



DVD-Companion Guide

Our Stories, Our Voices

The Old Lesbian
Oral Herstory Project

Produced by the Women of Puget Sound
Old Lesbians Organizing for Change



Special Note to Viewers and Presenters

Women sharing their stories with the OLOHP have each signed a contract with the Project. Excerpts used in this DVD, and in any other OLOHP presentation or publication, are taken only from transcripts for which the Project has a contract allowing use of parts of their interview in this manner. If any woman sharing her story with the OLOHP has any reservations about how her story will be used, she is encouraged to sign a conditional contract to which she can add restrictions that will be honored.

We make a special effort to explain this to everyone dealing with the OLOHP in any way. It is important that everyone understand that our purpose of gathering life stories is NOT primarily so that they can be used in books, articles or presentations. Our goal is to preserve these unique life stories, told in the women's own words, edited by the women interviewed, to be used for research purposes in the future. Some of the women interviewed have granted us permission to use their material in our efforts to further promote the Project and make it accessible to a broader audience.

The OLOHP works hard to make sure that each life story is protected and treated in a respectful manner. We would hate for anyone to hesitate to share her story for fear that we might use it inappropriately, or without her permission.

We can't thank the women enough who have trusted the OLOHP with their stories. Their words, their experiences, and their insights are an incredibly generous gift to our community, and our society, now and for decades yet to come.

OLOHP Unconditional Contract

Unconditional Contract

OLOHP Conditional Contract

Conditional Contract

I understand that I am participating in the Old Lesbian Oral History Project, OLOHP, Inc. I understand the scope and interests of the OLOHP is to gather the stories and document the lives of lesbians 70 years of age and older. I hereby release all right, title, or interest in and to the (these) audio recorded (these) audio recorded (these) video taped interviews by Arden Eversmeyer and the OLOHP, Inc. in doing so, I declare that they may be copyrighted and published by said Arden Eversmeyer and the OLOHP, Inc., which may also assign and copyright any publication rights to serious research scholars.

In addition to the rights and authority given to the OLOHP under the preceding paragraphs, I hereby authorize you to edit, publish, sell and/or access the use of my oral history memoir in any other manner which Arden Eversmeyer and the OLOHP, Inc. considers to be desirable, and I waive any claim to any payment which may be received as a consequence thereof.

I also understand that OLOHP, Inc. is an independent organization with 501(c)(3) status and that they are partially funded and supported by OLCC, Old Lesbians Organizing for Change.

I have been informed that the work of the OLOHP will be permanently archived in the Sophia Smith Collection located at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts.

I grant the above permissions with the exception of the restrictions listed below:

Place _____

Date _____

(If you need additional room to provide stipulations, please use the reverse side of this document. Both the interviewer and interviewee should sign additional comments.)

Place _____

Date _____

Interviewer _____

Interviewee _____

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Table of Contents

Special Note to Viewers and Presenters	
PS OLOC and the OLOHP	1
The OLOHP: Steps in the Process	2
OLOHP Books	2
<i>The OLOHP Insider</i>	2
Live Readings, DVD and Guide	3
Goals of <i>Our Stories, Our Voices</i> , the OLOHP	3
Suggested Audiences and Venues	4
What You'll Find on the DVD	5-7
Format Options for Presentations	8
Handouts for <i>Our Stories, Our Voices</i>	8
Discussion Questions and Action Plans	
for Old (and Older) Lesbians	9
for Care Providers to Old (and Older) Lesbians	10
for General Public, Senior Centers, etc.	11
Additional Discussion Questions	12-13
Contact and Ordering Information	14
Resources in Puget Sound and Beyond	15
A Bit More About Women Featured in the DVD	16-19
Getting Involved and Supporting the OLOHP	20

Diane S. (born 1939, Seattle) applauds PS OLOC:

Ever since the PNW OLOC Regional Gathering (2011), my life as an old lesbian has gotten richer and richer with all the opportunities of meeting old lesbians and supporters. So many things to do and women to do them with; opportunities to stretch my thinking and especially building supportive relationships. In my younger years, I may have hung out in crowded, dim, noisy bars hoping someone would not only notice me but want something a little more. But especially as a single lesbian, connections/ friendships seemed to constantly elude me or be of short duration. How much nicer and easier to meet old lesbians in the daylight, for us to have matured, grown, gained comfort in sharing friends, and especially today, with the possibility and safety of being out and open in public in ways not possible when we were young. I say this is a great time to be an old lesbian! Thank you, PS OLOC. I am deeply grateful.

