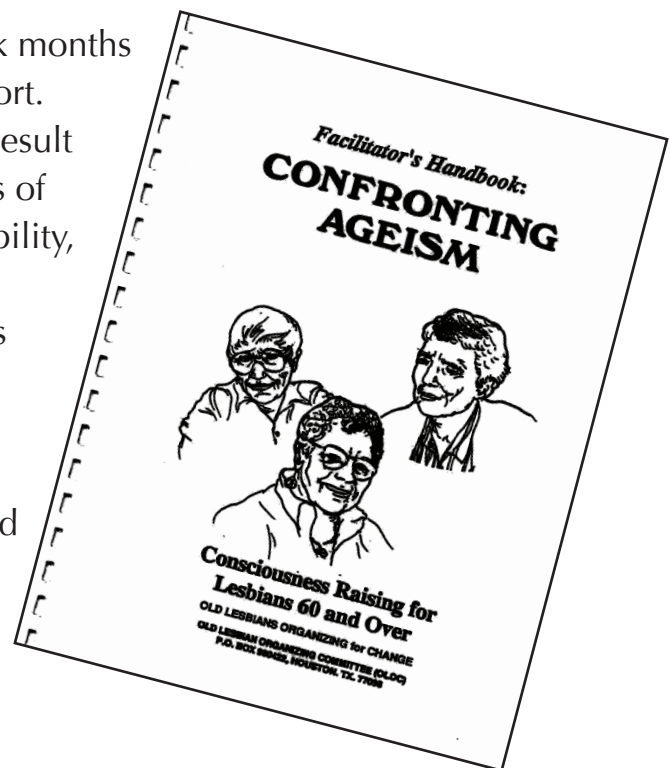
OLOC women are nothing, if not resourceful!

Facilitator's Handbook

OLOC was faced with the uphill battle of getting Old Lesbians to understand the scope of the problem of ageism and the importance of working to confront it whenever and wherever it is found. For many, many Old Lesbians, fighting just wasn't something with which they were comfortable. Many led insular lives and felt secure enough in the life they had built for themselves. When first asked, many would tell you they didn't think ageism was a problem they'd experienced. But OLOC was secure too – secure in its own belief that ageism was a problem for every old woman in one way or another and that, left unchallenged, those problems would only get worse. In order to help women understand ageism and how it affects everyone, OLOC undertook a huge task of creating a training manual.

What started out as a rather modest plan to produce a short video or brief document on ageism evolved into OLOC producing 150+ page training manual. Using consciousness-raising as its basis, OLOC spent several years putting together an impressive manual entitled *The Facilitator's Handbook: Confronting Ageism*, subtitled *Consciousness Raising for Lesbians 60 and Over*. It was agreed the document was not a book for general distribution but to be used to facilitate CR sessions on Aging.

Production of the handbook took months and months and was a collective effort. (*Supporting Document T*). The end result was a series of sessions on the topics of Aging and Ageism, Health and Disability, Finances, Our Bodies Growing Old, Sexuality/Sensuality, Social Relations and Community. The Handbook provided an amazing collection of essays, articles and other supporting materials (as well as the sessions) and extensive information on how to effectively use it. (*for the Handbook Table of Contents, see Supporting Document U*)



The complete handbook was printed and reprinted as needed for several years. OLOC also made an audio version and offered to supply it in braille if needed (absorbing any extra costs.) In 2000, the Steering Committee also decided to develop and distribute three separate one hour workshops utilizing much of the groundwork already done for *The Facilitator's Handbook*.

In 2005, the Steering Committee reviewed the manual and agreed that it needed some updating. That work is underway, but not yet complete.

Intern Program

Finding, and then keeping, qualified women who had time to devote to OLOC by serving on the Steering Committee was always a challenge. How to resolve the problem generated quite a few discussions that eventually led to the intern program (as well as a serious discussion of lowering the age limit for “subscribers” to enlarge the pool of potential candidates.)

An Intern program for the Steering Committee was introduced via an article in the December 2000 *Reporter*. It read:

This Intern Pilot Program provides us the needed help to go forward. The Interns do not vote which keeps us legal and committed to our age requirement of 60 plus on the SC and in our subscriber community.

Applications were taken for the positions and the first two interns were present at the October 2000 meeting. A third intern joined the following year. While the interns were very willing and capable, conflicts soon arose. Despite having three interns already actively working with the Steering Committee, it became clear that the both the committee and the interns needed to further clarify just what role interns were to play within the organization. This was discussed at the April 2002 meeting. Out of that discussion came a document, *Role of the Intern*, listing duties and defining the relationship. This subject was again taken up and further refined at the SC meeting in October 2002.

One of the confusions that needed to be addressed was the age of interns. The intern program at first allowed women 50 to apply. That was later changed to 55 and then to 57. This was done so that when an intern completed two years of service, she would have reached her 60th year and would be eligible to transition onto the Steering Committee.

Of the three women who served as interns, two were invited to transition to full Steering Committee status. One of those two continues to serve today. The third woman was unable to continue working with OLOC due to severe health problems. The Intern program is currently being evaluated to see if it was effective and whether or not it should be continued.

Guidelines (Policy and Procedures) Manual

Steering committee members came and went over the years and after dozens of meetings where policies were established and procedures were developed, it became clear that OLOC needed a manual that would gather all these documents together. Without it, SC members found themselves often going back over something that had already been considered. Several smaller, earlier versions were compiled, but in 2000 a complete *Policy & Procedures Manual* that would be reviewed regularly and updated as needed was proposed. It took until 2003 for this manual to be put together into a notebook (by Annalee Stewart and Arden Eversmeyer) and it was immediately found to be very useful. However, without a formal process in place, OLOC struggled to keep the manual up-to-date and in the hands of everyone who needed it. By its nature, each effort to review elements of the manual brought more changes, making the task even more difficult.

In fall 2006, another *Guidelines Manual* (renamed because it contained more than policies and procedures) was produced. The manual is hole punched so pages can be readily replaced and/or added. It is now noted on each document in the manual when it was last reviewed or revised. (*current Table of Contents, Supporting Document V*)

The Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project

In 1987, Arden Eversmeyer (who later went on to serve for 14 years on the OLOC Steering Committee) founded a group in Houston, TX called LOAF, Lesbians Over Age Fifty. It is a social networking and support group. Over the years many remarkable women have come through this group, but it wasn't until one of them died in 1990 that the loss of her life story was realized. The attempt to get the women of LOAF to write their own stories, of course, failed. Most of us think our lives are mundane, when in fact we have not only survived, but flourished in a hostile environment.

OLOC held its first National Gathering in Minneapolis, MN in 1996. Attending that Gathering was Degania Golove, an archivist with the June Mazer Collection in West Hollywood, CA. Arden talked with Degania about her wish to do some oral herstory work, and upon her return home, Degania sent materials and information to assist in developing what has become Arden's method for her oral herstory process.

In 1997, Arden started doing oral herstory work with LOAF women who were terminal with various illnesses. Then a vacation trip to California yielded some stories from friends.

In 1998 Arden met a mid-life gay man who is a visionary and a major fund raiser in Houston. Where she was not seeing beyond the immediate herstory subject he would say, "this is important work", or "what form are you using – how about video?", or "where are you going to house them?" and finally "how can I help?" Besides his ongoing encouragement, he raised enough money to pay for a part-time OLOC assistant for nearly two years. This was to give Arden more time to pursue oral herstories.

The OLOC database was the main source of identifying Lesbians over the age of 70 or born before 1930, the target age for interviews. Since there was literally no written record documenting the lives of Lesbians from this period, it became a challenge to find them. And finding them did not mean they would talk about their lives. The guilt and shame heaped upon us by society has a strong hold. Why should we deviate from the protective mode we have adopted all our lives?

As the years progressed with the project, word-of-mouth provided more willing subjects for interviews.

In October 2000, the OLOC Steering Committee adopted this work as a major project for the organization. It will be part of OLOC's legacy to the GLBT and greater community. It was done with the understanding that Arden would have control over the project, and it would be housed in Houston as long as she continued to be actively involved. It is housed with the OLOC archives in a 10'x10' mini-office in a climate controlled storage building. OLOC's adopting the project also meant financial assistance through grants.

It was agreed that the collection be available for reading and scholarly research. Many stories have been read over the years, but the first true "scholarly research" was done in the fall of 2006. A Stanford PhD candidate, doing a dissertation on gay and Lesbian parents 1945-2000, was with Arden for a week. With eight years of prior research, five full summers searching the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York, and much travel for personal interviews, this was an awesome experience for the researcher as it provided information for which there is no other written record.

Arden has been asked where the collection will eventually be housed. The final decision will be made by Arden and the OLOC Steering Committee, but it was agreed that it should be a Lesbian/women's archive. Currently there have been inquiries from Smith College, the University of Houston, the University of Minnesota, the June Mazer Collection, and the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York.

In 2001, four of the stories were excerpted for a major article in a Houston periodical. There has also been discussion about excerpting some of the stories for an anthology. In fact, there was a small Astraea Grant awarded that the SC decided to use to get the anthology started. The writing of the first four excerpts had been done by Pokey Anderson, and she has given permission for the article to be used. Arden has talked to several women who were interested in working on an anthology over the last few years, but nothing seemed to gel or feel just right. Now, according to Arden, "it feels like the right person has expressed an interest – Margaret Purcell, a longtime OLOC assistant, who has been involved with the project for some time."

