



The Voice of Midlife and Older Women



**San Francisco Chapter
Newsletter**

Web Site: www.owlsf.org
Email: owlsanfran@juno.com

May-June 2007

Through research, education and advocacy, OWL works to achieve economic, social and political equity for all women, to improve the image and status of all mid-life and older women, and to provide mutual support for its members.



**May 26, 2007
10 a.m.–12 p.m.**

(10–11 a.m., OWL business meeting and social; 11 a.m.–12 noon., program)

870 Market St. (near Powell)
Check OWL office door (Room 905) for meeting room number.
Refreshments; Guests welcome

Emergency Preparedness — *Are you and your loved ones ready?*

Learn key actions necessary to prepare you for all types of disasters, such as earthquakes and fires. Course emphasizes immediate disaster safety and personal preparedness topics, such as disaster plans and essential supplies; and includes health and mobility considerations and the need for personal support networks.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

(reprint from 2006)

"Each friend represents a world in us, a world not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born." Anais Nin

I want to send this first letter as your new president in the spirit of discovery and friendship: discovery because I hope to have a chance to work to create new and interesting programs that will engage new and old members alike; friendship because I believe that all real work is done through the joint efforts of like-minded individuals engaged in the process of creating a new and better world.

My name is Catherine Pinkas, and I am a financial advisor, university instructor, sound engineer and mother, in that order—children raised, so duties mostly completed!

I have served as the vice president of OWL San Francisco for the past two years. During this time, I have helped develop a number of Saturday programs on retirement information, financial updates and mortgage options, and a panel on "Women on their Own". This has been a great joy for me, as I believe that one of the critical strengths of OWL lies in the programs and information we present to our members.

Other projects I have been actively involved in include: redesign of our Web site, creation of our Speakers Bureau, development and design of an outreach brochure, presentation of our Speakers Bureau at the National Owl Conference, grant writing, and, most recently, the acquisition of a new computer for our staff. My hopes for the next year are fourfold:

1. to broaden our campaign to provide outreach through the Speakers Bureau;
2. to develop additional funding for OWL-SF;
3. to create a series of new programs and workshops that meet the needs of our members;
4. to assist in developing an active operational board to both plan and execute our strategic goals.

I welcome your thoughts and suggestions, and hope that you that will join me in creating new and exciting activities for the coming year!

Catherine Pinkas

SAN FRANCISCO OWL BOARD

Catherine Pinkas, President

E-mail: catherine@pinkas.us

Allyson Washburn, Co-Vice President

Nan McGuire, Co-Vice President

Ruth Strassner, Secretary

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Sheila Mullen

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Kathie Piccagli

Shirley Sidd

Ann West

Eunice Rosenberg

Jane Swinerton

Newsletter – The Committee,
(415) 989-4422

SF OWL Board meetings: first Monday of the month, 3-5 pm, 870 Market St.

Check the OWL office for the location.

Phone: (415) 989-4422

Fax: (415) 989-4050

Email: owlsanfran@juno.com

Web: www.owlsf.org

Mail: 870 Market St., Room 905, San Francisco, CA 94102

WOMEN BABY BOOMERS

As an over 80 year old member of OWL, I have been encouraged to see many mid-life women become active members of our San Francisco Chapter. All of you who are Baby Boomers are the wave of the future for our organization, and our country.

Women who fall into this age group find it more difficult to find new employment, particularly if they have been out of the job market for any appreciable length of time. The most important issues facing these women are health care for themselves, and the assurance of sufficient financial resources for the next thirty years. Just as it is hard to think of retirement when one is in her 20's, it is just as difficult to imagine being an octogenarian without enough money to maintain a desired lifestyle.

As women, our earnings only approximate two-thirds of what our male counterparts achieve, and yet our life expectancy is greater by several years. For the most part, traditional pensions are part of the past, and Social Security was never meant to be more than a basic part of the three-legged stool of retirement resources. That brings us to savings. The most valuable general advice for whatever instrument(s) one chooses, diversification should be the goal. That way, when the Stock Market reacts adversely, one should feel confident that a portfolio will not disappear.