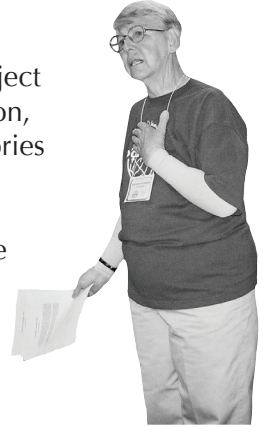


From Diane's Herstory: photos taken in 1959, 1974 and on the day of her interview in 2009.

PS OLOC and the OLOHP

Puget Sound OLOC (PS OLOC) is a thriving chapter of National OLOC, an organization that works to combat ageism, sexism, racism and classism. PS OLOC focuses its efforts on connecting old lesbians to form community throughout the Puget Sound area of Washington state. It encourages participation in activities and causes that work to improve their lives and increase their visibility within the LGBTQ community and society at large.

One of PS OLOC's major activities is a deep engagement in the Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project (OLOHP) founded by Arden Eversmeyer in Houston, TX in 1998. The OLOHP works to preserve the stories of lesbians born early in the 1900's. These women need to be recognized for their experiences and their accomplishments. Just as important, there are thousands of women who need to know that they are not alone.



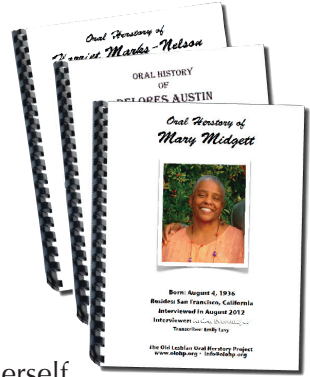
Approximately twenty PS OLOC members join women across the U.S. in working as interviewers gathering the distinctive stories of lesbians who lived through this unique period in our history. The OLOHP has now interviewed, digitally recorded, transcribed and compiled (with photos and other documents) the life stories of more than 500 old lesbians. All interviewers are old lesbians themselves. Each interviewee receives (at no cost) a copy of her own Herstory. Another copy is archived in the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College, Northampton, MA.

The vast majority of the women interviewed as a part of the Project have been between the ages of 70 and 96. They represent several ethnicities and a variety of backgrounds. Herstories have been gathered from 39 states all over the US, with more than 60 from the Pacific Northwest alone. The Project includes several Herstories of women who live outside of the U.S.

Two OLOHP anthologies feature several dozen of these stories. In recent years, the Project has presented live dramatic readings of quotes from the extensive and growing OLOHP collection, and now excerpts from that wealth of information are being shared via the *Our Stories, Our Voices* DVD and Companion Guide.

The OLOHP: Steps in the Process

- A: Interviewee signs a contract with the Project, unconditional or conditional
- B: Oral interview of the old lesbian interviewee, digitally recorded
- C: Transcription of the interview recording
- D: Editing by OLOHP and the old lesbian herself
- E: Compilation and binding of transcript and documentation (such as photos, writings, articles, awards, certificates, audios or videos)
- F: Copies given to the interviewee (no cost) and to Sophia Smith Archives at Smith College, Northampton, MA. Additional copies are sometimes placed in local archives as well.



OLOHP Books

Some Herstories can be accessed by the public via two books, each volume featuring stories from 23 women. These are: *The Gift of Age: Old Lesbian Life Stories* (2009) and *Without Apology: Old Lesbian Life Stories* (2012). Authors are Arden Eversmeyer, OLOHP Founder and Director, and Margaret Purcell, OLOHP Project Manager and Board President. (See Contact and Ordering Information on page 14.)

The OLOHP Insider

The OLOHP publishes and distributes a free quarterly electronic newsletter that provides news about the Project, glimpses into how it all works, updates of a few of the women involved, and some excerpts. (See Contact and Ordering Information on page 14.)



Live Readings, DVD, and Guide

For several years, women of PS OLOC have been presenting excerpts of Old Lesbian Herstories to audiences in live dramatic readings. The first reading presentation was done under the direction of Marcia Perlstein at a PS OLOC hosted event. To facilitate more widespread sharing of excerpts from the Herstories, PS OLOC embarked on production of *Our Stories, Our Voices*.

