

# The OLOHP Insider

#41, June 2019

The Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project



## *Arden's Musings*

When I get an email from Margaret saying it's that time again, time to write my piece for a new issue of *The OLOHP Insider*, I'm always a bit surprised. Amazing how quickly time passes. I'd swear we sent the 20th Anniversary Issue out only a few weeks ago, but the calendar makes a liar of me.

I've been busy, but not just with the Project. I'm taking time for myself that I've always wanted to do. For example, I've long been fascinated with the idea of riding a zipline, so with friends, we drove to Austin and did a series of five zips. Wow. I thought my legs were in better shape! But with a bit of help, I made it, crossing rickety bridges that went from tree top to tree top to reach the next glide. Was I ever pooped – but it was great fun.

I have a couple other trips planned for this year that are just for fun, and I also have plans to do more interviewing. That's the part of the Project I love most. When I interview a friend, I always learn more about them, no matter how long we've known each other. And when I interview someone I didn't know, I almost always come away with a new friend.

We are still getting notes from our readers about the 20th Anniversary issue of the newsletter. I loved hearing from so many of you after sending out that special issue. It was fun to put it together. For sure, it took me down memory lane. When you're so deeply involved in an effort like this one, it's hard to see the scope and scale of it. Going through all the file drawers, book shelves, photos and other stuff the Project has accumulated to determine what would go into the Anniversary issue was enlightening. I enjoyed taking a long look at how the Project grew, bit by bit, and imagining where it might go from here.

On rare occasions, I think maybe I've done what I set out to do with the Project, and that I'll slow down and start to wrap it up. When that happens, all it takes is meeting another old lesbian willing to share her story, hearing from a woman I'd interviewed years ago, or a bit of feedback from one of our interviewers, and I'm back in full gear again. There's no way around it, the Herstory Project drives me, sparking my imagination, and feeding my soul. I am so grateful for every one of you who have shared your story, volunteered, contributed, attended one of our presentations, and encouraged me.

Be well and be safe, good women.

*Arden*

*Women pictured on the left, from top to bottom, are Jinx Beers, Bea Howard, and Anita Howard (Anita was not related to Bea)*

*Gathering the Unique Life Stories of Lesbians 70 and Older*

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## Another Unusual Insider

Creating the Anniversary issue was way out of the norm for *The OLOHP Insider*. In a very different way, this issue won't fit our usual content. Instead of the usual mix of Arden's Musings, articles about some aspect of the Project, and excerpts, we're devoting all the available space to catch up on sharing a bit about the of women in the Project who have passed since last fall. It's been a long time since we've had to write about so many women dying. It's not unexpected, given that we've been interviewing for 20 years – but expected or not, it is hard to think about. All of these women were loved, and all will be missed.

**I: = Interviewer, N: = Narrator**

### *Vi Jones*

**Born 1927, died 2019**  
**Resided in Mesa, Arizona**  
**Interviewed by Jenny K. in 2018**



I: Did you identify as being a lesbian before that?

N: Well, I don't know that I thought of it in that aspect. I didn't date, but my very first memory... I was about five or six years old, and I came home from playing around somewhere, and I told my mother, "When I grew up, I am going to marry a woman." Do you think I got spanked for that? Oh boy! Did I ever! So, I went in the closet, and I was in the closet until I met Ginger.

### *Anita Howard*

**Born 1945, died 2018**  
**Lived in Minneapolis, MN**  
**Interviewed by Bridget & Meadow in 2018**



N: I lived with my grandma until I was four years old, and then the government came. She hid me from them when they came the first time. The second time, I was at my grandpa's store. They asked and he told them who I was. I tried to run away into the woods, but they knew. They put me in the government school [for Native American children] with my brothers and sisters in Wahpeton, North Dakota. I turned five years old there. I remember them singing Happy Birthday to me when I was five.

That's where I had my first, I could say, lesbian stuff. We would play house, and they always made me the father. The little girl would kiss me because she was playing the mother of the other kids. I went along with it. I was fine with that.

