

The OLOHP Insider

February 2014

The Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project

Issue 22



Arden: as a college freshman at age 17, a school counselor at age 34, and visiting Lake Chelan at age 78

Arden's Musings

I'm baaack! Actually, I wasn't gone - just sidelined for a while. For those of you who haven't already heard, I have congestive heart failure. Something new and unexpected. It started a few days after the OLOHP symposium last October. Fast forward a couple of months, dozens of tests and appointments, and three hospital stays, and I settled back at home with oxygen and muscles that would barely support me. It has been a long recovery, but a successful one. I am completely off O₂, am walking freely, totally without pain, and driving. And my heart is behaving with a combination of drugs. So life is very good again.

Of course, the health issues forced me to do some thinking, and gave me lots of time in which to do it. For two or three years we have been talking about cutting back on some of my various activities and responsibilities. I'm not talking about just with the Herstory Project, but some of my local involvements. Making changes has always been easy to put off until the proverbial tomorrow arrives. One of my biggest challenges has been to learn to say, "I'm flattered that

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you asked, but no." My recent journey certainly got my attention and I have begun to step back from many activities. Guess I'm a slow learner.

What this new adventure has brought home to me is that I need to do things smarter. I still plan to do more Herstory work, but I'll concentrate on keeping it local and cut back on trips for the Project. There have been other aspects of the Project that we've talked about implementing but haven't for lack of time. I think now we'll take time to explore them.

Charlotte and I are doing well here in Houston. I'm surrounded by wonderful local women who have been there to support us, both in my health scare and in my work with the Project. We have had an unusually hard winter for our sub-tropical climate, but nothing like some of you have suffered through. Charlotte and I still plan to take in our beloved National Women's Music Festival in June in Wisconsin, and possibly visit California in July. We're looking forward to seeing many of you. Be well.

Arden

Gathering the Unique Life Stories of Lesbians 70 and Older

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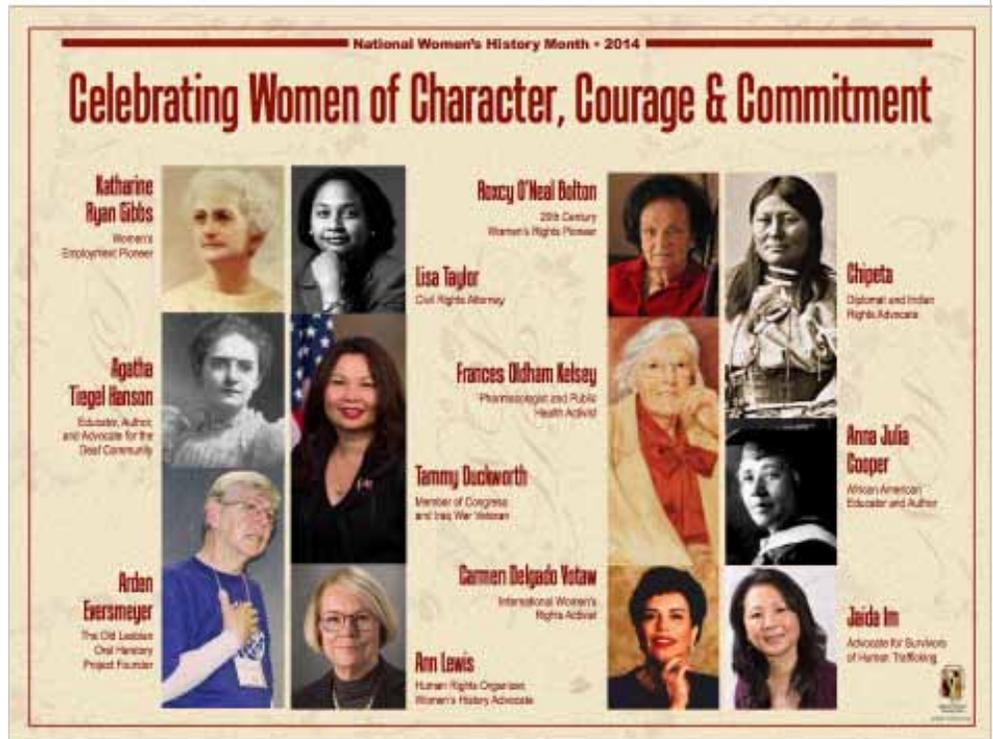
A Well-Deserved Recognition for Arden... on a National Scale!

Typical Arden: She sent us her article for this issue of *The Insider* but neglected to mention that she is among a group of women who will be honored in March during National Women's History Month 2014.

This year's theme is *Celebrating Women of Character, Courage & Commitment*. As you can see in the commemorative poster on the right, Arden is in good company – and she fits right in. The National Women's History Project began seeking nominations early last summer and one of the women Arden had interviewed for the OLOHP jumped right in. Diane Ste. Marie, of Seattle, WA, started the ball rolling, making sure the right people were contacted and the right information was sent to nominate Arden. Gloria Stancich, of Gig Harbor, WA, submitted the final application and in late September, we heard that Arden had been selected.

When the NWHP announced the honorees, Gloria and a few found out right away. We kept waiting for a reaction from Arden. After worrying that maybe she thought it was a spam e-mail, we asked. The e-mails letting Arden know she was to be honored hadn't even made it through to her. And once it did, it still took quite a bit of convincing before she believed it was real.

Fast forward to March which is Women's History month. Arden is in the midst of making plans to travel to Washington, D.C. for the induction ceremony on March 27. Several friends will be in Washington with Arden clapping for her as she receives her much deserved recognition on a national stage.



