

## Why Old?

By Tita Caldwell, 1931

I came out in 1976, at the age of 45, in Venice, California. It was a wonderful, exciting time to be a lesbian feminist. But for me there was a problem. Almost every woman was at least 10 years younger than I was. I did what I could to find lesbian feminists my age, but wound up feeling discouraged and invisible.

I discovered OLOC four years ago, at the age of 74, and it felt like coming home. Here were the old women I had been looking for: my peers, those who understood what it had been like for me coming out in my 40's, those who remembered what surviving married life in the 1950's was like, those who had been affected by the same books and movements as I. This is what OLOC means to me.

Since 2005 there has been a great influx of women in their early sixties into OLOC: our attendance at SF Bay Area meetings has almost doubled, and hardly any of these new women are over 70. At the same time we have lost the participation of some of our oldest members due to illness and death. Each year the percentage of women over 70 shrinks and there are only a few women over 80 attending our meetings.

Although it is exciting to see so many lesbians eager to join OLOC, bringing new energy and skills, I also feel the fear of losing what has become so precious to me, the presence of my peers, and of the women who are older than I am.

We have implemented new practices in order to ensure that the voices of our oldest members be heard, and we continue to search for new means of doing this. We now do our check-ins by age, starting with the oldest woman, and make sure she gets the time she needs. At our last meeting, which was a workshop on class as well as our current financial situation we broke into small groups by age, and we all felt good about it. We will continue to find new ways of adjusting to the changes; after all, that is what we've been doing all of our lives.

Written in 2009