### *Jolly Sue Baker*

**Born 1938, died 2018**  
**Resided in Tacoma, Washington**  
**Interviewed by Mary H. in 2014**



N: Bob and I divorced in 1974. He ran off with the next door teacher, and I went skiing.

I: Broke your heart, didn't it?

N: Yeah. Then I just skied some more. That is when I found my life as a lesbian. Skiing was a way to keep the kids off the streets and out of drugs, and I learned to fly. That was wonderful. Then I looked around and realized that there were these women, these wonderful women, all who skied like they'd been born on them. I wanted to ski like them, and grow up and be just like these people – they were actually my age.

They all were incredible skiers. They all had incredible jobs. None of them were dependent on anybody. I must have skied with them four years before I figured out they were lesbians. They were great, and I was having a wonderful time.

I: This was before you were divorced?

N: I was working up to it. And once Bob left, I saw no need to replace him. At least not with a man.

I: How long was it before you felt that the lesbian designation fit you too?

N: Oh, [laughing] about 20 minutes! I claimed to be a political lesbian from the moment I met these women and realized that I wanted to be just like them.

My life with Bob had been really hard. I had a medical condition that made physical sex very painful. So I was looking for a friend, and a playmate, not looking for a sexual partner. That came later, and it was nice, but in the beginning, I just wanted a friend and a playmate. And I never turned back.

*We have learned that these women who shared their stories or worked with the OLOHP have died. They were loved, and we'll miss them.*



### **Marta Weigle**

**Born 1944, died 2018**  
**Resided in Santa Fe, NM**  
**Interviewed by Ann N. in 2018**

- I: When would you say that you really identified as a lesbian?
- N: I felt that I did not understand what a lesbian was. I identified as an awful queer, an ugly, ugly queer. I wouldn't have even said "dyke," and I certainly wouldn't have said "lesbian," though I did read Sappho when I was learning classical Greek at St. John's.
- I: When you say "queer," do you mean homosexual?
- N: Yes, those queer, dirty, awful ...
- I: When you were identifying that way?
- N: All the way through college, really.

### **Jinx Beers**

**Born 1933, died 2018**  
**Resided in Van Nuys, CA**  
**Interviewed by Arden in 2009**



- I: How young were you when you self-identified as a lesbian?
- N: Now that's a good question. Looking back, I think I was a lesbian in the womb. I think I was always a lesbian. But when you're young, you don't have a word for it. You just don't know what's going on. By the time I was 18, 19 – then I had the word and I knew that I was a lesbian.
- I was in the military at that point. At 19, I went overseas and spent two and a half years stationed in Germany as occupation troops for World War II. The War was over in '45. But it was ten years later that we signed the treaty.
- I: Were you "out" in the military?
- N: Well, not when I was in the regulars. No. I don't know why I wasn't outed, because I did some really stupid things.
- I: Sometimes you get lucky.
- N: I got lucky. I got really lucky. I have an honorable discharge from the military from regulars and I have an honorable discharge from the reserves.

### **Gloria Stancich**

**Born 1935, died 2019**  
**Resided in Gig Harbor, WA**  
**Interviewed by Arden in 2006**



From *Our Stories, Our Voices* (Project DVD)

*The stories are wonderful. Listening. It is such an honor to be able to hear so many of these stories. Looking at the overall experience of interviewing, what I am left with is the profound trust that women are willing to give me, to have with me, to tell me some of the most intimate experiences of their lives. That really touches me deeply.*

### **Marge Nelson**

**Born 1928, died 2018**  
**Resided in San Francisco, CA**  
**Interviewed by Arden in 2012**



- I: You got married before you finished school?
- N: I was in love with Howard... and I was totally surprised by this! I started a class in Interpretive Reading, a speech class, and I fell in love with the teacher. This was one month after I got married! Who the hell am I? I used to follow her. I walked back and forth to school and she walked down the same street. For a long time I would just follow behind her, just yearning for this woman. I had no clue about what that was!
- I: Mm-hmm.
- N: No clue. No clue at all.