Poster, and other items, are available at <http://tinyurl.com/lap2gao>

There have been quite a few communications about the honor, but we especially loved this note that came to Arden from the NWHP. It tells us once again just how far things have come in the past few decades.

If you are bringing your wife, she of course will be our guest for the reception and dinner. Thank you for your amazing work to ensure that American lesbians will not be written out of history.

Tickets are still available for the gala reception being held at the Willard Hotel in D.C. on March 27, 2014. For more details about the award, the reception, and the incredible group of women being recognized, visit the National Women's History Project website, www.nwhp.org.

Most of you already knew what an amazing woman Arden is, and that means the world to her. But it sure is nice to see some of the rest of our world sing her praises, and to know this honor will encourage others to follow their hearts as well.

Email from a woman who had shared her story with the OLOHP and had recently received her copy.

When I saw the [herstory] book, I doubted there were any words to express how I felt. I think after I finish crying, looking at my life unfold with each page, I am still in awe. Thank you will have to do for now until I see you to give you a hug.

I care, Mary Midgett

Passings

We were sorry to hear that two of our friends, women who had shared their stories, recently died. Here are excerpts from their stories.

From Kathy's 2001 interview:

(in response to a question about when she realized she was a lesbian)

I think that it was probably, to some extent, when I was in college, in undergraduate school. I had known through high school that I was not interested in a lot of the same dating activity and whatever that some of my friends were. That did not appeal to me a whole lot. I did date some. I dated some people fairly regularly, but it was not my thing at all. I was much happier playing sports and doing a variety of things. When I went off to college, largely because of a girl that lived next door to us, I did pledge into a sorority. And I thought. "This is not what I want to do, at all." So I decided not to do that, dropped out of the sorority, and just stayed as a regular student for the four years.

I had one very good friend. That was never really a sexual relationship, but I did a lot of things with her, and enjoyed her a lot. We enjoyed some of the same things. I would suspect, although I've certainly lost touch with her for years, that she, at some point, would have become a lesbian, or gay woman. But I don't even know that.

When I left college and came out here and went to work at the welfare department, they had a group of people there that had a softball team. I went to play with them, and so should have got into this whole scene at that point. I lived with them for two or three years – with a woman who did not work at the welfare department, but who had come up here with someone who did. Anyway, it was a friend of this group of people that ran around together. That was my first real experience, and it was probably my ah-hah. I'd spent all this time not knowing what it was about, but this... this was what it was about.

From Kathy's 2009 interview:

(during a discussion with Carmah, her partner, and Arden, about their activism once they had both retired)

I think one thing that we should say is that Carmah and I never wanted to run for office or do anything like that. We didn't want to be involved in that part of politics at all, except to be fundraisers or something like that.

We knew that if things were ever going to change in the state of Colorado, for the state to be helpful to LGBT people, we needed to work very hard to elect people that were progressively thinking about what should happen to GLBT people and how we needed to change our laws in the state so we could have equity. So we have worked behind the scenes on a lot of that. We've been happy to be small-p political people, not big-P. We never wanted to do any of that. We wanted to help make it a better world for all of us.

Kathryn Glass

Born 1932 in Oklahoma

Died 2014 in Colorado

*Interviewed originally in 2001,
and again in 2009.*



Kathy, age 16 in 1948



Kathy, age 82 in 2013

Ann Wansley

born May 1922
interviewed at age 78

died in Arizona, 2013



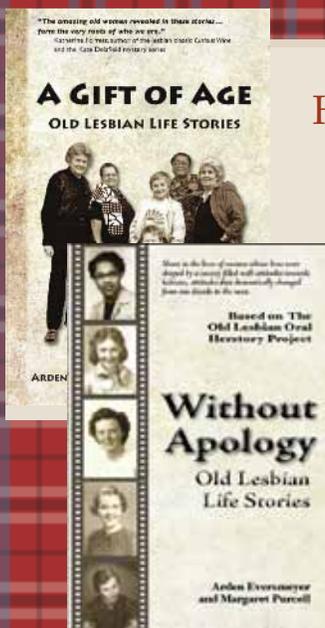
Ann was interviewed by William Benemann as part of an effort to document the life stories of elder GLBT at University of California, Berkeley.

I never had a chance to get to meet and know somebody else on a sort of personal basis, or to know anybody whose background was different from my own, so to speak. To me, it was just really exciting to get to know somebody that way.

Joanne was two years older than I. She had finished junior college in Santa Maria. So I looked up to her. For one thing, she knew all sorts of things I didn't know. But we had read a lot of the same stuff as kids, you know, the same books. She'd read a lot more, just as my current partner has read tons more than I have. [Laughs] Just tons more! But the same general sort of background. Her farming background was new and different to me.

I was, from a friendship point of view, really, really, really taken with this gal, impressed by her wisdom and experience and so forth. And then we fell in love. That came as a great shock, because I didn't know what really was going on. I couldn't quite figure out - we didn't engage in a lot of heavy sex, but we engaged in a lot of hugging and - mostly hugging, and some kissing, but mostly just holding on to each other. But I found that very gratifying.

We tried to be very discreet. For many years we tried to be very discreet. I never really came out of the closet in any real sense until after I got out of the Army, and then in a rather restricted sense. Then I came out more, after I got out of working in civil service. But all the rest of my life, people picked me out. Other lesbians picked me out. They could tell. I don't know how they could tell, and at some point in time I'm gonna find one or two of those old timers and say, "What the hell did I do that made you know right off the bat that I was there for the picking??" So, I don't know what anybody else thought. We just decided we were going to be in the closet. Period. We were never "out" to any of our family or old friends.



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 currently be ordered at 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.