Women in the age group being discussed are more likely to be single, possibly divorced or never married. And though they may have had better educational opportunities than women in the past, they still have not been able to achieve the higher incomes of their male counterparts. As a general rule, pensions which were a form of reward for stability in a job are less and less available. Today one must rely on one's own savings, whether a 401K or an equivalent. That requires personal discipline.

We think of retirement age as sixty-five. At that age most women are still in their most vibrant, productive years. Many will continue to work at jobs previously held because they cannot afford to support themselves otherwise. Others may be relying on financial resources which need to last for thirty or more years. That can be intimidating.

These are some of the realities facing our members who fall into the Boomer category. They will not be resolved easily, but as I said initially, I am encouraged by the activist roles I see being taken by more and more of our mid-life members. You are the future of OWL.

Shirley Sidd

PROPOSED "COURT WATCH" PROGRAM

The Elder Abuse Prevention Consortium at the Institute on Aging has invited OWL to participate in a program to attend court sessions involving elder abuse cases in San Francisco. As a preliminary to OWL making a commitment, on March 19 I attended the sentencing phase of such a case, along with Helen Karr of the District Attorney's office. I found it interesting and enlightening. Elder abuse is considered in every case where the injured party is over the age of 65.

At this phase (sentencing) the issue was whether the defendant should be sent to state prison or put on probation (and, if the latter, what the terms of probation should be).

The judge detailed the criteria on which his decision was based:

- . **Seriousness of the crime.** Elements considered were the injury inflicted and the circumstances of the act.
- . **Was defendant armed with a deadly weapon?** In this case, the weapon was a motorcycle helmet (not a firearm or knife).
- . **Was the victim vulnerable?** Yes, she was an 81-year-old woman of slight build.
- . **Was there physical or emotional injury?** Yes. She suffered a three centimeter cut on the left side of her head and an abrasion on the right. She was treated at a hospital, where she was "self-effacing" and denied "suffering or anguish". She was released from the hospital and walked five blocks to her home. The jury had determined that she did not suffer "serious or significant" injury (although photographs had shown bloody injuries while she was on a gurney at the hospital).
- . **Monetary loss?** \$4000 (medical), for which restitution will be made.

Defendant's response to the event?

He was said to have shown "shock and surprise," but not "remorse".

Risk of endangerment to others? Court felt this was an isolated (though "outrageous") event. Since there was no prior record, nor indication of a pattern of behavior, it was felt that state imprisonment was not needed to prevent further crimes.

Client's "professionalism?" Court felt the act was compulsive, angry behavior, "bullying" but not a pattern. There was no relationship of trust or confidence between the plaintiff and defendant.

The defendant was sentenced to one year in the county jail, with credit for time served, and five years' probation, with mandatory alcohol and anger management treatment during time of probation.

If OWL takes on this commitment to participate, my recommendation would be for a training session for volunteers, with emphasis on the significance and benefit of a court watch program.

Interested? Contact me at (415) 661-8019.

Marcia Soffer

OWL BIOGRAPHIES -- ALLYSON WASHBURN

Driving north on Columbus Avenue, I turn west on busy Bay Street; on its north side, near the Hyde Street cable car run, I locate Allyson Washburn's three-story brick condo residence. Upstairs, we settle down in her comfortable living room with its fireplace, western windows and friendly cats, and she mentions that she had moved here from a lovely Victorian in the Lower Haight, near the Mint.

Here's the story she tells me. With a father from New York and a mother from southern Virginia, Allyson was born a baby-boomer in Ranson, West Virginia, near Harper's Ferry. Growing up in Cumberland, Maryland and graduating from high school in Hagerstown, Maryland, she and her future husband, Paul Mellott, first met in their French class. While Paul went on to the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Allyson graduated with a degree in psychology from Hood College, a small

women's college in Frederick, Maryland, then married Paul in the Naval Academy chapel. With Paul transferred to a base in Maine, Allyson followed, teaching psychology to enlisted men there and gaining her master's degree in Education from the University of Southern Maine, in Gorham.