The DVD was produced in collaboration with Dr. David R. Coon, Associate Professor, Media Studies, University of Washington, Tacoma. The Pride Foundation provided financial support. A Companion Guide and handouts are available to assist facilitators in presentations. Dr. Kathleen Prezbindowski, a member of PS OLOC, conceived the idea of producing a DVD, initiated the collaboration with Dr. Coon, and co-authored a grant proposal, the DVD-Companion Guide and handouts with Margaret Purcell.



Goals of *Our Stories, Our Voices: The OLOHP*

The DVD and Companion Guide are designed and presented by PS OLOC lesbians in efforts to develop cost-effective outreach to better the lives of old lesbians, particularly those who are isolated/invisible/vulnerable. As female, sexual minorities, often disabled by age and low-income, old lesbians have survived many decades of discrimination and shaming. Vast numbers still dare not come out as lesbian/gay, or they go back into the closet for safety's sake when they must survive in homophobic environments. This project aims to increase self-esteem and community engagement of old lesbians; improve mental and physical wellbeing; and increase likelihood of aging in place, reducing risks of early institutionalization and significantly higher health care costs.

Suggested Audiences and Venues for Viewing the DVD, *Our Stories, Our Voices: the OLOHP*:

a. Old (or Older) Lesbians:

Directly – The PS OLOC project seeks to:

- empower old lesbians directly by providing access to the DVD's life-changing voices and images of other old lesbians
- allow women to be truly authentic as women-loving women, no longer condemned to hiding that truth
- help women feel whole – not assumed to be asexual because they are not attached to men

Indirectly – The project also aims to empower old lesbians indirectly by decreasing the fear and other stressors created by homophobia and related isolation via education about old lesbians.

The DVD and Guide offers information to:

b. Providers to Old (or Older) Lesbians:

- for education/training/CEUs of directors and staff at retirement communities, senior housing, senior centers, Area Agencies on Aging
- in clinical settings: gerontologists, nurses, CNAs, MDs, PTs, social workers, nutrition staff
- women's/gender studies
- members of aging councils or societies such as ASA, NCOA, GSA

c. The General Public, assisting in building welcoming environments for LGBTQ elders:

- leaders and congregations at places of worship
- senior organizations such as AARP; PFLAG
- community centers

See Discussion Questions and Action Plans for use after DVD viewing, see pages 9-13.

***Our Stories, Our Voices* Presenters: Arden Eversmeyer (1931); Sue Weinheimer (1933); Gloria Stancich (1935); Mary Henry (1939); Aganita Varkentine (1940); Hazel Wilding (1946); Deirdre Knowles (1947). Production: Margaret Purcell, Dr. David R. Coon, Dr. Kathy Prezbindowski**

What You'll Find on This DVD

OLOHP Founder/Director Arden Eversmeyer narrates, and six PS OLOC women voice the excerpts of Herstories of 37 Old Lesbians. Interviewers ask Old Lesbians some specific questions such as: "When were you aware that you felt 'different' from the other girls (or women)?" "Did you serve in the military? How was that time in your life?" Interviewers bring up issues with therapy and religion, and "words you use to describe you." There are many unexpected, difficult-to-hear, as well as touching, disclosures.

Some readings are brief—15 seconds:

Jackie "I walked into this party and I had never seen so many lesbians all in one place. They were sitting on each other's laps, kissing each other. My first reaction was, 'Aahhh.' And then it was, 'THIS is where I belong.'"



Longer excerpts demonstrate interviews

(I = interviewer, N = narrator): Harriet

N: People were judging me, "How come you waited 60 years--or 57 years – to live who you were?" I was so scared.

I: Mm-hmm.

N: But here at this women's festival...I was so excited to be there! I like to look at women.... It was my first introduction to bodies.... I went to the pool to meet my new friend Esther – and I didn't recognize her without clothes on!

I: That was your initiation.



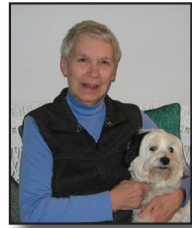
N: Living the life of a lesbian, has freed me in a way I never dreamed, imagined, possible. Talk about reaching the height of satisfaction internally, externally, emotionally, physically! There's nothing like it. I'm 75 years old and when my honey kisses me or we make love, I could walk six inches off the ground. It's totally amazing to be able to receive and give that kind of love.

I: Hmmm.

N: I love my life now...I love having been granted the awareness of my lesbianism. It's a gift, not a curse.