Because transcriptions of interviews for the Oral Herstory Project have been done with the help of various people using a variety of techniques over the years, there wasn't a digital file. This has presented several problems. There was

no easy way for Herstories to be searched or excerpted. Herstories could only be viewed in Houston. There were also concerns about having a backup for protecting the Project. (As herstories are completed, two copies are compiled: one remains in the collection, the other is sent to the interviewee.)

In an effort to resolve some of these issues, the Herstories are being scanned, then run through an OCR program (a program that “reads” the scans which are essentially photographs of pages) and reassembled as digital files. As they are created, digital versions of the Herstories will be burned onto disks that can then be kept in a remote location. This will also make it easier to post sections of Herstories on the OLOC website, a future goal.

Every interviewee signs a contract, conditional or unconditional, for the use of her story. These contracts are honored. No story is available for use that has restrictions.

The steps to a completed story are simple, but sometime lengthy. This is the basic process:

1. Initial contact is made through letter, telephone, or e-mail.
2. A basic outline used for the interview with instructions for collecting pictures and documents is mailed to the interviewee.
3. An appointment for the interview is made.
4. The interview is conducted and two copies of each piece of documentation are made. (Originals are left with the interviewee.)
5. Audio tape is transcribed to printed text.
6. Transcript is sent to interviewee for editing.
7. Edited transcript is sent back to transcriber for correction.
8. Pictures and other documents are mounted for the books.
9. Text and pictures/documents are combined for the books.
10. Interviewee’s copy of the Herstory is mailed to her.

Getting an edited transcript back from an interviewee so that the Herstory can be completed can sometime be difficult. Occasionally it is necessary to give it to a proof reader to “clean up” (not change), and complete the book.

The most expensive part of the project is transcribing. Transcribers are difficult to find, and much of the work is done out of state. Currently, transcribers are paid \$5 a finished page, and \$10 an hour for corrections. Most of the grant money is spent on transcribing, copying, and supplies. Twice money has been

spent for a rental car at a destination. This is only done if there are multiple interviews involved. (Many expenses are absorbed by Arden and her partner, Charlotte.)

Arden does workshops whenever possible to promote the project. In 2005 and 2006, she did workshops at the Canadian Old Lesbian Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia. In 2006, she did one for Shell Oil Company in connection with Houston Pride Activities. In 2006, she did a training seminar in Durham for OLOC. And in 2007, Arden gave a presentation at the National Women's Music Festival in Bloomington, Illinois. A woman attending that presentation was so impressed by The Oral Herstory Project, she made a large financial donation to support Arden's ongoing efforts.

Over the years, Arden has trained several Old Lesbians in the interview process. *A Guide for Interviewers*, (prepared by Arden and loaded with lots of helpful information) is available to potential interviewers. To date, the trainings have resulted in very few Herstories. As of January 2007, there are a couple Lesbians on the west coast and one on the east coast gathering herstories.

The following pieces of information are of interest. As of January 2007:

1. There are now 93 life stories in the collection.
2. The oldest woman was born in 1916. There are two born in 1917, both living in the Phoenix area.
3. Eight of the women are African American.
4. Six of the women are now deceased.
5. Four of the women were foreign born.
6. Twelve of the women came from working class backgrounds.
7. Three were communists.
8. Nine are Jewish. And we have atheists, agnostics, pagans, a Buddhist, a few "mainstream" religions, and many not part of any spiritual tradition.
9. Four are ex-nuns.
10. Six were in the military.
11. Fifty four have college degrees - seven have a PhD.

In 2004, Arden stepped down from the OLOC Steering Committee so she would have more time to devote to gathering herstories. At that time, OLOC also renamed the project; it is now officially called *The Arden Eversmeyer Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project*.

Arden continues to gather herstories as quickly as she is able. There is an urgency inherent in the nature of the Herstory Project. Each year, women whose stories OLOC wanted to gather slip away. Some of the Old Lesbians die before we are able to get their stories; other become unable to tell their story. These stories deserve to be preserved and the women recognized for their experiences and contributions. And, just as importantly, there are thousands of other women who need to know that they are not alone.

When a representative of OLOC was taking a class at the University of Minnesota, the topic of OLOC and its work came up. When it was explained what OLOC was all about, the class fell silent. Whether it was out of embarrassment or ignorance on the part of other class members would be a guess. Going home a bit discouraged, the OLOC woman was both touched and disheartened to receive the following email from the instructor:

I feel a need to tell you that I love the idea of your work. My mom's sister, Marlies, was a lesbian. She was born in Nazi Germany, and came to America with my mom and the family in 1937, when she was 15. Not many years later, she became pregnant and married a man she had only dated a few times. She became a nurse and worked nights through her entire marriage and her son's childhood. After her son got married, she left her husband and moved in with another nurse from work.

It wasn't long into their first visit to our home (this was circa 1976 – I was 12), that we noticed they sported matching rings and figured out they were a couple. To my mother's credit, she simply told us that "Marlies and Julie are about as married as people get," and from then on they were just another set of relatives – two aunts who visited and got visited a lot.

Julie, who was quite a bit younger than Marlies, broke off the relationship in 1983. Not long after, Marlies killed herself. I believe that Marlies wasn't just suffering from a broken heart, but from a lack of community. The thought of being an old lesbian alone couldn't have seemed like a pretty picture to her. I always thought that if she had been more connected to the lesbian community (as it is now, not as it was in Florida 20 years ago), she might have felt

more hope. The good ending to this story is that because of the tragedy in our family we remained in touch with Julie.

Julie is now re-partnered to a woman with kids, and she and her partner Hazel are having a very good old lesbian life.

Stories such as the one illustrated in this email demonstrate the clear need for and importance of projects such as OLOC's *Oral Herstory Project*.

Oral History
of
Matti Tippet



Oral History
for
Betty Rudnick



Betty and Ruddy, her GodDog

December 7, 1924
January 12, 2000

Oral History
of
Vera Martin



1993

Born: June 18, 1923

Resident: Apache Junction, AZ

Interviewed: October 2000

Interviewer: Auden Essauwaga

Transcriber: Patsy Anderson

Other Projects

Birthday Cards

A common grievance of several OLOC founding mothers was the ageist nature of many commercial birthday cards. Before long, a collection of ageist cards began to accumulate. It wasn't hard to find them. In fact, many were cards personally received by OLOC women. Cards often depicted old women as unappealing, sexless, humorless and even invisible. Cards, typically displayed in stores under the heading "Over the Hill", depicted aging as something to be dreaded and took this tact in cards aimed at 30 and 40 year olds.

Unfortunately, many of these cards strike the reader as funny. And maybe they are. But OLOC felt the harm done by the message far outweighed the value of a chuckle.

In the mid 90's, OLOC began to encourage women to take action. The cover story of the September 1994 *OLOC Reporter* showed a birthday card. On the front was a drawing of two old people and the text read "Now that you're getting older, there's one thing good about your failing memory..." The inside read "When we put you in an institution, you won't remember who put you there. Happy Birthday." In that issue, OLOC encouraged women to speak out when they received an insulting card. One suggestion was to ask the sender of the card if that is really the message they wanted to give. They also encouraged women to write to the card manufacturer and provided contact information. OLOC even provided a little poem written by SC member Marlene Feingold to include in the letters:

Your cards say I'm wrinkled and old
Never happy or lovely or bold.
So, quick as a bunny,
I'll just take my money
And shop where your cards aren't sold.

Shevy Healey, who was especially irritated by these cards, relayed an incident while shopping for cards that inspired her:

I chanced to notice this old women behaving somewhat strangely. First, she looked from side to side, kind of checking

to see if anyone was watching. (She missed me.) Then she began what seemed like a transfer process. She picked up a handful of cards from one slot and put them face backwards in another slot. She did this twice more, each time randomly filling the empty slots. Then she walked calmly and purposefully away.

“Whoa!” thought I. “What’s going on here?” I walked over to where she had been standing and started to poke around. You won’t believe what I found!

This old woman, a meddler for sure, had taken a mess of ageist cards from their slots, turned them face down behind some other cards, and simply filled up the empty spaces with any old card!

“Most interesting,” I thought. She certainly hasn’t damaged any property, or destroyed it. She hasn’t taken anything. Hmm. I guess she just got tired of those ratty cards and decided to put them out of sight!

Very interesting indeed!

OLOC thoroughly investigated the possibility of producing and marketing their own birthday cards but ran into enough obstacles, that the national organization had to pass on the idea. In April 2001, Steering Committee member Annalee Stewart announced that she and a group of other Old Lesbians in Minnesota were set to produce women/age positive greeting cards. At the October meeting later that year, she provided samples to the Steering Committee, which commended her group on their efforts. Minnesota OLOC went on to produce several more cards, marketing them and donating some of the proceeds to national OLOC. (*Supporting Document P*)

All OLOC produced cards feature Old Lesbians and proudly list their names and ages on the back.

Starting in 2005, the OLOC Steering Committee has sent birthday cards to everyone in the database for whom they have birth dates. This program has been well received.

