

# The OLOHP Insider

December 2010

The Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project

Issue 7



## *Musings from Arden*

What a year! So much has happened. The first being completion of the first year of a two-year commitment for this newsletter. Of course you understand that Margaret does the work and I get to enjoy it, too. We have been so pleased with the comments that come back from some of you readers. (We call them our “warm fuzzies”). And we are always happy to add new names to the reader list — just let us know who you are. In addition to sending issues to each of you as they are completed, we’ve found the *Insider* is a useful show-and-tell tool when we give presentations and when we are in contact with someone new to the Project.

All of the issues of the *OLOHP Insider* can now be found on our website and can be downloaded. This may be of interest for those of you who have joined us this year as readers, as well as the fine old lesbians who have shared their life stories with me.

This past year saw seven trips for Charlotte and I, from Southern California to Cape Cod and several

points in-between. For the coming year, I need to cut back the travel a bit, but already have plans for trips to Arizona and the east coast. Assuming all goes according to the plan, we’ll also make our annual July pilgrimage to National Women’s Music Festival in Madison, Wisconsin. This year, that trip will be coupled with going to the regional OLOC conference in Tacoma (July 28-31, 2011). And I need to go to Northern California to work and hopefully train a couple of interviewers. That’s four trips!

Training new interviewers is important as well as doing workshops and presentations. So if you know old lesbians who would share their life story, especially those born before 1930, but at least 70 years old, send me their names.

And if you want a presentation, let me know and we will try and schedule it for you. Oops... didn’t I just say I needed to slow down?

I wish all of you a safe and happy Holiday Season. And for all of you, a prosperous and healthy 2011.

*Arden, born 1931*

*The Insider is a useful show-and-tell tool when we give presentations.*

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

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## *A Bit About Transcribing*

Often, one of the most challenging steps in creating a Herstory is transcribing someone's words from the audio recording to paper. Various people have taken on the task over the years. Some came to it with transcribing experience; others just wanted to help and knew how to type. I fit into the second category and found it to be both fascinating and frustrating.

Once an interview has been done, transcription has always been the most expensive step. I took on doing a few of the stories for two reasons. First, I thought I could save the Project a bit of money. But the more compelling reason was much more personal: I had read dozens of the transcripts, and found most of them intriguing, but it wasn't until I listened to one of the audio recordings that I truly understood the magnitude of what was going on. Almost every interview is an incredibly personal insight into the story teller's life. While I had some sense of that after reading their words on paper, hearing their story was a totally different experience. That realization is what made me determined to add some audio clips to our website (which my partner, Mary, accomplished.)

But that's about the listening experience. Actually getting those words onto paper is more of a technical challenge. Every woman's voice is distinctly different as is the quality of the recording itself. It seems to help to listen to most, if not all, of a recording before even beginning to type. It gives me time to get used to the woman's voice and her speech patterns.

The mechanics of transcribing are pretty simple. Most transcribers use a foot pedal that allows them to activate the recording without taking their hands off the keyboard. I have mine set up so that the audio is playing when my foot is on the pedal and stops instantly when I lift my foot. There is a fast-forward and rewind button also, so I can easily let it play while I'm typing and, if I get behind or I'm not sure what was said, I can easily stop and go back. Controlling the play back is the easy part, once you get used to it.

The larger challenge is to learn how to listen and, to a degree, almost edit at the same time. The transcriber doesn't change anything significant, but it is almost always necessary to edit out a phrase here or there. It's not uncommon at all for someone to start

a thought, then realize they need to go back and explain something first, or change her mind about what she wanted to say all together. As a transcriber, part of the job is to edit those kinds of fragments. It's also common for someone telling their story to start many of her sentences with "I remember," "So," "Then" or "And." I don't edit all those transitional words out, but many of them.

The goal is for the typed words to accurately reflect what is said, and we never intentionally change anything, but we aren't doing legal or medical transcription, and there are times the transcriber needs to make a judgement call.

The fun challenges are when a phrase or name is not picked up clearly on the recording. Sometimes it helps to turn up the volume and concentrate... other times I can understand just enough of what is being said to send me to Google to see if I can ferret out what the name of that little town on her school bus route was, or to learn what a hectograph is, or determine who in the world Bartleby the Scrivener is so I can decide if that's what the woman really is saying.

Let me share one more big lesson that I've learned: try to avoid getting so immersed in listening that when the woman telling her story suddenly guffaws, a phone rings, or a bird screeches in the background, that you find yourself startled and ripping the headphones off.

I love transcribing and wish I had more time to devote to it. Arden says she falls a little bit in love with each woman she interviews — it's very much the same story when transcribing.