The life stories run the gamut from heartbreaking to humorous:

Sally “This was serious business. There were medications. There were two kinds of shock treatments. There was electric shock in the morning, and insulin coma in the afternoon. Here I am, little Miss Spoiled Valedictorian, Smith College student, locked up in this cuckoo place ... complete with torture.”



There is wit:

JoAnn “When I discovered women, I felt NO GUILT. The nuns never said it was a mortal sin to kiss a GIRL for more than a minute.”



Women recall their first awareness of feeling different:

Marie “When I saw the show ‘Fried Green Tomatoes,’ my relationship with Ann reminded me of Idgie and her relationship with her friend, Ruth. It really brought back the memories. I think Ann could’ve told me, ‘Jump in the lake,’ and I would’ve jumped. I set her on a pedestal.”



**How to describe what these women were feeling?
Information was lacking or faulty:**

Annalee “I went to the library and started looking up things. Everything I read was written by males, generally by psychiatrists, about men who were very sick. I would read that, but I didn’t understand some of the terms they referred to, and it didn’t sound like anything I felt. I couldn’t identify with it at all.”



Some old lesbians address life in the military:

MM “I joined the Army...and HEAVEN was brought to me! Lesbians. I joined February 14th, 1956. After that, it was smooth sailin’. It was good.”



Particularly with advancing age, many old lesbians feel alone and frustrated:

Lois “I don’t know how somebody could live and be as old as I am, be gay my whole life, and not know. I never knew there was a place for women to go....If straight people knew how we have to feel because we happen to be this way....Too many of them still believe that being gay is our choice. Well, I got news.”

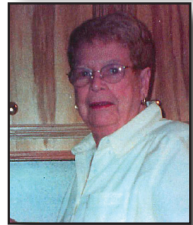


Coming out to self or others may begin at any point, and may be a lifelong process:

Jewelle “I knew when I was eight. My grandmother spoke of a lesbian once. She said: ‘Yes, she was a bulldagger and she was a great dancer.’ And that was the first time I had ever heard that word, and because of the way she said it...I knew it was okay. It was okay.”



JL “We had never held hands out in public. But before they put her in the ambulance I kissed her on the forehead and whispered that I loved her. It was the first ever show of affection, in front of an ambulance driver. I call that one of God’s whispers.”



Betsy “In my young life then, I didn’t have a name for my feelings or any clue as to what it was about. Truth is important, but when the truth is unknown to you, how can you acknowledge it? You don’t even know what IT is!”



Words in support of the OLOHP Project by Fai C. (from ALISS: Aging Lesbians in South Seattle):

Telling our stories reminds us of the fullness of our lives; reading (or hearing readings of) herstories nourishes us – reminds us that we are not alone. In that moment of shared stories – we gain strength for the work ahead of us.

Suggested Format Options for Presentations

- * PS OLOC women may be available to present the program live and lead a discussion in the Puget Sound area
- * Arrange for an audience screening of the DVD with a discussion led by a facilitator (using the Companion Guide)
- * Do a live reading of your own. (We can provide excerpts.)
Possibly screen part of the DVD.

Ordering and contact information for the OLOHP and PS OLOC located on page 14.

Handouts for *Our Stories, Our Voices*

We recommend that audiences receive handouts with essential information about the Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project. The DVD-Companion Guide and handouts mentioned below are available as downloads, or can be ordered. Evaluation forms for feedback on the DVD and Companion Guide are also available. The Guide and all additional supporting materials can be downloaded at www.olohp.org, or by emailing a request directly to info@olohp.org.

***Our Stories, Our Voices* Audience Handout**

The general handout allows those in the audience to go away with some of the vital information in print. It includes the following:

- Information about the Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project
- Book ordering information
- DVD and Companion Guide ordering information
- Contact information for the OLOHP and PS OLOC

Discussion Questions

Discussion questions and action plans are intended for use after presenting the DVD. We are providing three versions of the discussion questions, each customized to the three audiences:

- a. old(er) lesbian audiences
- b. health care providers and staff at senior centers, retirement facilities, etc., as well as educators and students working in senior health care fields
- c. general communities, places of worship, senior centers, aging organizations, etc.