Reading and Viewing List

Thanks to a tremendous effort on the part of Sally T. Duplaix, MLS, OLOC has on its website an extensive bibliography listing books, articles, viewing materials and other references that address the subject of ageism and related subjects. Entries are fully cited and are grouped under Ageism, General, Essays, Biographies/Autobiographies/Memoirs, Sociology/Psychology, Fiction & Poetry, Video, Periodicals and Website Addresses.

Sally created this bibliography in 1999 and continues to contribute updates to the reading list as new materials become available, making this an even more valuable resource.

The Memorial Plaque/Program

From the beginning, the *OLOC Reporter* regularly carried brief articles memorializing OLOC women who had died. In 2003, under the guiding force of Steering Committee member Shaba Barnes, OLOC started a Memorial Plaque. The handsome wooden plaque contained engraved plates with the names of Old Lesbians who had been involved with OLOC who had died. OLOC women are encouraged to submit names for the plaque and make a small contribution to OLOC to offset the cost of the plate and engraving. Shaba also sends a personal note of condolence to the woman's loved ones.

The Plaque is present for viewing at every National Gathering. Shaba, who is now the Memorial Program Director of OLOC, has given memorial presentations at the last few Gatherings. Her well received presentations serve as a moving reminder of the many incredible women who are no longer with us.

Shaba also submits updates regarding the Plaque to the *OLOC Reporter* on a regular basis and is currently working on a more extensive Memorial section for the OLOC website.

The Travel Directory

Within a year of organizing and sending out a newsletter, OLOC took a step to help connect the women of OLOC. This notice appeared in the newsletter:

If you are interested in being a resource for OLOC women traveling in your area send your name to our Houston address and it will be listed in the *OLOC Reporter*. The concept is that travelers would phone you and you would give them tourist information, or visit with them. You would not be expected to provide sleeping accommodations – although some of you may wish to offer this.

Immediately, eleven willing OLOC women offered and their names and contact information appeared in the next issue of *The Reporter*. *The Travel Directory* was for years managed by Elaine Mikels with updates appearing in the newsletter on a regular basis. This task was later taken over by Rosemary Hathaway who became part of a collective effort to turn the list into a booklet.

An interesting article appeared in the *Reporter* that started out by stating that the deadline for submitting names to be listed in the new *Travel Directory* booklet was May 1. The second sentence goes on to explain that the deadline really isn't May 1, it's March 15. The explanation that was offered is a wonderful example of the trials and tribulations of working as a collective where every member has her say.

You send your work to Houston. Houston sends it to San Francisco. San Francisco sends it to Arcata. Arcata then keys it in and sends it back to San Francisco, San Diego and Michigan for editing and suggestions. They then send it back to the designer (in Arcata) who puts it into newsletter form. It's even more complicated than this but you get the idea...

When it came out in '95, the Directory sold for \$1.50. Updates continued to appear periodically in the newsletter.

The Travel Directory is still in use today and now lists over 75 women in 35 states and sells for \$3.

Archives

The first mention of an archive in the minutes and other supporting documents can be found in a folder dated October 1991. There, Ruth Silver was referred to as the OLOC historian and mentioned a scrapbook she was keeping. The Committee also formalized a job description for an Archivist. It read as follows:

Archivist

The job of the Archivist is to keep a full and complete record of all OLOC Steering Committee activity for future reference, as well as for historical purposes. This includes collecting copies of all past materials as well as keeping current with present activities. Included in this record (as many scrap books or other record books as needed) is the following:

- Minutes

- Agendas

- Correspondence

 - (kept by the Corresponding Secretary and the Regional Director)

- Newsletters

- Photographs

- Publicity about OLOC or by OLOC

A notation was also included that read: *Eventually copies of all of this material will be made for the June Mazer Collection.*

Several women served as the Archivist over the years. When the accumulated materials were moved to Texas, where OLOC had set up a national office, Barbara Pyle donated her time and talent to organize and house them and set up a filing system. When her health wouldn't allow her to continue, the archives were moved to the OLOC office. Currently, the archives are still housed in Houston, TX, but they have been moved to a storage space and are being maintained by Arden Eversmeyer.

The future of the archived materials has been discussed several times over the years. Without any clear plan, it was always agreed that they would simply continue to amass materials and decide later.

In Summary

by Arden Eversmeyer, Steering Committee Member Emerita

As this history is compiled 18 years after the organization was conceived, it's both inspiring and discouraging to look at where OLOC stands today. It is discouraging that OLOC is still needed. Ageism is, if anything, a more pervasive problem than it was 20 years ago.

Despite a significant percentage of the general population entering the ranks of "senior" status, our society seems more focused then ever on marginalizing millions of people, simply based on age. We are all bombarded by constant reminders that young is good and old is... well, it's not something we want to be. Using this product for younger-looking skin, disguising your gray hair, driving a sporty car, taking the right vitamin, even subjecting your body to surgical procedures that have no medical benefit... all to avoid looking your age. There are the unexplainable notions so much of society holds as to what is acceptable behavior for the old, especially old women.

Yet OLOC has many reasons to be proud of itself. Swaying popular opinion of millions of people is a daunting task, especially when you are a marginalized group standing on the edges looking in with very little money in your pockets. The thoughts and voices of a couple hundred vocal old women, worse yet, Old Lesbians, were all too easy to dismiss. Yet OLOC refused to be silenced. It persisted in telling anyone within hearing distance that Old Lesbians will not be dismissed, that OLD is not a four-letter word, and that they are not going away.

One of the major challenges of OLOC has been confronting ageism within the LGBT community itself. By insisting they be heard and visible, attending and participating in hundreds of LGBT events over the past two decades, it no longer seems so shocking that there are Old Lesbians and that they continue to live happy, productive lives. OLOC women may still have to speak up to be heard, and may have to remind the larger community that they need to be included, but they are no longer a surprise. That, in and of itself, is a big step forward for which OLOC can take much of the credit.

Even more of a challenge has been finding the Old Lesbians, many of

whom were raised in a time when coming out, in any way, even by joining an organization such as OLOC, was a threat to their safety and well-being. How can anyone weigh the value of finding an isolated Old Lesbian and helping her understand she does have something of value to offer her family, her friends and her community and that she is not alone? Unfortunately, the need to identify and validate the lives of Old Lesbians still persists. Each Old Lesbian OLOC has helped along this journey represents a great accomplishment.

In addition to fighting against ageism, OLOC also focuses on how ageism affects so many aspects of an Old Lesbian's life. (Supporting Document W)

OLOC currently has a database of over 870 women and employs a part-time administrative assistant. It is impossible to measure just how much influence OLOC has had. Mostly because it would be impossible to count the thousands upon thousands of people who have been challenged to stop and think about ageism after having seen a group of OLOC women marching in a Pride Parade or heard a presentation at a music festival about the Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project. Is there any way of knowing how many people no longer think it's okay to send a greeting card that purports to commemorate someone's birthday, but instead portrays old people as incompetent, incontinent, humorless or sexless?

Times may have changed, and how OLOC goes about meeting the challenges of tomorrow may be different than how they met the challenges of the past. But OLOC has lots left to do, and continues moving, gayly forward!

OLOC Meeting April

CHARLOTTE L. AVERY 4123 SWARTHMORE

ARDEN EVERSMEYER 4123 SWARTHMORE Hous

RAMONA MORGAN 1401 Tyl C I D

MARLENE FENGOLD 141-28

ROSEMARY HATHAWAY 560A

IZZIE HARBAUGH 89163

VEERA MARTIN 939 JEWETT

BARBARA MACDONALD 2459

DOROTHY HOOGERP

SHEVY HEALEY

RUTH SLIVER

SHARA BARNES

DOLLEY GREEN

The OLOC Reporter

News of Old Lesbians Organizing for Change - & of the Old Lesbian Organizing Committee

June, 1996

P.O. Box 980422 • Houston, Texas 77098

Vol. 6, No. 4

A Gathering Not to be Missed

by Shevy Healey (1922)

Application

To be a Member (60 or over) or a Supporter of
Old Lesbians Organizing for Change
(OLOC)

For all old lesbians, 60 and over, we urge you to join OLOC as an expression of your commitment to be with other old lesbians in your own area working to confront ageism. If no such group

Memo to: Arden, Charlotte, Pat, Marlene, Marge
From: Deedy

The following are suggestions for a planned giving policy for OLOC.

1. Set up OLOC ENDOWMENT FUND in interest bearing account
2. Include in Endowment
3. Gifts of \$1,000 or more

Ageism Fishbowl*

This version of the Ageism Fishbowl is prepared for the
American Society on Aging 42nd Annual Meeting
March 16-19, 1996
Anaheim, California

This format relies on a Facilitator and up to eighteen old lesbian participants. When there are fewer people, each person will get more than one turn until all the points are made (and, of course, there are undoubtedly others you will want to make). After each woman has spoken the facilitator will ask the group what was the gist of the statement she made. It may take more than one person's input to get the full gist. After the audience has said what they heard, the Facilitator will ask the person speaking if she has anything to add, and proceed on to the next person.

