

# The OLOHP Insider

February 2012

The Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project

Issue 13



## *Musings: Changing With Time*

Who would have thought fifteen years ago this project would become what it is today? A simple effort to get the stories of friends of mine who were very ill quickly took on a life of its own. My first attempt to gather a story was with a dear friend, Marie Mariano. When I listened to the result, I was dismayed to find it was as much about me as it was Marie. (Both photos on the left are of Marie.) That interview got severely edited and was a big lesson for me.

The first big growth spurt for the Project came when I started searching for women who lived nearby when we took trips to OLOC Steering Committee meetings around the country. Then, along the way, I started doing programs about this project at festivals and conferences, which gave me more referrals to old lesbians who were willing to share their stories.

Five years into the Project, OLOC offered financial support that partially paid the expenses. It enabled me to expand my work. OLOC continues to sponsor the Project today.

Several years ago I met Margaret Purcell and her partner, Mary Henry. There had been talk of writing a book to share some of the stories and Margaret said she'd like to try working with me on that. From that collaboration came *A Gift Of Age: Old Lesbian Life Stories*. Next came the idea of a newsletter, and the *Insider* was born. Then the work on another book started, resulting in *Without Apology: Old Lesbian Life Stories*, which just became available this month.

About four years ago we recognized the need to find a permanent home for the OLOHP collection. The sheer volume in storage was amazing. So the search was on, and I turned to my nephew, Keith Ewing, who is a university librarian in St Cloud, MN for advice. We sent several letters of inquiry, and finally made a trip to Northampton, MA to visit the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College. We are honored to have the OLOHP collection sharing space with the papers of Jane Addams, Planned Parenthood, MS, Helen Hayes and many, many more. We have sent 150 of the OLOHP stories so far, and they have already been used for research and classes at Smith. We continue to process and transfer stories to Smith as they continue to do what they need to make them available for researchers and then to a broader audience.

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***Gathering the Unique Life Stories of Lesbians Born in the Early 1900s***

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The OLOHP has been blessed with talented contributors who are passionate about what we are doing. Margaret's partner, Mary Henry, is our web mistress. She is about to give our web site a whole new look. Janice Ives, a friend in Houston, has made all of the title pages for the stories. Emily Levy, in Santa Cruz, CA, has been the primary transcriber for many years. We have trained several interviewers and some of them are doing wonderful interviews. This has reduced my need to travel, and also adds stories and data to our collective herstory. Various other women have contributed by transcribing, writing articles about the Project and offering their support. We also incorporated the project as well as acquired non-profit 501(c)3 status. We are indebted to Eva Geer and Debbie Hunt for their assistance in this process. And of course, there is my sugar, Charlotte, who has always supported me on this journey. All of these women share in the success of the Project.

I know I've left out the names of women who have helped make the Project what it is, and for that, I apologize. As the saying goes, there are so many women, and so little time. And none of this would have been possible if it weren't for all the generous women who have believed in what we are doing and shared their stories. They have changed my life and the lives of so many others.

A very busy 2012 is shaping up on the calendar. As many of you know from a direct mailing we sent out, we're also focusing on sharing our new book, *Without Apology*. The responses and feedback have been heartwarming. And since we're taking the road-less-traveled in marketing the book, we're always open to suggestions! Write or call us.

What a journey this has been. I get to meet and interview the wonderful old women, and others in my team get to do much of the support work! It may only be February, but 2012 is already a year of milestones: reaching a 15th anniversary, surpassing the 250 story mark, and seeing our second book in print. Just think what the remaining 10 months may bring.

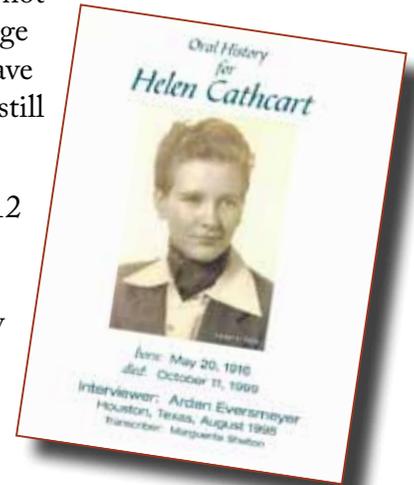
Who could ask for more?