Transferred to Norfolk in 1974, Paul and Allyson suffered the death of their premature first baby, then, in 1975 and 1977, enjoyed the arrivals of their son, Ben, and daughter, Alyssa. Tragedy occurred again in 1979 when Paul died in a helicopter crash. Through the difficult years following his death, Allyson and her children received great care and support from family, friends and the Navy community. They soon moved to the Baltimore area, several miles from her parents, and Allyson returned to school.

Her children now seven and nine years old, Allyson met her second husband while earning her doctorate in Experimental Psychology at Johns Hopkins University. With his acceptance of a research position in the visual sciences in San Francisco, they moved here in 1984. This marriage ended within two years, but Allyson decided to remain here, believing this diverse city to be a great place to raise her children.

Volunteering first in their public schools, she developed a long community service life by joining the local boards of the League of Women Voters and the YWCA, and also participating on several San Francisco City/County public committees.

Allyson completed her dissertation research and began a full-time research career, working first at the Bayview-Hunter's Point Foundation directing a State of California study on the use of acupuncture for heroin detoxification. She later conducted studies in the treatment of heroin and cocaine dependence at UCSF. In the mid-'90s, Allyson began working for the Institute on Aging, and received grants from the National Institute on Aging and the Alzheimer's Association to support her research at the Jewish Home.

Some five years ago, she began teaching research methods, statistics and gerontology at San Francisco's Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center, leading its Vital Seniors Project; and she commutes to Petaluma once a week to teach students at the University of

Northern California. Allyson has an impressively long list of presentations at professional organizations' conferences across the country, and authored publications in many professional journals. Currently, she is working with San Francisco's California Institute of Integral Studies to develop the Center for Conscious Aging and serving as editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Transformative Education*.

And her children? Daughter Alyssa, graduating from U.C. Santa Barbara and Hastings Law School, is a criminal defense attorney in the Fresno Public Defender's office, with plans to return to the Bay Area. Son Ben graduated from the University of the Pacific with a Master's degree in physical therapy. Both he and his wife are physical therapists, with Ben working at S.F. General Hospital and Christy at Mills Peninsula Hospital. With the expectation of their first child in October, Allyson looks forward being a grandmother

And, what's fun? "I enjoy reading both novels and nonfiction, drawing portraits and the figure, writing essays for the journal I edit, walking, seeing foreign and independent films, having long dinners with family and friends," Allyson replies. As for future plans, she says, "I hope to spend more time doing research with the new Center on Conscious Aging; I want to travel more, and I want to play with my grandchildren!"

All this while she's now functioning as an OWL-SF board member. "Such energy!" I note while departing, dodging a cable car and driving home up Telegraph Hill.

Phyl Smith

ASK AN OWL

It's well known that a positive attitude affects health, well-being and longevity. This month's question is: "What are the ways you help maintain a positive attitude?" Some suggestions from members follow:

- . Being outside in the fresh air, walking and looking around (and yes! smelling the roses I see!) always makes me feel better, because the heart is pumping blood around the body; also a good time to think "outside the box."
- . A realization that life is yin and yang, up and down, and that I alone control my attitude. Which would I rather feel, happy or unhappy? (Not a difficult decision: happy, of course!)

- . Working at something that engages one.
- . Social and familial support: giving and getting.
- . If all else fails, just sit down and eat some Ben & Jerry's!

("To keep the heart unwrinkled, to be hopeful, kindly, cheerful, reverent. That is to triumph over old age." Amos Bronson Alcott, 1799-1888.)

Sheila Malkind

- . This is a very profound question. Pursuing your bliss, as Joseph Campbell was so fond of saying, is the way to live life fully and positively. I take great joy in family, friends and various physical, mental and creative activities, and try each day to mark and appreciate the good moments of life. Sometimes it seems easier for me to maintain a positive attitude than a positive outlook on things political in the world today. But basically I feel that by focusing on hope and ideals we may have the opportunity to work toward implementing them. Reaching out to and working with others is, in its way, the making of community. It feels good to be a part of that.