a. Discussion Questions for Old (and Older) Lesbians

1. Did a particular story especially stand out to you? Why?
2. List descriptors that you thought of when you heard or read the term “old lesbian” BEFORE you saw this DVD. Are those descriptors different AFTER seeing the DVD?
3. What feelings did you have when you heard words on the DVD such as, “The gift of my lesbianism is a blessing, not a curse.” Or when Betsy wrote to her daughter, “In my young life then, I didn’t have a name for my feelings or any clue as to what it was about. I didn’t exist...”
4. Do you have family or friends who are LGBTQ? Have you talked with them about what their lives are/have been like as “old” or “young” LGBTQs?
5. If you aren’t already out to them, how could you share your sexual identity with a friend or family member? What would help you to begin such disclosure?
6. How might an old lesbian who feels isolated put the subject of her sexual identity on the table? What might reduce her anxiety/fear?
7. How do you feel about the concept of, “Why bring up the subject at all?”
8. Other issues for discussion include realities that some old (and young) lesbians were disowned by families, suffered conversion/reparative therapy, were trapped in heterosexual marriages, lost custody of their children, lost jobs, were denied promotions, or dealt with suicide.

Suggested Actions for Old (and Older) Lesbians

1. Talk with one friend or family member about approaches you could take to coming out.
2. Role play such an interaction with a friend, either an old lesbian or a heterosexual person.
3. Attend a PFLAG (formerly known as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) meeting.
4. Watch for, and make use of, opportunities to share your experiences.

*LGBTQ: Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning/Queer

b. Discussion Questions for Care Providers to Old (and Older) Lesbians

1. What feelings did you have when you heard the old lesbians' own words on the DVD?
2. Did a particular story especially stand out to you? Explain.
3. List descriptors that you thought of when you heard or read the term "old lesbian" BEFORE you saw this DVD. Are those descriptors different after seeing the DVD?
4. Do you have family, friends or colleagues who are LGBTQ? Have you talked with them about what their lives are/have been like as "old" or "young" LGBTQs?
5. What do you need to feel more comfortable, competent, and welcoming to LGBT clients?
6. What experiences have you had with exclusion or difference?
7. Does your workplace offer cultural sensitivity training for staff? Does the program include LGBTQ diversity?
8. Does your cultural sensitivity program at school or work address your clients' LGBTQ and aging issues?
9. How might you start a conversation with a client/patient whom you perceive to be an old lesbian? How might you respond if the client does not engage in the conversation?
10. Other issues for discussion include realities that some old (and young) lesbians were disowned by families, suffered conversion/reparative therapy, were trapped in heterosexual marriages, lost custody of their children, lost jobs, were denied promotions, or dealt with suicide.

Suggested Actions for Care Providers to Old (and Older) Lesbians

1. Attend a PFLAG (formerly known as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) meeting.
2. Talk about the subject with your administration, asking to participate in LGBTQ cultural sensitivity trainings if they are available.
3. Role play with colleagues, a supportive, affirming conversation with a woman you perceive to be a closeted old lesbian.
4. Gently start the conversation with a client who you feel might be an old lesbian, and be affirming.

c. Discussion Questions for the General Public, Senior Centers, Places of Worship, Organizations

1. Think of a situation where you felt isolated or different from the rest of the group. What was that like for you? How would you like to have been treated?
2. What feelings did you have when you heard the old lesbians' own words on the DVD?
3. Did a particular story especially stand out to you? Explain.
4. List descriptors that you thought of when you heard or read the term "old lesbian" BEFORE you saw this DVD. Are those descriptors different after seeing the DVD?
5. Do you have family, friends or colleagues who are LGBTQ*? Have you talked with them about what their lives are/have been like as "old" or "young" LGBTQs?
6. If your senior center, church or organization offers cultural sensitivity training, does the program include LGBTQ diversity?
7. Are there considerations that you perceive as barriers to discussions of LGBTQ issues at this church/temple or organization?
8. Other issues for discussion include realities that some old (and young) lesbians were disowned by families, suffered conversion/reparative therapy, were trapped in heterosexual marriages, lost custody of their children, lost jobs, were denied promotions, or dealt with suicide.

Suggested Actions for the General Public, Senior Centers, Places of Worship, Organizations

1. Seek out and participate in events that are likely to increase your awareness and cultural sensitivity to LGBTQ issues.
2. Attend a PFLAG (formerly known as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) meeting.

*LGBTQ: Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning/Queer

In collecting these stories, the OLOHP has shown extraordinary integrity and intellectual honesty. Oral history is intrinsically subjective. It is no small thing to so gracefully honor the narrator's (interviewee's) perspective.