### **Amy Estelle**

**Born 1950, died 2019**  
**Resided in Albuquerque, NM**  
**Interviewed by Ann N. in 2018**



- I: When did you say you came out?
- N: I came out with someone in college, someone who was already out. That was great. Then, when I became politically active, I decided I wanted to be in an open relationship, and that was kind of my political phase. That lasted from '73 until, maybe, 1984. I will say I have been loved by many women, loved well by many women, and I have loved many women.

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**Jackie Grover**

Jackie resided in Long Beach, CA. Although she was never interviewed herself, Jackie volunteered briefly for the Project.

**Bea Howard**

**Born 1931, died 2018**  
**Resided in San Francisco, CA**  
**Interviewed by Arden in 2003**



I: How long were you married?

N: I was married for 17 years. It was because of the Women's Movement that I was finally able to leave. I read Betty Friedan's book and I said, "Well, she's talking to me." I knew... all the years that I was married to him, I knew that I was in the wrong place. I knew that I really wanted to be with women. But I didn't know how.

Earlier, before I was 21... I went down to Greenwich Village because I understood that that's where the lesbians were. So, I went down there and sat outside a lesbian bar. I saw these two women come out. They were fighting. I looked at them and I said, "Uh-uh! That's not what I want!"

"I guess I'll get married." "I don't know what's wrong with me." I didn't know what was wrong with me. And so, it took me a while. I wasn't ready to rush into marriage, but I didn't know what else to do with my life.

I met Norman and he was a nice, easy-going guy, so we got married and I sometimes think, "Oh, if I'd only waited a little bit later I never would have married." But then I wouldn't have two wonderful kids and four grandchildren.

**Minnie Bowman**

**Born 1934, died 2017**  
**Resided in Knoxville, TN**  
**Interviewed by Arden in 2011**



I: Are you with someone now?

N: I am. We'd been friends for 50 years. We'd seen each other maybe four times in that 50 years, but we've always known that the other was there and the other was our friend. I had stopped to see her when I was traveling. When I left her the next day, there was so much energy between us that I think I went back six times to give her another hug. That was it.

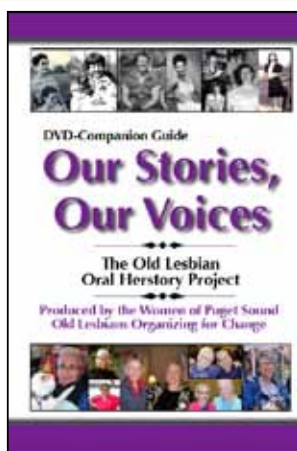
**Anon**

**Born 1929, died 2018**  
**Resided in Colorado**  
**Interviewed by Arden in 2009**

I: You got your "ah-ha" when you went to college?

N: My first relationship was with a sweet little southern belle that nobody in their right mind would have even thought... no one would have thought anything about her. Boy, she just led me down the primrose path! [Laughing] I fell head-over-heels.

One of the things about me is that I've always been pretty much a loner. I have never gone after somebody else first. I've been very concerned with the era of growing up, my mother's pounding into me, "What would the neighbors think?" I would have never... I was a goody-two-shoes. I was a goody-two-shoes to the point of being obnoxious.



**How can you be involved in the OLOHP?**

Lesbians 70 years of age and older can tell their own stories. If you don't "qualify," encourage older lesbian friends to contact us. Buy our books and our DVD \*  
Donate copies of our books and our DVD+Guide to your library. Make a tax-deductible donation to support the Project.\*\*  
Send us a note of encouragement!

\* *A Gift of Age*, *Without Apology*, and the DVD *Our Stories, Our Voices*, can be ordered at [www.olohp.org](http://www.olohp.org)

\*\* Tax-deductible donations can be made to the OLOHP either by using the Donate button on our website, or mailing a check.