After the last woman has spoken the Facilitator may either

1) open up a discussion between old lesbians and the audience (What did you learn today? As an old lesbian, which of the points did you most resonate with? As a younger lesbian, how do you respond to some of the common ageist remarks?) or

2) thank the group and urge them to keep thinking about this fishbowl so that they personally can confront ageism wherever they see it.

The Facilitator asks the following question before each speaker: (The repetition is deliberate and helps the audience stay in focus.)

AS AN OLD WOMAN, WHAT DO YOU NEVER AGAIN WANT TO
HEAR, SEE, OR EXPERIENCE?

1. I never again want to hear: "You don't look your age." This is supposed to be a compliment but instead is a direct expression of ageism. To be "old" is synonymous with being ugly. What you really are saying when you tell me I don't look my age is that if I DID, I would look awful, so isn't it wonderful for me that I don't. Think for a minute what it means for an old woman to hear over and over again how ugly it is to look her own age!

TIME LINE

THURSDAY

Registration
Supper
Hospitality - Cantine

FRIDAY

Breakfast
Welcome
Panel #1
HOW OUR LIVES
ARE CHANGING
Break
Conversation Groups

Lunch
Announcements
Panel #2
INDIVIDUAL
SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS
(open mike)
Break
VIDEO
Free Time
Supper

DOWN HOME
ENTERTAINMENT

SATURDAY

Breakfast
Welcome
Panel #3
FORBIDDEN TOPIC:
DEATH AND DYING
Break
Conversation Groups

Lunch
Announcements
Panel #4
CELEBRATING CHANGE:
MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Break
Open Mike
Free Time

BANQUET-DANCE-
ENTERTAINMENT

SUNDAY

Announcements
OUR FANTASIES
CLOSING CEREMONY
Lunch

Supporting Documents

Document	Document Title
A	First West Coast Conference By and For Old Lesbians Planning Committee Members
B1-B2	First West Coast Conference By and For Old Lesbians (1987) Presentations, Workshops and Presenters
C	The West Coast Celebrations II and Conference of Old Lesbians (1989) Presentations, Workshops and Presenters
D1-D2	Early OLOC Meeting Attendants
E	(Steering) Committee Meetings
F	OLOC Committees and Committee Members September 1990
G	Coordinator Position
H	Group Norms: Expectations for Our Behavior, Early Version
J	Incorporating OLOC, Early Notes
K	Early Financial Reports
L1-L2	Mail Depot Flow Chart (1994)
M1-M7	Newsletter Highlights
N	OLOC Brochure, First Version
P	Examples of First Cards Developed for OLOC (by Minnesota OLOC Chapter)
Q	Excerpt from the book Lambda Gray
R	Press release regarding a leaflet distributed at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Creating Change Conference in 1994.
S	Fundraising Example: Their Hands
T	Credit Page for <i>Facilitator's Handbook</i>
U1-U2	Table of Contents of <i>Facilitator's Handbook</i>
V1-V2	Guidelines (aka Policy and Procedures) Manual, July 2007
W	Ageism Graphic

(See Page 1)

First West Coast Conference By and For Old Lesbians Planning Committee Members

Jeanne Adleman, San Francisco
Shaba Barnes, Los Angeles
Silvia Dobson, Santa Barbara
Carolyn Fank, Santa Monica
Muriel Fisher, San Diego
Shevy Healey, Idyllwild
Barbara Macdonald, Agua Caliente
Mina Meyer, Long Beach
Joyce Pierson, Solana Beach
Sharon Raphael, Long Beach
Cynthia Rich, Agua Caliente
Kate Rosenblatt, Solana Beach
Florence Rossoff, Santa Barbara
Betty Shoemaker, Santa Barbara
Natalie Zarchin, Oakland

A Special Thanks To Mina Meyer, Conference Coordinator

Additional participation in the planning and execution of the event:

San Francisco/Bay Area Support Committee:

Jeanne Adleman, Dottie Fowler, Rosemary Hathaway,
Natalie Zarchin

Los Angeles Support Committee:

Mae Blanton, Pat Denslow, Virginia Ellis, Georgia Middup,
Betty Roetter, Donna Smith

San Francisco Readers Theatre:

Sarah Davis, Mary Flick, Dottie Fowler, Rosemary Hathaway,
Frances Lorraine, Natalie Zarchin

Arts Exhibit Committee:

Muriel Fisher, Coordinator; Glinda Havens, Margaret Lewis,
Kay Wilson

Gwen Snyder, a San Diego graphic artist, designed and donated the logo.

Supporting Document A

(See Page 1)

First West Coast Conference By and For Old Lesbians (1987) Presentations, Workshops and Presenters

Opening Presentation

Presenters: Jeanne Adleman and Barbara Macdonald

What Is Ageism? How do Old Lesbians confront ageism in society; its Institutions, in the Women's Movement, in young Lesbians, in ourselves? How do we Empower ourselves? How is the Personal Political?

Opening presentation was followed by **Consciousness Raising:**
How does Ageism pervade our lives? How do we internalize it?
What does it do to us?

Workshops:

Ageism and the Myth of Ableism Shevy Healey

Proposed Legal Rights for Domestic Partners Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon

Ritual of Croning Sevina Teubal

Why Didn't You Save For Your Old Age? Ruth Mountaingrove

Old Jewish Lesbians: Anti-Semitism and Ageism Kate Rosenblatt

Is the Health Care System Making You Sick? Natalie Zarchin and
Florence Rosso

Getting Rid of Addictive Habits of Youth Betty Shoemaker

The Double-bind For Old Lesbian Mothers: Ageism in our Families
Jeanne Adleman

Lesbian Relationships: Lesbians who have been Married Dotty Fowler and
Rosemary Hathaway

I Didn't Say Mother. I Said Lover: Younger Partners of Old Lesbians
Joyce Pierson & Cynthia Rich

Confronting the ISMs. Even When We're Not Sure Which One
Shaba Barnes, Hilda Benites-Palma, Carolyn Fank

Finding Community: I've been here, Where have the rest of you been?
Kate Rosenblatt, Florence Rossoff, Betty Shoemaker

Sex and Sexuality from 60 On Jeanne Adleman

Supporting Document B1

Working to End Ageism Baba Copper

How Do We Celebrate Aging in an Ageist Society? Vashte Doublexx

What Can You Expect At Your Age? Loss and Mortality Elizabeth Freeman

Life As A Self-Fulfilling Process Amelia Breit

Coming Out As An Old Lesbian Ruby Juster

Conversations on Class Differences in Lesbian Relationships Irene Weis

Celebrating Ourselves: Being Single and Liking it! Pat Denslow

Conversations on Class Differences in Lesbian Relationships Marilyn Murphy

Spirituality In Our Community Shaba Barnes

Issues of New Love Relationships Dotty Fowler

Closing Discussion

Making an Impact: Specific Strategies to Empower Us and to Combat Ageism.

Choose one of the following topics and engage in group discussion and “brainstorming”.

- A. Organizing for an ongoing national organization of Old Lesbians.
- B. Networking to develop regional and local support systems.
- C. Strategies for confronting Ageism: Developing consciousness raising groups and educational projects; creating a visible, powerful public image of Old Lesbians.

(See Page 2)

The West Coast Celebrations II and Conference of Old Lesbians (1989) Presentations, Workshops and Presenters

Plenary: *Introduction To Consciousness Raising* Buffy Dunker

Workshops:

Living with Physical Disabilities/Getting Through Catastrophic Illnesses

Gloria Wilson and Ren Hennerlau

Alternative Housing: How and Where Do We Want to Live

Catherine Nicholson with Elizabeth Freeman and B. J. Miller

Coming Out After 60 Beverly Hickok

"Out of the Chute" Lesbians and "Late Bloomers" Rosemary Hathaway

Legal Issues for Old Lesbians Renee Hanover with Del Martin & Phyllis Lyon

Older is Better: The Pleasures of Aging Ruth Palmisano

Self-Healing: Uniting Body–Mind–Spirit

Frances Lorraine, Sarah Davis, Marjory Nelson

Singles: Living Alone and Liking It Sally Binford

Spirituality Sunlight

Lesbians of Color: Contributions and Concerns Doris

Old and Young: Issues of Lesbian Relationships Elaine Mikels

Pushing 60 Alta Fly

Finding and Making Community Ginny Jordan

Final Morning Programs

Introduction to Networking Ruth Heidelberg

Then select one to attend: Networking and planning about: (a) Health Issues or (b) Housing Issues or (c) Money Management Issues

Sing-Along with Liz

Massage Exchange

Tennis

A Morning Hike around Lake Merced

Affinity Groups (similar to a caucus)

Women In The Arts Exhibit

Supporting Document C

(See Page 3)

Early OLOC Meeting Attendees

November 3-4, 1989 at Grosvenor Inn in San Diego, CA

Attended by: Renee Hanover

Betty Shoemaker

Rosemary Hathaway

Gertrude Chasens

Barbara Kalish

Cristina Vegas

Glenda Snyder

Shaba Barnes

Vera Martin

Ann Ramsey

Minutes also mentioned apologies for not attending the meeting from Ruth Heidelberg (due to a conflicting commitment) and Shevy Healey (due to illness).