Ann Birnbaum

Additional Discussion Questions

Below are additional questions that may assist closeted, isolated Old Lesbians to enter into conversations about their lives.

- A. Tell me if you have (or had) a special woman in your life?
- B. What qualities did (or do) you value about her? How did you and she first meet? (Fun hearing those stories!)
- C. How open were you able to be with your friends, to let them know how special you two were/are to each other?
- D. What messages did you get when growing up? Did you ever feel pressure to walk more like a lady, or keep your knees together when you're seated? Did you feel pressure to date guys? To marry and have children? How did you feel about trying to fit into the heterosexual box?
- E. What challenges did you encounter along your way, such as non-acceptance, discrimination or shaming – with family, jobs, or your church or temple? Can you reflect and share about such instances in your life... perhaps the toughest one you had to deal with?
- F. Have you experienced internalized homophobia – self-hatred or self-loathing – because of being lesbian, bi, gay or trans?
- G. What experiences of others are you aware of, and how have they affected you?
- H. Do you have friends or family who have gone totally into the closet because of religion, family pressure, employment, or housing?
- I. Is there a term or label that you have used and DO feel comfortable with to describe yourself about your being a woman-loving-woman (WLW)? And are there some terms you do NOT like for yourself or for anyone? How do you feel about each of these terms: Gay, Lesbian, Queer, Dyke, Butch, Femme, Bulldagger, Lipstick Lesbian. Others?
- J. At what point in your life did you recognize that you wanted to have your closest connections/relationships be with other women – even with all of the accompanying risks and pain? What have been your greatest successes on this journey of being who you really are?
- K. What friends or family members have you felt particularly safe with – in confiding your feelings for women?

- L. Are there individuals in your life to whom you will NEVER come out – it’s just not worth the energy? (Do weigh the pro’s and con’s in every case!)
- M. Is there one – or maybe two or more – person(s) – you DO still want to come out to in this lifetime? Have a “baby steps” plan?
- N. What place do gay or lesbian friends or social groups play in your life now? How satisfied are you with that? How would you like to change it?
- O. Would you like to be OUT (as lesbian or LGBTQ) more or less? A lot more? Somewhat more? Less? Not at all?
- P. How has the legalization of marriage affected your life now?
- Q. How have the changes in public attitudes toward gays and lesbians affected you personally?
- R. How can we all set the words “old” and “lesbian or gay or trans” on the dinner table or address them in the senior center? In this way we are helping old lesbians (including ourselves) feel accepted, comfortable, and welcomed as exactly – wholly – who we are – not some shadowy figures half-way hidden in darkness, guilt and low self-esteem.

Additional Discussion Questions For Care Providers to Old (and Older) Lesbians, General Public, Senior Centers, Places of Worship, Organizations

- S. What cultural sensitivity trainings related to old LGBTQs do you make available at your site?
 - DVD *Our Stories, Our Voices: The Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project*.
 - Professional films such as *Cloudburst* and *Edie and Thea*.
- T. Do you have other programming specifically related to old (and older) lesbians?
- U. What books or DVDs are in your library that relate to LGBTQ issues – perhaps to better understand a peer who is LGBTQ or a teen granddaughter who is identifying as lesbian.

Arden and the women who work with her believe deeply that we can’t wait for others to document our lives; we have to do it ourselves, and they act on that belief. I have been inspired by them as well as by the lives of the women whose stories appear in the books they have published. Joy Fisher

Contact and Ordering Information



Contact the Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project

email: info@olohp.org

snail mail: OLOHP, PO Box 7382, Houston, TX 77248

Order the OLOHP books by emailing info@olohp.org

A Gift of Age: Old Lesbian Life Stories \$16.95

Without Apology: Old Lesbian Life Stories \$19.95

(Authors Arden Eversmeyer and Margaret Purcell)

Shipping: \$4 for first book, \$2 each additional book

Or order at www.olohp.org (where prices are discounted!)

Order a copy of the DVD, *Our Stories, Our Voices: The Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project*

\$25 plus S/H – order at www.olohp.org

or contact us at info@olohp.org

Request/Order the *Our Stories, Our Voices DVD-Companion Guide*, Handouts, or Evaluation Form. PDF, free; print set, \$5.00

download PDF copies: www.olohp.org

print set, email: info@olohp.org

Request information about having PS OLOC do a presentation/dramatic reading in the Puget Sound area, or ask about OLOHP scripts that can be used with your own readers.

email: info@psoloc.org or info@olohp.org

Sign up to receive free *The Insider* OLOHP newsletter

email your request to info@olohp.org or fill out the

newsletter request form at www.olohp.org

Contact the Project for information about sharing your story, or to provide a referral to another old lesbian you know who might be interested in participating

email: info@olohp.org



What Arden and the other women have achieved here is nothing less than the creation of an historical treasure that will serve as an invaluable resource for generations to come.

