

The OLOHP Insider

February 2015

The Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project

Issue 26



Arden's Musings

Life continues to be busier than ever. Charlotte and I are recently back from a very successful two week trip to Florida. We started by doing a program at the Compass Community Center, a beautiful LGBT facility in Lake Worth. Margaret had shipped our display from the 2013 Conference, and I used the digital program Margaret had designed for the Oakland Gathering. Quite a challenge for me, since that meant I needed to learn to run the application and a digital projector! About 60 attended the program. Some excellent connections were made that evening. My thanks to Connie Kurtz and Ruthie Berman for coordinating that program.

While in Florida, we also attended the annual Silver Threads Celebration in St Pete's Beach where I did a workshop, saw several friends, and again, made some good connections. I came home with lists – potential interviewees, interviewers, and transcribers. I trained one woman to be an interviewer, and am working with another who may be able to do some work in Europe on our behalf. More interviewers in Florida – that's a good thing.

Edie Daly, from Gulfport, took us to the Holocaust Museum in St Petersburg where we planned a program for late spring. It will include the display, some of the OLOHP women reading from their stories, and a new digital presentation. So, another trip to Florida this year. I do thank you, Edie, for coordinating this event.

The icing on the cake on many of our trips is always the time we get to spend visiting with friends we have made while working on the Herstory Project. What a bonus.

We have a busy schedule of interviews, travels, classes and programs building for the year. It may be more growth than we had bargained for, but it's exciting, nevertheless. We will keep you posted as we move forward.

Arden

Gathering the Unique Life Stories of Lesbians 70 and Older

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A Look at Who is Doing the Interviewing

- * currently active
- * past interviewers

Wow. Look at all this space. Luckily, some of our active interviewers travel thru these areas on occasion. Interested in finding out more about being an interviewer? Contact us!



At Look at Our OLOHP Interviewers...

No matter how you look at it, the work of the OLOHP couldn't happen without the interviewers. For many years, Arden shouldered that responsibility on her own, but now that's changed. So let's start by giving a shout out to all the women currently doing interviews for us, and to those who are getting ready to do their first interviews. And with luck, we'll be adding a couple more names soon as Arden does her training in early March.

Interviewing isn't everyone's cup of tea. Over the years, Arden has worked with quite a few women. A few did an interview or two, and some never took that first step, which can feel a bit overwhelming.

Through these years of experience, a basic set of criteria for interviewers was developed:

- Interviewers need to be lesbians.
- Ideally, they should be old enough to relate comfortably to the women being interviewed, in their late 50's, 60's or older.
- if at all possible, an interviewer needs to share her story with the Project first, so she can better understand the process and experience how it feels to be on the other side of the equation.

We try to meet our own criteria, but we're open enough to see the value in staying flexible. For instance, we don't have a star on the map in the St. Louis area, yet we have someone doing an interview there very soon. Sharon contacted us, letting us know about friend in her late 70s willing to share her story. We were unlikely to be able to get someone into that area in the next six months, and since Sharon has done similar interview work, we made an exception and Sharon will do the interview for us. Our hope is she'll not only get that story for us, but that she'll be willing to do more, and we can add St. Louis!

If all goes according to plan, we're also hoping to gain an interviewer in the Denver area this year, as well as one in Chicago. Even then, there are still some wide open areas in the country where we either miss opportunities to gather a story, or we rely on other interviewers who are willing to work an interview or two into their travels.

We're proud to say every one doing interviews for the Project enjoys it. Some do a dozen a year, others one a year. No matter how many, they are all loved and appreciated for what they are doing.

We've learned that these women from the OLOHP have passed. They will be missed.

M: My partner had cancer, and she believed in holistic healing, and then waited too long. I didn't even know about it, because I was living here in Fayetteville by that time, and she was in Eureka Springs. We had split up, and we had tried to keep a friendship going, but it didn't work too well. And so I didn't know.

She showed up at the door one day with this box of books. She says, "I'm cleaning out, and I found these books that are yours." I took the box and I said, "Come in." She said, "No, no, I have to go." She had a friend driving, which was not her usual way of doing things. It was six months later that I heard that she had cancer.

I finally opened up that box. I had never opened it. It was not books that belonged to me. It was books that we had talked about, read, enjoyed, read to each other, and all that kind of thing.

I: She just wanted you to have them.