March 3-4, 1990 in Santa Barbara, CA (Betty Shoemaker's home)

Attended by: Shevy Healey

Barbara Kalish

Elaine Mikels

Ann Ramsey

Betty Shoemaker

Vera Martin

Rosemary Hathaway

Shaba Barnes

Gertrude Chasens

June 15-17, 1990 in Albuquerque, NM

Attended by: Marie Highland, AZ
Ann Boppart, AZ
Cristina Vegas, CA
Barbara Kalish, CA
Rosemary Hathaway, CA
Vera Martin, CA
Shevy Healey, CA
Ruth Silver, CA
Pat Davis, CA
Ann Ramsey, CA
Shaba Barnes, CA
Pat Denslow, TX
Ruth Heidelberg, MD
Renee Hanover, IL
Elaine Mikels, NM
Gertrude Chasens, OH
Ann Harbaugh, OR

September 7-9, 1990 in Walnut Creek, CA

Attended by: Ann Ramsey, CA
Vera Martin, CA
Renee Hanover, IL
Shaba Barnes, CA
Barbara Kalish, CA
Cristina Vegas, CA
Rosemary Hathaway, CA
Shevy Healey, CA
Ruth Silver, CA
Elaine Mikels, NM
Gertrude Chasens, OH
Ann Harbaugh, OR
Marie Highland, AZ
Ann B., AZ
Ruth Heidelberg, MD
Pat Davis, CA
Pat Denslow, TX

(Steering) Committee Meetings

1989	September 3-4	San Diego, CA
1990	March 3-4	Santa Barbara, CA
1990	June 15-17	Santa Fe, NM
1990	September 7-9	Walnut Creek, CA
1990	November 30- December 2	San Antonio, TX
1991	April 22-23	Atlanta, GA
1991	October 9-13	Long Beach, CA
1992	April 21-26	St. Augustine, FL
1992	October 13-18	Houston, TX
1993	April 21-24	Laurel, MD
1993	October 13-17	Eugene, OR
1994	April 19-24	Lansing, MI
1994	October 11-16	Houston, TX
1995	June 22-26	Provincetown, MA
1995	October 19-22	Apache Junction, AZ
1996	April 10-14	Houston, TX
1996	October 11-12	Apache Junction, AZ
1997	April 22-28	Minneapolis, MN
1997	October 24-27	Houston, TX
1998	April 22-28	San Francisco, CA
1998	September 9-10	no location noted
1999	April 22-27	Houston, TX
1999	October 14-18	Houston, TX
2000	April 21-23	West Chatham, MA
2000	October 20-22	Houston, TX
2001	April 13-15	Minneapolis, MN
2001	October 11-15	Houston, TX
2002	April 19-21	Minneapolis, MN
2002	October 25-27	Houston, TX
2003	April 4-7	Lansing, MI
2003	October 24-26	Albany, NY
2004	April 23-25	Houston, TX
2004	October 14-17	Houston, TX
2005	April 16-18	Durham, NC
2005	October 20-22	Charlotte, NC
2006	April 7-9	Durham, NC
2006	October 12-15	Vancouver, WA (Portland, OR)
2007	March 23-25	Long Beach, CA
2007	October 5-7	University Place, WA

(See Page 11)

OLOC Committees and Committee Members

September 1990

Newsletter

Ann Ramsey
Gertrude Chasens
Elaine Mikels - Convener

ByLaws

Ruth Silver
Vera Martin
Renee Hanover - Convener

Correspondence

Ruth Silver
Vera Martin (distribute)
Barbara Kalish - Convener
Shevy Healey

Fund Raising

Ruth Silver
Shaba Barnes
Barbara Kalish - Convener

C.R. Packet

Shevy Healey
Ann Harbaugh
Pat Denslow
Rosemary Hathaway
Ruth Heidelberg
Pat Davis

Finance Committee

Ann Ramsey
Vera Martin
Renee Hanover
Rosemary Hathaway
Shaba Barnes - Convener

Agenda

Ruth Heidelberg
Ann Harbaugh
Shevy Healey
Rosemary Hathaway - Convener

NLC Committee

Shevy Healey
Elaine Mikels
Renee Hanover
Ruth Heidelberg
Vera Martin - Convener

Publicity

Gertrude Chasens

Arrangements

Shevy Healey
Vera Martin

Coordinator Position

The following is the first document in the archives that addresses specific duties and responsibilities of a Coordinator for the Steering Committee. It was developed in October 1991 and appended to the minutes.

Roles and Responsibilities of OLOC Coordinator

1. Using policy statements, carry out OLOC policies.
2. Monitor committees/roles using developed guidelines. (Finance, Corresponding Secretary, Minutes Secretary, Interregional Communicator, Newsletter Collective, Mail Handling, Work Distribution, Mailing list, Publicity, Norms Committee and Historian)
3. Identify organizational problems and resolution process.
4. Assign Ad Hoc tasks.
5. Function as OLOC spokesperson.
6. Convene and Plan Steering Committee meetings with local area Lesbians who live in or near the meeting site.
 - develop agenda with support team from Steering Committee (Gertrude, Kittu, Ruth H. and one OLOC Steering Committee member of her choice) Use conference call system available through Ruth H.
7. Call emergency meetings.
8. Clear all extraneous writings in name of OLOC.
9. All responsibilities of the coordinator will be done using feminist process. (this process will be spelled out by steering committee)
10. Coordinator will be paid for OLOC expenses.

(See Page 15)

Group Norms: Expectations for Our Behavior, A Very Early Version

This preliminary list came from an evaluation of the need to develop a set of guidelines for interactions in OLOC meetings. (Developed in October 1991.)

A much more detailed version was adopted a year or two later.

1. BE AWARE OF WOMEN WHO ARE ISOLATED
2. AFFIRM by: Respond before going to own thoughts
Compliment on tasks. HUGS
Express both appreciation and criticism
Response and Feedback
3. ACUTE listening and communication.
VIBE WATCHER
don't read or write while woman speaks
speak to group not just one woman
4. Clear definition of tasks and roles to engender accountability.
Differentiate between task and process sessions.
5. Express differences with "I" statements.
Recognize differences in ability and information.
Express anger and rage.
6. DECISION MAKING:
Consensus/ if none then mediation.
Blocking for moral or ethical reasons only. Agree to disagree.
Evaluate tasks and responsibilities at end of each meeting.
7. EXPECTATION OF GOALS:
Develop a process to be passed on to other women's groups.
Be a task oriented group using process to be as fruitful as possible.
What we are doing today (Oct. 10) do it again and again.
Explore ways to achieve expectations of group.
8. RELATING:
same way at meeting and also in between.
Feel free to leave
Don't leave without resolution.
Leave personal issues (between two members) outside of meeting. Feel
enough trust of the group to be able to ask for support; listening and/or
mediation.
Group therapy is not a function of this group.
9. Our policy about being "used".

Incorporating OLOC: Notes

The following information, presented to the SC in 1992, was the result of researching the steps to incorporate OLOC. The report was probably written by Arden Eversmeyer but the document was not signed. The advice was from Texas attorney, Deb Hunt. (LOAF is another lesbian organization Arden was involved with incorporating in Texas.)

INCORPORATION

The LOAF attorney said we could NOT incorporate in California with a mailing address in Texas. She said we COULD incorporate in Texas and be registered as a Foreign Corporation in California.

Fees

- Registration in the state of Texas

- Reduced hourly attorney fee of \$50.00 per hour for a maximum of seven hours work

- Estimated cost: \$400

Our attorneys are Moore and Hunt - we use Debbie Hunt.

A Board of Directors must be formed, and they must "meet" once a year. These could be women who attend Steering Committee meetings, and the necessary brief business could be handled there.

We already have some officers. They may or may not be Directors - it makes no difference. They do not have to attend the annual meeting.

Like LOAF - she suggests no membership so they won't have to be called together for business.

The Registered Agent - the person to whom all mail is directed - has to live in the state of registration. If it is Texas it should be someone other than Arden since she is the Registered Agent for LOAF.

Since OLOC is an educational organization it will meet the requirements for a not-for-profit incorporation.

OLOC will need an accountant to take care of tax forms and file returns. This person will work closely with the Treasurer, so should live near the Treasurer. I'm sure there are a lot of questions that can be answered by an attorney in your area.

(See Page 18)

Early Financial Reports

The earliest financial statement on record in the archives was this Treasurer's Report dated October 31, 1990. It appears to be a summary of all money transactions from the first year of OLOC.