Ann Bannon Weldy

Resources for More Information on Aging LGBTQ

AARP

www.aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/aarp-pride/

Aging with Dignity

www.agingwithdignity.org

The American Society on Aging, LGBT Aging Issues Network (LAIN)

www.asaging.org/lain

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

www.thetaskforce.org

The National Resource Center on LGBT Aging

www.lgbtagingcenter.org/about/background.cfm

Additional Training Resources

NW LGBT Senior Care Providers Network

www.nwlgbseniorcare.org/

Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE)

www.sageusa.org/

Project Visibility

www.bouldercounty.org/family/seniors/pages/projvis.aspx

Other Related resources in the Puget Sound region

www.psoloc.org

www.olohp.org

www.tacomalesbianconcern.org

www.comingoutwomen.org



A Bit More About Women Featured in the DVD

If you found you were left wondering what had become of the various women whose words were used in *Our Stories, Our Voices*, we can share a bit about some of them.

Excerpts were taken from 37 different women's stories. As we mentioned before, each has signed an unconditional contract with the OLOHP allowing us to use materials from their stories. As you can well imagine, the Project is extremely protective of the women who have bravely and generously shared.

You can find full stories about some of these women in the Project's books. In addition to other women whose words were not used in this DVD project, *A Gift of Age* shares with you much more about: Tre, Marie, Skip, Bev, Sally, Jennie, Annalee, Vera, Lois, Ruth, and Mattie. *Without Apology* features: Charlotte, Jackie, Edie, Vivian, and Betsy.

Carol went on to play baseball all through high school and beyond. She played short stop and second base with the Future Daisy League, the farm team for the Indiana team in the All-American Girls Baseball League that was featured in the popular film *A League of Their Own*. Unfortunately, the league folded a year before Carol was old enough to join a team. Later in life, Carol gave presentations about the League at schools and to other groups. In honor of her work during the AIDS crisis, Carol carried the Olympic Torch for a mile in 1998.



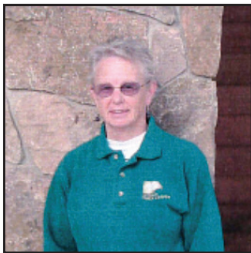
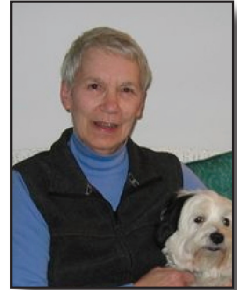
Tre did eventually earn her degree after working her way through dozens of colleges, a quarter/semester at a time! She worked as a teacher for years, then formed a successful all-woman construction crew working in California. Arden reconnected with Tre about a decade ago and they have stayed in touch ever since.

Skip served as a WAC and went to art school. She pioneered methods for building affordable displays for small museums. After she retired, Skip scrimped and saved so that she could afford to help women in the arts. It was her seed money that enabled Kay Gardener to write her oratorio *Oroborous*. She also set up a small fund, Skip's Sappho Fund, to be administered by the Astraea Foundation. Skip died in 2005.



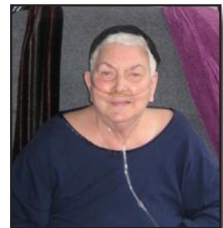
Lillian went on to teach at the college level. When she bemoaned the fact that there were almost no books or other resources about lesbians, her partner basically said, "Then why not write them yourself?" Lillian Faderman is now an internationally known scholar of lesbian and LGBTQ history and literature, as well as ethnic history and literature.

Sally survived her horrifying experiences and went on to a successful career in the library sciences. She donated a large collection of what is known as "lesbian pulp fiction" to Smith College. Hundreds, if not thousands, were subjected to similar "medical" treatment, but few came out of it strong enough to tell what happened to them. Sally died in 2014.



Bev: To keep from being institutionalized, Bev chose to marry and raise a family. After working a variety of jobs and raising five kids, Bev divorced and came out, spending years with the love of her life, Tobi. Bev died in 2015.