(In short: music, laughter, and a sense of humor.)

Ruth Strassner

For next month: "Ask An OWL" would like to have suggestions of names the letters O. W. L. might represent. Some members would like other characterizations rather than "Older Women's League". For example, our president, Catherine Pinkas, thinks of OWLS as "older, wiser laughing souls". What are your ideas?



BULLETIN BOARD

BOOK CLUB

The next book club meeting will be on May 25, 12:00 noon – 2:00 pm, at 870 Market, room 911, “The Living Room”. We will discuss “American Bloomsbury: Louisa May Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau: Their Lives, Their Loves, Their Work” by Susan Cheever. (This book is not in paperback, but the public library has 7 copies.)

On June 22, we will discuss “Palestine Peace not Apartheid” by Jimmy Carter. (The public library has 42 copies; the book seems to circulate a lot, so check the wait list at your branch.)

Join us, and bring your lunch, if you wish. If you have questions, call Shirley Sidd (415-440-5672) or Rosemary Bacy (415-665-0380).

**SATURDAY, MAY 12, 1-3 PM.
JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF SAN FRANCISCO**

**3200 California St, SF, Room 206.
Sheila Malkind, Director of the Legacy Film Series, presents a fresh selection of entertaining short films portraying the variety of later life experiences.**

SENIOR CENTER WITHOUT WALLS

Free Telephone Group Activities for Elders throughout the Greater San Francisco Bay Area. Offers activities, friendly conversation and an assortment of classes and support groups to elders who find it difficult to go to a community senior center. You can participate from the comfort of your own home through telephone conference calls. And it's completely free!!! A schedule of upcoming classes and presentations will be mailed to youCall 1-877-797-7299 toll-free and talk to Terry Englehart or Jennifer Cancino.

(This non-denominational, non-profit program is sponsored by Senior Resources at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Oakland and the Episcopal

Homes Foundation and is funded by grants and private donations.)

OWL/CA MOTHER'S DAY LOBBY DAY – MAY 10

Every year for Mother's Day, OWL/CA has a lobby day in Sacramento. This year the theme is "universal health care". OWLs gather to distribute the cards we signed to legislators, having a chance to talk with them also.

In addition, there are interesting speakers, and this year lunch will be provided. If funds for transportation are needed, they will be provided by OWL/CA. Several members from our chapter are going, and more are welcome. It's a great chance to meet legislators, to learn and talk about an important issue, and join with OWLs from all over the state. For more information, contact Jacqui Snowden at 415-467-2289.

Mother's Day Report – OWL National UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE

Almost every year, OWL-National publishes a “Mother's Day report” on some topic important to midlife and older women. Last year's report was “Where Will I Live and Who Will Take Care of Me?” This year's report is “Give 'Em Health, Revisited: Medicare-For-All”. The release of the report will be accompanied by a major press release in Washington, D.C. and others, elsewhere.

Letter Writing ACTION

At last month's chapter meeting, we sent a letter of support to assemblywoman Sally Lieber for her bill AB76 which would separate non-violent female prison inmates from violent ones and also move them into small community facilities where they can receive meaningful services. Our advocacy postcard for May will be sent to Barbara Boxer to thank her for introducing The Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA) S2593. This act will restore women's reproductive rights which have been seriously eroded by the recent Supreme Court decision.

Eunice Rosenberg

CALENDAR

(For a more complete and current listing, see the website: owlsf.org [click "calendar"])

- May 7 Monday – **OWL Board Meeting**, 3:00 – 5:00 pm, 870 Market St., Room 1185.
- May 19 Sat. – **OWL Garage Sale**, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, 639 Elizabeth, SF
- May 25 Friday – **OWL Book Group**, 12:00 – 2:00 pm, 870 Market St., Room 911
- May 26 Sat. – **OWL General Membership Meeting**, 10:00 – 12:00, 870 Market, Room 1185
- June 4 Monday – **OWL Board Meeting**, 3:00- 5:00, 870 Market
- June 22 Friday – **OWL Book Group**, 12:00-2:00 pm, 870 Market, Room 911
- June 23 Sat. – **OWL General Membership Meeting**, 10:00am-12:00 noon.