*Arden, born 1931*

## ***THE FIRST PAGE IS THE LAST PAGE***

A good many years ago, Arden Eversmeyer asked if I had a scanner. I told her I did, so she asked if I would make a title page for her for a herstory she was working on. I agreed and she gave me what picture she wanted on it and the information needed. That particular title page was for Helen Cathcart of Houston, Texas. I did not keep a copy of that page but certainly would have had I known I would still be making them.

As of this January 2012 I have made 219 title pages. After Helen's, I started keeping a copy of each one I made. The first one I have a record of was made on March 13, 2001.



Many times I would study the photo I have to work with and try to get a sense of their personality. Then I look for a type style that I feel will express their style. Sometimes it is pretty easy; pictures many times appear elegant, sturdy, determined, happy, stern and many other emotions. Sometimes I hit it on the head and other times I really don't know what type style to use.

As I look at pictures of the women, read where they were born, where they live, I wish I could have met them or gotten to be better acquainted to such wonderful beings.

Every now and then Arden will call or write and ask me to correct a title page that is found to have wrong information on it, due to wrong information given, or poor typing skills or poor proof reading. For instance, just this week she asked me to re-do one, noting the woman was not interviewed in 1907 oops! Sometimes they look just right, but they aren't!

Due to modern electronics, I have all the title pages on a jump drive, and plenty of room to add more. Making the title pages has been very fun. When the book is being put together, the title page is the last item needed; hence, the first page is the last page.

*Janice Lee Ives*

*Lee loved her best friend from the time they met when she was eleven and Loie was nine. They always stayed in touch and saw each other often, but forces in their lives kept them apart until they were 71 and 69.*

N: Something told me – I had a diamond and sapphire ring on my finger and I took it off and I gave it to her and I said, “Loie, I am never letting you out of my life again, as long as we both shall live.” And I put this on her finger and she said, “I’m overwhelmed, because I don’t want you out of my life ever again.” She had made some reservations in a Sheraton for us to be overnight before we went up to her home. I want to tell you something. I’ve had honeymoons in my day, and this, the God’s truth, was the best one of all.

And it was the only one that counted, as far as I was concerned. From then on, it was just Loie and I and the whole world could go to hell. We started our lives together, we end our lives together. She’s still living, but she wouldn’t know me if I fell over her, you know. She’s that bad. She has Alzheimer’s so badly. She’s in a nursing home here in Maine, about three hours away. It’s all over but we’re still here.

I: You had about ten years, then? Together?

N: Yes, we did. We did.

I: That’s a blessing. So good.

N: We did. And it was so beautiful. And believe me, there’s great sex after 70! The greatest! And you can put that in here. For all the younger girls.

I: That’s gonna be important to somebody.

N: Yes. There’s great sex after 70. Yes indeedy-dooody! Especially when you love from the heart and the soul.

I: Yeah. Yeah.

N: And the togetherness is just beyond belief. No matter how many times you’ve been with somebody, had fun, tore off a quick piece, whatever [laughs], there’s nothing like deep down everlasting love from the time you’re children. All the love grows through the years. There’s puppy love, there’s friendship love, there’s best friend love, you know. And there’s deep and abiding – it’s the love of God, and the love of that individual, given to you by God.

I: Yeah. I do know what you mean.

N: Even though people look upon it as wrong, it can’t be!

I: Right.

N: Or it wouldn’t be so deep. Through thick and thin.

I: Yep.

N: And good and bad. For richer, for poorer. In sickness and in health. ‘Til death us do part. That’s Loie and I.