Eris left the military, married and had a child. In mid-life, she switched directions completely and spent a decade as a Buddhist nun before leaving, frustrated by the structure that limited what the nuns could contribute. Eris died in 2009.





Vera devoted almost her whole life to activism, demanding rights for women, workers, African Americans and lesbians. As one of the founders of OLOC, Vera served in their leadership, and as their spokesperson, for over a decade. Vera died in 2014.

Lee: Almost a decade after pledging her life to never again being separated from Loie, forces beyond Lee's control made that impossible. Lee qualified to live in a veterans' retirement facility and they wouldn't allow Loie to live with her. They stayed connected, but Loie had to live at a nearby facility specializing in memory loss.



JoAnn: Once she discovered "kissing girls," JoAnn went on to spend her life in long-term lesbian relationships. She has devoted decades of her life in university administration advocating on behalf of gender equality and people living with disabilities. She continues to do so in her retirement.

Ruth S: Joking that she had to come out as a straight woman when she decided to marry a man and raise a family, Ruth did later come out again. Years after her partner of a decade died, Ruth entered into a new relationship with Jean, the woman who gave her an "intentional hug." Ruth died in 2015 at age 96.



Ruthie and Connie left their marriages and have been together since 1974. Fierce advocates for lesbian rights, they appeared on shows such as the Phil Donahue Show. Their story is told in the film *Ruthie and Connie: Every Room in the House*. Now married to each

other and in their 80s, they continue to devote much of their time to activism and are pillars in the lesbian community.

Jewelle is a well-known and respected author, poet and playwright as well as a renowned feminist. Jewelle Gomez is also known for her own philanthropy and empowering other women to give in various ways. She and her partner were among the litigants against the state of California suing for the right to marry.



Mary did “get her act together,” making the decision to divorce and build her life with women, as she wanted. Mary is in a 30+ year lesbian relationship. She works closely with the OLOHP as an interviewer, board member, editor, presenter and fill-in transcriber.

Sherry accepted her husband’s challenge and came out, leaving 25 years of marriage behind. While in a coming out group, she met her future wife, Ruth. Together, they have worked for decades as activists around LGBT rights as well as various other causes. They’ve been together since 1991 and married in 2008.



Morgan: After being virtually rescued from life on the streets after a chance meeting with feminist icon Jill Johnston, Morgan earned one of the first degrees in Women’s Studies and went on to teach. In addition to being a staunch voice against the abuse of psychotropic drugs and electroshock therapy, Morgan is a Romani historian, giving presentations and maintaining a mobile museum honoring her heritage.

Annalee and her first partner were the first two “single” women allowed to adopt children in the state where they lived. After years of having to hide the lesbian part of her life, Annalee went on to boldly paint her university faculty office lavender and very publicly serve as the grand marshal of a Pride Parade.



Getting Involved and Supporting the OLOHP

If you would like to be interviewed, or you know someone else who fits the Project's criteria, send an email to info@olohp.org

The OLOHP has so far managed to gather and preserve more than 500 Herstories at no cost to the women sharing their stories. This has been accomplished through a combination of personal donations of money, a few grants, some financial support through OLOC, Old Lesbians Organizing for Change, and thousands and thousands of volunteered "time, treasures and talents." Women have graciously traveled hundreds of miles, spent hours scanning, printed thousands of pages, assembled piles of Herstories, dealt with thousands of emails, and more, all on behalf of the Project, all without monetary compensation.

Marcia, an interviewer, shared: The OLOHP means the world to me. I have had the opportunity to listen to lesbians older than I who have had challenges and celebrations – lives in and out of the closet – found camaraderie, confidence and validation for being who they are. Through the OLOHP they have been able to emerge from invisibility and have their voices not merely heard but archived for generations to come – generations who otherwise would hardly remember or may not even know how it was.

The Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project is an expensive endeavor. On average, the cost of one completed Herstory is \$750.⁰⁰ Ideally, the Project would like to continue to work for another decade in the hope that stories of lesbians born in the mid 1900s will document how their experiences have changed... and how much they stay the same.



To donate money and help keep this Project going, send a check to the Houston address on page 14, or go to www.olohp.org and use the Donate button.

If you have a skill to offer, such as volunteering to transcribe a few stories, reach out to the Project at info@olohp.org or email Margaret Purcell directly at Margaret.OLOHP@gmail.com