M: The memories. [voice breaking] And [slight crying] she was the love of my life.

I: Mm-hm.

M: Sometimes you can have real intense feelings for a long while. [voice breaking]

I: But isn't it wonderful that you had it?

M: Yes. I would not trade it for a lifetime with someone that I really couldn't even stand by the time we got through the lifetime. I have a tendency to wear people down, and so I probably would have gone through two or three or four marriages. [Laughter] I think I'm what people call "high maintenance." [Laughter]



Marilyn Yoder

Born 1937

Interviewed in 2008

'Cass' Cassingham

Born 1928

Interviewed in 2009



Barbee 'Cass' Cassingham

"I began to identify as a lesbian when I ended my third years of nursing school and I didn't want anybody to know about that. At those times, you certainly didn't. I followed that secrecy thing for about six years, seven. Pretty much still, until we moved here, to Whidbey Island and then I just didn't care."

Sandy's story was excerpted in the August 2014 Insider. She had already started her journey into Alzheimer's when she was interviewed, and many of her memories were no longer clear. Sandy died recently and subsequently, her surviving partner has come to the OLOHP asking if there is any way to make another copy of Sandy's story for her. Without it, she wouldn't have much of anything of Sandy's, as the family had taken it all, including their photos.



Sandy Herbstler

Born 1941

Interviewed in 2010

Died 2014

Screen Sharing Rules! by Margaret

Bit by bit, we add to our arsenal of tricks to make things run more smoothly in the OLOHP. Our latest successes have been with a remote control screen sharing application.

The call went out. "Help! I lost an important folder full of files on my computer. I had it one minute, and now it's gone." Given that Arden and I live over 2000 miles apart, we had to get inventive. We'd been playing a bit with screen sharing, but decided it was time to put it to the test. The good news is, it worked!

It's rather frightening that it's so easy, but in a matter of a few minutes, we were both able to be on the phone with each other, open the application on our respective computers, determine the location and password that we needed to exchange, and I was able to see Arden's screen. We opted to use TeamViewer for Mac, but there are several

good applications out there. It was like show-and-tell as I explained what I was doing, and why, and she watched her



cursor move without touching her mouse. Bingo. The lost folder was found (having been accidentally moved into another folder) and put back where it belonged. Crisis averted.

But wait... Arden has two email accounts on a desktop computer and on a laptop. One device would receive mail from both accounts, but only send from one. On the other device, the situation was almost the exact opposite. It took some doing, but we did eventually win the day and get her email working on both, incoming and outgoing.

Now, if someone can explain how those email settings get corrupted after working for months without a hitch, we'd be even happier!

Want To Do Us A Favor?

Here is an easy one for you – take a few minutes and write a review of one, or both, of our books, and post it on Amazon.com. We ran out of copies of our first book, *A Gift of Age: Old Lesbian Life Stories*, and opted to work with a division of Amazon to do a short run printing instead of ordering them by the box. Part of that process resulted in the title being directly listed on their website. As long as one book was listed there, we went ahead and made arrangements for them to list *Without Apology* as well. (Used copies of both *A Gift of Age* and *Without Apology* have shown up there before, but this is a new listing.)

If you go to Amazon.com and enter the title, you'll find a button for you to write review. Just follow their prompts. Ideally, we'd love to have you review them both, and, of course, please speak kindly of them!

If you have other favorite places where you can submit book reviews, we'd love it if you did that, too. Proceeds from the books go to expenses such as transcribing interviews and every book sold helps.

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.*

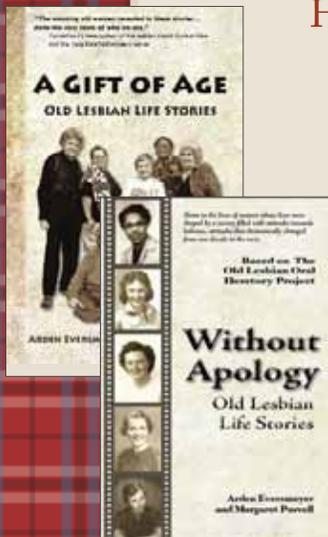
Donate a copies of our books to your local library.

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 currently be ordered at amazon.com and www.alibris.com

** 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.



A special thanks to OLOC, Old Lesbians Organizing for Change, www.oloc.org, for their ongoing support.