*Age 20, in 1945*

*Lee McGall  
born February 1925  
interviewed in Maine  
in October 2011*

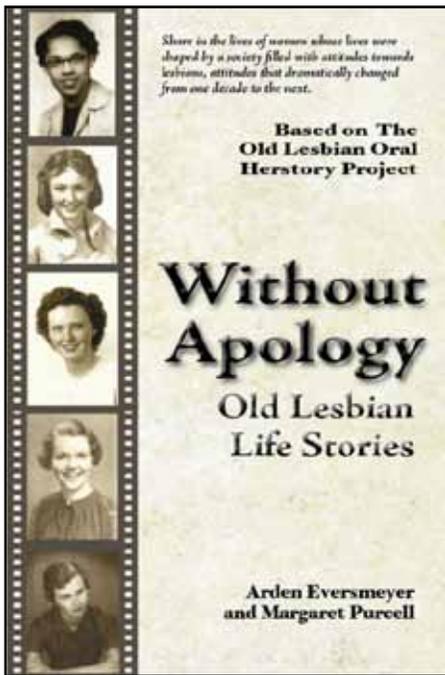


*Lee and Loie, in their  
seventies*



*Age 86, in 2011*

The title of this book, *Without Apology*, is taken from Joann Jones' interview. The full quote is, "We are who we are, without apology." Her story appears in this book.



It's hard to imagine today what it was like for a woman to live in a time when she had never heard the word lesbian, when there were no lesbian organizations, and when she had to be careful what she wore to the bar because a woman could be arrested simply for wearing pants or the wrong shoes. These are just some of the experiences shared in *Without Apology: Old Lesbian Life Stories*. It is a retelling of the stories of 24 lesbians, each offering a valuable glimpse into what it was like to be a lesbian during a unique and challenging period in American history.

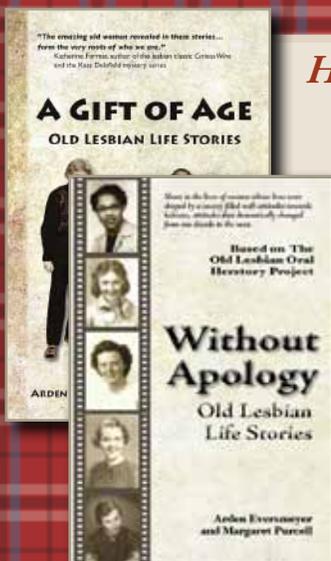
Each and everyone of the women who shared their stories in this book is influential in the everyday sense of the word. By standing up and living the lives they wanted to, and by speaking up and telling their stories, they have changed the world around them bit by bit, even when that wasn't their intention. They set an example for a student, provided a positive role model for nieces and nephews, broadened the thinking of someone serving to them in a restaurant, and challenged the stereotype often held by their employers, doctors, clergy and family members. These women are true pioneers.

I started reading as soon as I got the book and finished it in one day. So interesting and well done. I even like this one more than I did the last one. Congratulations!

Kay V.

Order a copy of *Without Apology: Old Lesbian Life Stories* at [www.olohp.org](http://www.olohp.org) or by writing [arden@olohp.org](mailto:arden@olohp.org)

*Without Apology* Nearly 400 pages  
100+ photos \$19.95



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

*Lesbians 70 years of age and older can tell their own story. Contact us. If you don't "qualify", encourage older lesbian friends to contact us.*

*Buy our books.\**

*Donate a copy of our book to your local library.*

*Make a tax-deductible donation to support the Project.\*\**

*Send us a note of encouragement!*

*\*A Gift of Age: Old Lesbian Life Stories and Without Apology: Old Lesbian Life Stories can be ordered at [www.olohp.org](http://www.olohp.org)*

*\*\*Tax-deductible donations can be made to The Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project either by mailing a check (address on page 1) or going to our website and using the PayPal/Donate Now button. You can also support the OLOHP by making a donation to OLOC, one of our sponsors, telling them it is on our behalf. Visit their website at [www.oloc.org](http://www.oloc.org), or write PO Box 5853, Athens, OH 45701.*