O.L.O.C.		O.L.O.C. TREASURER'S REPORT AT 31 OCTOBER 1990	
DATE *****	DESCRIPTION *****	RECEIPTS *****	
11/1/89	COLLECTION WCC 11	610.00	
11/10/89	CONTRIBUTION A. RAMSEY	75.00	
3/4/90	MISC. CONTRIBUTION	5.00	
5/5/90	WCC11 COMMITTEE	500.00	
5/18/90	CONTRIBUTIONS	255.00	
7/9/90	CONTRIBUTION (AR)	50.00	
6/4/90	CONTRIBUTIONS	290.00	
8/17/90	CONTRIBUTIONS	107.00	
8/29/90	CONTRIBUTIONS	199.50	
10/1/90	CONTRIBS & ADVERTISING	105.00	
	TOTAL RECEIPTS	2,196.50	
		DISBURSEMENTS *****	
11/5/89	TRAVEL ASSISTANCE	230.00	G CHASENS

Finances

O.L.O.C. / O.C. Income/Expense Sheet

Income

Chicago Resource Center	5,000.00
December Fund Raising Letter	630.00
Individual Donations	1,272.00
Los Angeles Area Fundraiser	108.00
Bay Area O.L.O.C.	
W.C.C.II	560.14
2/24 Dance	1,306.00
Brothers for Sisters	170.00
Individual Donations	470.00
Bank Interest	53.39
Total Income	\$ 9,569.53

Expenses

Bank Charges (Checks, Endorsement - service charge)	34.23
2/24 Dances	506.66
Manual for Group Leaders	29.90
Atlanta Scholarships	1,450.00
Atlanta (Ribbon & Pens)	41.68
Atlanta (Printing)	35.51
Fiscal Agent (Operation Concern Inc. 10%)	951.61
Total Expenses	\$ 3,049.59
BALANCE 4/18/91	\$ 6,519.94

Mail Depot Flow Chart (1994)

1. Money

Make a list of all checks received, the amounts, names and addresses of donors, by area.

- a. A copy of the list with the checks should go to the treasurer.
- b. A copy of the list should go to Barbara and Christina to add to their list of contributors
- c. A copy of names of contributors for the particular region should go to that region's Area Coordinator so that the names can be, for sure, included in all special regional appeals, events, etc.
- d. A copy of the list to the Cor. Secy to check against the letters to be sure she has thanked everyone.

2. Letters and Tear-Slips from the Newsletter

All originals should be kept either by the Cor. Secy or by the Regional Communicator in a book together with whatever replies have been made. Depending on the content the following copies should be made:

- a. For the Cor. Secy to send thanks for donations. and to respond to any other Questions.
- b. For the Newsletter Editor for a "We Get Mail" Column, or for an announcements column, or for anything that can be newsworthy.
- c. For the Regional Communicator to respond to all Contact Persons

Inquiries and regional Inquiries:

A note on this: Just having the information that a person wants to be a Contact Person is frequently not sufficient. That person may have sent in a donation, either sizable or small, as well as making written comments about OLOC or herself that are interesting, perhaps even newsworthy. So having the whole document will be of help to the Director of Regions.

The same thing applies to the Cor. Secy. where the more personal the letter the more valued it will be by the person receiving it. A

form letter doesn't convey the extent of our desire to make real contact with the person. The letter can only be personalized when the Cor. Secy responds to whatever is in it, and therefore should have a copy of the original letter.

3. Requests for Brochures:

These should be handled directly, probably with a printed acknowledgment form saying something like: Here are the ____ copies of the OLOC brochure you requested. If you have any further information you desire we would be happy to respond. Your donation towards the cost of these brochures is greatly appreciated. Thank you. OLOC Steering Committee.

4. Requests for Workbooks:

The post office will give us as many of their large mailers as we want, if we send it first class at \$2.90 each, which seems worthwhile.

Probably a note should be included with the Workbook saying something like (this is a rough draft only!):

"Thanks for your request for the Facilitator's Workbook: CR on Ageism for Old Lesbians 60 and Over. We hope you find this Workbook useful in getting old lesbians together to confront the ageism in our lives."

"We want very much to hear from you about any groups that will be conducted in your communities using this Workbook. We particularly want to call your attention to the Report Back Evaluation Questionnaire at the back of the Workbook, a Handout for Session #8. Returning it to OLOC can help us to improve and broaden the effectiveness of this Workbook!"

In sisterhood

OLOC Steering Committee

Newsletter Highlights

The *OLOC Reporter* has published dozens of interesting articles over the years. Some offer insights as to what OLOC was involved in and the evolution of its thinking. Many of them are just as relevant today as they were when they were published. Here is a list of just some of the articles listed with title, author and publication date. It is followed by a list of some of the women whose herstories have been featured in the *Reporter*.

***Old... Ageism... and Internalized Ageism* by Pat Durham June 1992**

...begin thinking of yourself as OLD, simply as chronologically OLD. And that OLD is okay, old is who you are and what you choose to make it: active, beautiful, sexual, experienced, competent, powerful and accepting.

***On Belonging* by Terpi (Dorothy Hoogterp) June 1992**

As lesbians, most of us had a more intricate search; the journey to find others like ourselves, the struggle against *not belonging* to the accepted world of family, church, school and society. We became very aware of the struggles of others in our own struggle against homophobia.

***Diversity with a Difference: On Being Old and Lesbian* by Shevy Healey, Ph.D. March 1993**

(excerpted from a speech at the conference on the American Society on Aging in San Francisco June 1992)

There is no question that the hostile and poisonous environments in which we old lesbians have been forced to live can cause damage. But our oppressions, which are exacting their price, have also taught us to be resourceful and to develop special and sophisticated coping strategies that have enabled us to survive. The real miracle is that most lesbians found the strength, the bravery and the courage not just to survive but to grow and to love as well.

On Aging and Ageism... "You Do Not Hear Me!" by Barbara Macdonald
December 1993

(excerpted from the talk *Women Divided: the Politics of Ageism* presented at the Sixth Feminist Scholars Lecture Series, Sept 1992, Penn State University)

I have to address this medical model briefly tonight, for as long as you hang on to your terror of the physicality of Old – and that's what *aging* is – you will not be able to hear me.

Reclaiming the Crone, A Herstory by Emma Joy Crone **December 1993**

Even the language is derogatory. Society calls us "old" behind our backs, while calling us older, senior, golden age to our faces. People use the term *little old lady* to trivialize the fact that women do have a tendency to shrink as we age. We are also called *fiesta* if we are outspoken or told that we "look good for our age."

Book Review of Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism

Nan D. Davis reviews the book written by Suzanne Pharr **March 1994**

She speaks from her own experience of 16 years living an unauthentic life by hiding the lesbian side of herself because of her fear of what homophobia might do to her life. She came to see that homophobia is more than society's viewing homosexuality as *sick* or *sinful*. The message of this book is that lesbians threaten the male dominance, which is so implicit in our society that we don't even notice it.

What Do You Expect At Your Age???? by Shevy Healey **September 1994**

...in our culture, one of the first ageist assumptions is that to be old automatically means to be in some state of failing health and decrepitude, physical, mental, or both and further, to be in this state means to be valueless and a non-person. It is no wonder, then, that women from their thirties on begin to lament their failing physical abilities, as if the standard set in the teens and 20's are the normative standards for life. My experiences with health limitations were so tied in with ageist expectations that at the first signs of what turned out to be a relatively mild condition, I had a life crisis.

***Politics In the 90's and Beyond* by Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin**

September 1996

(reporting on their experiences as delegates to the 1995 White House Conference on Aging)

...we, individually and/or collectively, in or out of the closet, have political power if we assume it. We have seen social and political change that we never expected to occur in our lifetime.

***Researchers and Participants: A New Kind of Relationship* by Betty Rudnick, Ph.D., member of OLOC and Sharon Jacobson, Ed.D. Women's Studies Program State University New York in Brockport Summer 1998**

A few years ago, if someone had told us that we would make a new friend by being in a research project we would have both laughed. We all know how research goes. The researcher comes in, takes what they want, says thank you, and leaves. You never hear from them again; often times leaving you with a feeling of being used or exploited. But not all research is or has to be that way.

***Ageism in our Institutions and Organizations* by Vera Martin June 2000**

(text of a speech presented at the 1999 NGLTF Conference)

I can well remember when we asked to participate in a conference. After much discussion, we were accepted. However, we were given space in a building totally removed from where everything else was going on. It involved quite a walk to get there and no flyers were distributed to afford us any publicity. We also were not mentioned at the plenary. When we complained, we were told "We thought you would like the privacy and the quiet." ORGANIZATIONAL AGEISM!

***On Being a Woman of Color* by Vera Martin September 2000**

If we don't resolve some of the issues of racism that keep us apart we will not succeed in our mission: the eradication of ageism and homophobia.

***Old is Not a Four Letter Word* by Mary M. Morgan September 2000**

Ageism cuts the next generation off from their own history by deprecating the experiences of old people as irrelevant, boring, behind the times.

***Imagine My Surprise* by Deedy Breed December 2000**

The last place I expected to discuss ageism was at our Unitarian Universalist Church in Chatham; but last winter I found myself in front of the congregation delivering a sermon on Ageism.

***Excerpts from a Presentation before the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association* by Shevy Healey, Ph.D. March 2001**

I am not knocking the value of eating properly and exercising diligently. All of that will make one healthier but not *younger*. Such rationalizations are called, in *our* (psychological) language, denial, unquestionably an attempt not to face the fact that one's body is getting old, that what is occurring is normal not a disease process. Not to face that fact has great perils. The greatest, in my view, is that conscious aging is replaced by hazy wishful thinking.

***One of the Most Important Issues Facing Women Today: Privatizing Social Security Will Hurt All Women* by Annalee Stewart June 2001**

Social Security is especially important for women because nearly two thirds of women 65 and over receive a majority of their income from Social Security and one third rely on Social Security for 90 percent or more of their income. Without Social Security, over half of all elderly women would be living in poverty.