LAST MONTH

April "Heart Smart" OWL Meeting Wrapup

On Monday, April 18, San Francisco OWL deviated from its usual Saturday morning monthly meeting format with an early evening program held at Mt. Zion Campus of UCSF.

The well-attended presentation, entitled "HEART SMART: A Cardiovascular Program for Midlife and Older Women," was the result of a coalition between San Francisco OWL, The Transition Network, and our hosts, The UCSF National Center of Excellence in Women's Health.

First, we heard from Judith Walsh, MD, Cardiologist, whose topic was "Women and Heart Disease," and Marian Devereaux, Registered Dietician, who presented "Diet + Lifestyle Changes = Heart Health."

In addition, Marion Bar-Din gave a riveting presentation entitled "Personal Perspective." Ms. Bar-Din described how, while sitting in a library, she experienced peculiar symptoms that she thought might—or might not—be a heart attack. She then carried us through her resulting experience, which included a by-pass operation, depression, and, ultimately, a recovery that promises her many more fruitful years.

The coalition that we entered into proved to be successful for the Chapter, and it is hoped that we shall be able to continue the partnership in future months.

Shirley Sidd

NEXT MONTH

More Calendar Notes.....

"Universal Health Care" is a dominant issue for OWL---Nationally, State, and in our SF chapter. (In late February, our chapter had a very good joint meeting with the SF Gray Panthers, about universal health care. There were excellent speakers: Conny Ford, SF Labor Council; Brenda Salgado, Breast Cancer Action; and Ellen Shaffer, National Women's Health Network. PowerPoint presentations used by Brenda and Ellen are on our website: owlsf.org > speakers bureau > topics.)

We are also part of a coalition of groups primarily in the Bay Area focused on **universal health care as a women's issue**. The Women's Working Group is hosting an **educational summit on May 10, 9:30-3:00**, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 1187 Franklin. The keynote speaker is Tangerine Brigham, SF Dept. of Public Health; other speakers include Aileen Hernandez, Director of the CA Women's Agenda; Sara Rogers, Sen Kuehl's office, Bree Johnston, MD, Dept. of Geriatrics, UCSF; and Mary Smith, concerned citizen. Registration is \$20; register by calling 415 353-2667.

There will also be a Women LEAD (education and advocacy) Day in Sacramento on May 16. Call Brenda Salgado at (415) 243-9301 for more information and registration.

Kathie Piccagli

YES! I WANT TO JOIN OWL!

The Founding of OWL

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

City State ZIP

TELEPHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Annual dues of \$50 include \$15 SF OWL, \$10 State OWL and \$25 National OWL. Members receive SF OWL bi-monthly newsletter, and both OWL CA and National OWL Observer quarterly newsletters. *When you pay dues to the San Francisco Chapter, you automatically become a member of State and National OWL.* No one will be turned away if unable to pay the full amount.

Make a check out to and mail to:

OWL- SF Chapter
870 Market Street, Room 905
San Francisco, CA 94102

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870 Market Street, #905
San Francisco, CA 94102

OWL was born in 1980 in Des Moines, Iowa, during one of the pre-conferences held around the county in preparation for the third White House Conference on Aging, which was held in 1981 in Washington, DC. At the pre-conference in Des Moines, TISH SOMMERS noted that little attention was being paid to the ways in which aging was different for women. She called for a special "ad hoc" meeting to discuss this concern; OWL has been a voice for the special concerns of midlife and older women ever since.

Comments or questions? Please contact the SF OWL Office at (415) 989-4422; FAX: (415) 989-4050; e-mail: owlsanfran@juno.com

Office hours: Monday 11 am to 1:30 pm
Newsletter Deadline: Call editor for date
(415) 585-3950

The date on your mailing label is the date your membership (or subscription) expires.