*Margaret*

## *Passings...*

*Born February 1922, Violet shared her story in Madison, Wisconsin in July 2009. She died at age 88, in November 2010. She is already missed.*



## Excerpts from a few of the Herstories



*Mary Beth (on right)  
with Evelyn in 1959*

**Mary Beth  
Brindley**  
**Born August 1939**

*From her Interview  
in September 2009*



M: During my first year at Memphis, Tennessee – where I was majoring in P.E., ironically – my parents took me behind closed doors. The summer that I played softball, unfortunately, my softball coach was a deacon in the Methodist church that my mother went to. He came to my parents and said, “I think your daughter is homosexual and she’s having an affair with someone in the softball community.” After my brother left home for the day, my parents called me in and grilled me for two hours. “Are you a homosexual?” “What in the world are you thinking?” As a 19 year old, I lied, lied, lied. I didn’t know what else to do.

I didn’t consider that brave at the time, but I left home right after that. I thought, “I cannot continue to be who I am and be so ridiculed and made to feel ugly by my own parents. This is not the way to live life.” So, to escape, I moved to Fort Worth, Texas.

*(She and Evelyn lived in Fort Worth more than 25 years.)*

I: Did you have any kind of social network of other lesbians?

M: Barely. We did not go to the bars and my partner was closeted in her dental lab tech job, although several other people that worked there were gay. It was in my teaching contract the last seven years that I taught that you could be fired for deviate behavior, i.e. homosexuality. I was already closeted and when that went into the contract, I became *so* closeted.

We had no lesbian bars, even if we’d been bar-hoppers, in Fort Worth. Our main socialization when we first moved there in 1959 was the softball community. So as Evelyn left softball because of an injury and went into bowling, we had some leftover friends from softball, some new friends from bowling, and a few friends through work. But nothing like the marvelous lesbian community in Portland, Oregon [where she now lives].

*(Mary Beth and Evelyn were together 49 years before Evelyn’s death in 2008.)*

E: One time, when I was drinking, I was across the street from a Navy enlistment center for women and I got the idea that I wanted to join the Navy. I went across the street and they said that I had to bring proof. So I went home and I got my adoption papers and changed them, because I was too young. (Chuckling.) I got into the Navy that way.

I remember my dad; I said, “I’m going into the Navy.” He was reading the newspaper and he just looked at the newspaper and he said, “Well, if that’s what you want to do.” That was that! (Laughter) So there was really not much of anyone telling me what to do. They already knew that I always did what I wanted to do. (Chuckling)

G: What year was that, Eris?

*(continued on next page...)*

**Eris Dreykus**  
**Born April 1933**



**1955**

E: I was 18. I had just gotten through high school. My life was really... I didn't know what was going on. I was drinking a lot at that time. It was too much.

After going into the Navy, they sent me to boot camp and then to Oklahoma A&M to learn something about the Bureau of Ordinance, where they sent me in Washington, DC. I didn't really like it that much. I did get into some difficulty with one of the lieutenants, a woman. What happened was that I stayed out overnight so I was put up for... I've forgotten what they call it now where you go before a trial.

G: A disciplinary action.

E: Yeah. A disciplinary action. I wouldn't tell who I was with. They were all quite annoyed and angry with me because I wouldn't say who I was with. But I wouldn't do that so they decided that they would discharge me with a bad discharge. I said, "I'm sorry, you can't do that because I'm at the age of unauthorized enlistment." (Laughter) So they couldn't! I was discharged, but I was discharged with an honorable discharge.

G: I suppose they were at fault for not having... of course they had your adoption papers which you had doctored up a little bit.

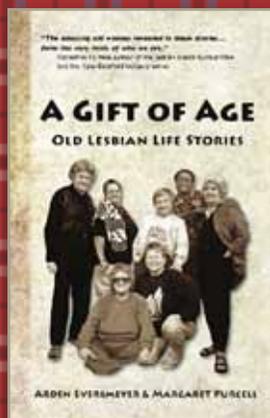
E: After the whole business with the Bureau of Ordinance, I decided that I would use my college credit and I decided I'd go to Drake College in Des Moines, Iowa. It seemed, at that time, I was always against everything. (Chuckling) I just couldn't seem to go along with the program. I didn't know what was really going on. I knew about lesbians. I knew from very early on about lesbians because there was Patty Mell... what was her other name? She was a famous person for doing acts. She was a lesbian. She fell in love with her drama teacher and she talked about it openly and she was only in her teens. She was a very bright woman. We were kids growing up together.



2009

*Eris Dreykus  
Born February 1925  
Died 2010*

*From her Interview  
in 2009 & 2010*



### *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 a copy of A Gift of Age: Old Lesbian Life Stories.\**

*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 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 in page 1) or going to our website and using the*

*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.*



*I always have a smile on my face when I receive the OLOHP email. What a wonderful idea for someone to have come up with. Many thanks for all you, Arden and the rest of the posse do for us gals.*

*Georgia*

*I printed it out to savor, and read every word. Thanks so much!! A wonderful effort.*  
*Sue*