***Authenticity: How to Grow and Thrive Outside the Closet* by Deedy Breed September 2001**

So I began what has turned into a life-long process – that of coming out of the closet. As the years have gone by, this becomes easier to do and necessary for all lesbians and gays to undertake, if they have a safe and empathetic place to do so.

***See What Women Can Do: The Old Women's Project, Part 1* author unknown
March 2004**

Our purpose is to make visible the reality that old women have our own personal stake – not solely in issues such as Medicare, Social Security, prescription drugs, nursing homes, as vital to our survival as those are – but in all issues of social justice.

***The Old Women's Project, Part 2 Why Women? An Open Letter to Women Organizing Against War* author unknown June 2004**

Women are now on the front lines. Yet nowhere in the world do women have equal voice in the decisions to make war – or input into how war and its aftermath will affect women. The Old Women's Project believes that if we want to end war, it is essential for us to insist that the world see that war has a woman's face. Women can no longer be trivialized as *collateral damage*. We are at ground zero in modern warfare.

***Just What Is Aging Anyway?* by Nancy Nystrom December 2004**

There is no one to teach us when old age slams at us that there is any other way. Aging is, at least as fostered by the general society, a refusal to see a future; an obstinate wish for the past. For those younger folks, aging is a stranger, someone they have been warned not to go near. Their views and experiences with the old are either folk tales about grandma, or medicalized views of those at the end of life. For the young, there is nothing in between, and there is no one to teach them the difference.

***Agents of Change Walk Through "Interesting" Times* by Alix Dobkin
March 2005 (from keynote speech at 04 Gathering)**

Feminists have lost many battles: for example, women-only space. Women-only space is rare these days, but we have learned to hold our space, even in the presence of a man or two. Back in the 70s, if a man entered our space, every woman was either hating it or worrying about the man's feelings, but now we are pretty much over that. Who under forty knows what CR is any more? But they know they are entitled and their world is bigger than ours was.

Supporting Document M5

***The Value of Aging*, author unknown June 2005**

Old age, I decided, is a gift. I am now, probably for the first time in my life, the person I have always wanted to be.

***Growing Old* by d. maria September 2005**

(Written in response to a request in *The Reporter* for writing on illness, dying, death and living well.)

One of the women in the story said she was 81 and a half. "At my age" she said, "the half matters." After the story ran, the camera went to the anchor in the studio who said gleefully, "Aren't they just the cutest little girls!?" HE REALLY DID! I was so disgusted I couldn't get to my computer fast enough to email him. After I had yelled at him (in caps), tried to shame him, and he had yelled back "I was an angry bitch – SURPRISE!" he began to get it, he apologized and seemed to understand that ageism was like racism and he had NO idea! there was such a thing.

***Why Are Ageist Attitudes Still Acceptable?* by Cynthia Rich September 2005**

Attitudes toward old women have been frozen in time. The assumptions, stereotypes about the women we are today are almost exactly the same as attitudes were toward us when we were younger women in the 1950s.

***Why 60 and Older?* by Barbara Macdonald December 2005**

(excerpted from the welcoming talk at the *First West Coast Conference and Celebration by and for Old Lesbians* in 1987)

This issue came up so frequently (when planning the conference) that we finally were able to see that our own conditioning, our own ageism, if you will, interfered with our clear thinking. The problems of midlife women (women from 40 to 59) are different from the problems of old age...

Ageism and Lesbophobia by Sharon Raphael, Ph.D. September 2006

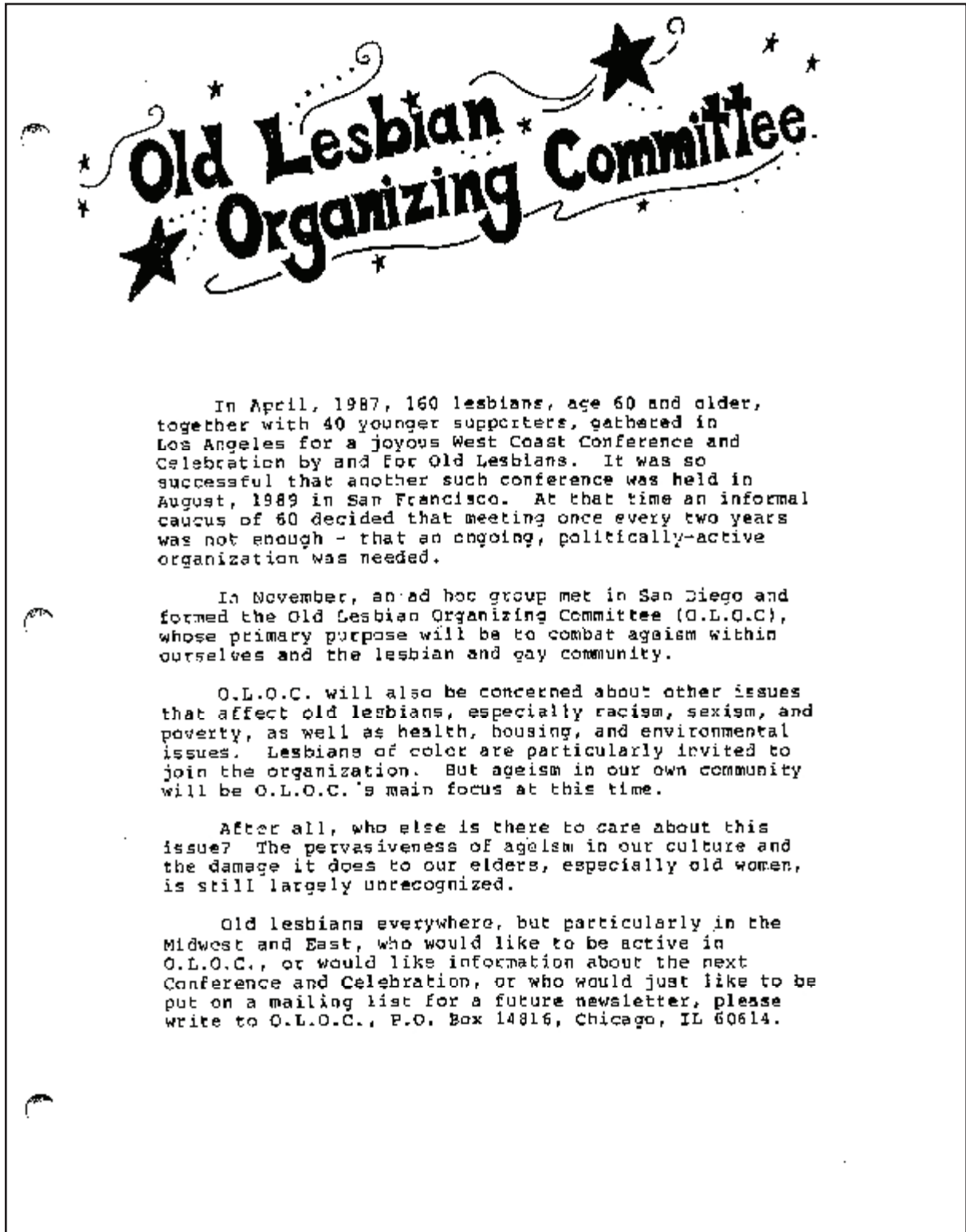
Just as Lesbians gave the much needed power to many aspects of the feminist movement, it is Old Lesbians who are intellectually in the vanguard of truly understanding what ageism does to old women and who are acting as the role models for what to do to avoid the pitfalls of ageism. But the problem is that old women are not listening to us to any large degree – which we must fight not only for our own self-interest but also in order to be heard.

Women Whose Stories Were Featured in The *OLOC Reporter*:

Bernie's Story, in the March 1993 issue
Blue London, in the June 1999 issue
Carol Owens, in the March 2000 issue
Sarah A. Davis, in the March 2000 issue
Saundra Tignor, in the June 2000 issue
Marion Abdullah, in the June 2000 issue
Scottie, in the March 2001 issue
Helen Cathcart, in the December 2001 issue
Marie Mariano, in the June 2002 issue
Edie Daly, in the September 2002 issue
Jackie Mirkin, in the September 2002 issue
Shaba Barnes, in the December 2002 issue
Fran Eaton, in the March 2003 issue
Lucille Portwood, in the June 2003 issue
Betty Rudnick, in the September 2003 issue
Jo Hiner, in the December 2003 issue

OLOC Brochure, First Version

Here is a scan of the first brochure developed in 1990.



(See Page 28)

Examples of First Cards Developed for OLOC by Minnesota OLOC Chapter *Ages listed are when the pictures were taken.*



Pictured: Jo Hiner, 75



Pictured: Fran Valasek, 74



Pictured: Jeanne Audrey Powers, 69



L to R: Jo Hiner, 75; Mary Henry, 62;
Pat Rouse, 62; Annalee Stewart, 73;
Pauline Iacona, 62; and at the piano,
Fran Valasek, 74

(See Page 36)

Excerpt from chapter by gerontologists Sharon Raphael and Mina K. Meyer in the book *Lambda Gray*

We believe that what this small group of old lesbians has already achieved cannot help but affect a larger population. When we begin to change language, the very core of how we think about reality is transformed. When the word “old” is changed from a negative to a positive, or at least a neutral, perception, it allows both user and listener to include the old as active and equal participants in whatever the endeavour is. It automatically empowers the individual. To reclaim the word “old” is to break down the barriers that are there to keep people in place, then to allow them to move along the path toward creating their own definition of what their later years might be. Thus the impact of this group of old lesbians goes beyond word usage and definition of old age: Words have become deeds.

In all respects, what propels this small but influential group of old lesbians who are redefining old age and fighting ageism is feminism and a feminist understanding of women’s reality. Although few women understand all the nuances of feminist theory, all women today are affected by the ideas of feminism. We believe that eventually the ideas brought forth by these pioneering old lesbians will find their way into the everyday lives of people young and old.

(See Page 37)

Press release regarding a leaflet distributed at the *National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Creating Change Conference* in 1994.

Press Release

OLOC Leaflets for Change.

Political Action by Old Lesbians Organizing for Change.

Leaflets were distributed to those attending the Creating Change Conference in Dallas, Texas on November 11, 1994. The subject is AGEISM but the issue is EXCLUSION. At their last year's the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) met with OLOC and committed themselves to include old gays and lesbians in staff training, in staffing and in planning and implementing future conferences for "creating change."

OLOC is the only lesbian group exclusively devoted to hearing the voices of old lesbians over 60 years old – so that we may speak for ourselves, not be spoken for by service agencies, nor spoken about by researchers.

NGLTF promised a year ago to include us in. OLOC has not forgotten. We are still waiting. In leafletting, we call attention to the long-neglected issue of AGEISM – in families, in our own institutions, and in modern society!

Support NGLTF in their goal of creating change! We act as sisters, not as competitors or hostile critics. Let us all work together to change our lives for the better.

Fundraising Example: Their Hands

This photo depicts the intertwined hands of Ruth Silver and Shevy Healey. The inscription on their rings is in Hebrew. While in Israel, Ruth originally purchased a strip of metal engraved with the title of the Hebrew song *Dodi Li*. A skilled metal smith herself, Ruth made the strip of metal into a ring. A copy of the ring was later made when she and Shevy made their commitment to each other.



Translated, the inscription of the rings read:

I Am My Beloved's, And My Beloved Is Mine

(See Page 49)

Credit Page for *Facilitator's Handbook*

Facilitator's Handbook:

CONFRONTING AGEISM

Consciousness Raising for Lesbians 60 and Over

Collective Responsibility for this Handbook is taken by:

Charlotte Avery (b. 1930)

Pat Denslow (b. 1918)

Rosemary Hathaway (b.1929). Convenor

Shevy Healey (b. 1922). Coordinating Editor

Ruth Heidelberg (b. 1927)

Vera Martin (b. 1923)

Kittu Riddle (b. 1919)

Cover Art Work © by Valerie Jacobs (b. 1931)

Layout and Computer Work by Shevy Healey (b. 1922)

First Edition: 1992

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Supporting Document T

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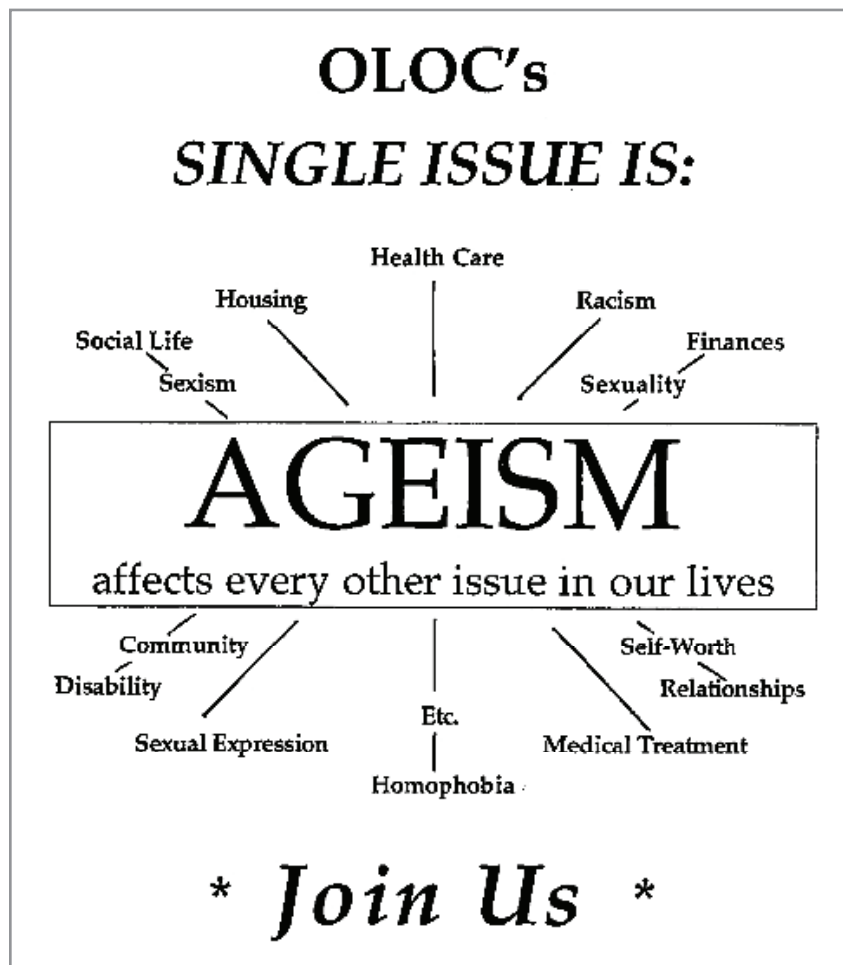
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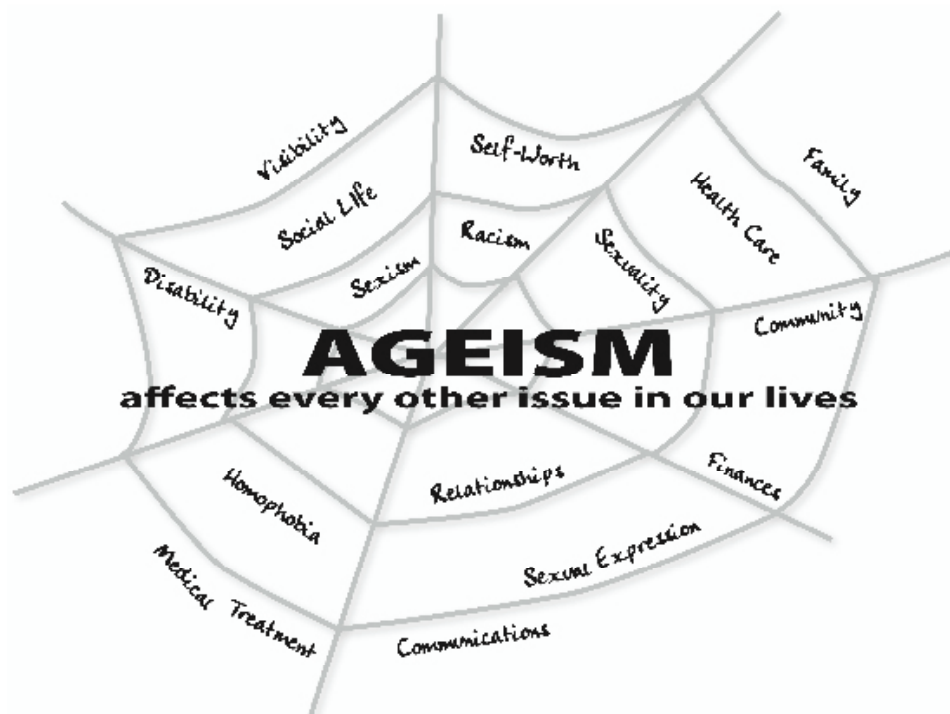


Left:

A graphic depiction of the concerns of OLOC was developed as an educational tool and was used from the mid-nineties on.

Below:

An updated design of the same same graphic was appeared in the 2006 Gathering Program Book.



Index of Women

So many women have made contributions of their time, talent and energy to OLOC, making it the organization it is today. It is, of course, impossible to mention them all. While women may have come a long way in the past century, as a group, they are still often reluctant to take credit for their accomplishments. The number of times a woman's name appears in this document may tell us quite a bit, but it isn't the whole story. Hopefully, everyone involved is proud of the role they have played in the formation of Old Lesbians Organizing for Change.

Here is a list of those mentioned in this document followed by page number or letter (indicating the support document). Names appear as they did in the archived records. The index was a last minute addition and will undoubtedly contain errors. We apologize for any inaccuracies. Entries are alphabetized by first names. Appearing in this list does not necessarily mean the woman is/was a lesbian. Bold/italics indicates an image.

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Left: Quilted banner bearing the original wording for OLOC, Old Lesbians Organizing Committee. Photograph was taken when the banner was displayed behind the speakers at the National Lesbian Conference in April 1991.

Below: New quilted banner reflecting use of the current name, Old Lesbians Organizing for Change. Photograph was taken when the banner was displayed at the National Gathering held in Minnesota in 2002.



OLOC member Ruth Silver designed and created both banners. They are large, over 25 square feet each, have a white background, royal purple border with purple, turquoise and red used in the lettering and ornamentation.