



Web Site: <http://www.owlsf.org>

April - June 2014

Email: owlsf@owlsf.org

OWL is the ONLY national membership organization to focus exclusively on critical issues facing women as they age. We work together to improve the status and quality of life for midlife and older women through national, state and local networks.

**OWL SF
Presents:**

**Fran Moreland Johns discussing her book,
*Perilous Times: An Insider Look at Abortion
Before — and After — Roe v Wade***

The author will discuss the dramatic and ongoing struggle for women's rights, focusing on women's personal stories of back alley abortions before Roe v Wade, and the physicians and activists who risked everything to provide safe procedures.

After initial comments, Ms. Johns, an OWL SF member, will be 'in conversation' with OWL SF board member Maxine Anderson, followed by a Question & Answer session with the audience. Some important questions:

- **Are we returning to a pre-70s time?**
- **What are women's rights re: reproductive choice?**

**When: Saturday, April 26, 10:00 AM — 12 NOON
Where: Flood Building, 870 Market Street, Room 1185**

**Handicap Accessible
All Invited**

OWL SF * 870 Market Street, #905, San Francisco, Ca. 94102
Phone 415-989-4422 * Web site: www.owlsf.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Hello Everyone,

I hope you are ready for a wonderful spring! I am going to use this column to follow-up on a few items that have happened since the first of the year.

In January we sent each of you a big package of OWL SF materials and we have heard from many of you how much you appreciated it. Thank you! Now your 'assignment' is to use some of those wonderful things we sent you to help spread the word about OWL SF, what we are about, and our programs.

Some you were present at our February event on Pedestrian Safety—OWL SF has contributed mightily through letters, and several of our people on public committees supporting pedestrian safety. In the first wave of results, the Supervisors have designated \$4 million (a drop in the bucket to the meet the needs) to the start of engineering changes to our most dangerous intersections—changes to include the 'bulbing out' of corners so pedestrians are more visible; longer lights for crossing; a safety line requiring cars to stop further back from the intersections, to name but a few.

We encourage you to contact your supervisors to thank them for this initial effort. Please let them know that you are an OWL SF member and encourage them to keep it up! Urge them to include funding for further efforts in their next budget.

Then there was the Memory program in March – this topic, that concerns us all, was presented to a packed house, and there was quite a lively and educational discussion. Our presenter Dr. Joel Kramer, a gentle person, answered each question with humor and grace. I think he was quite interested in some of our oldest OWLettes! Hmm, I wonder why? Could it be that 90+ year-olds attending issues and conversing actively in a Q&A might speak to a treasure of active minds?

Coming soon, OWL SF on Facebook. We are in the process of building a presence on Facebook and have a training on the 9th of April for administrators. It is our hope that this activity will not only support the community's awareness of OWL SF, but also support our efforts to raise action on some of the issues we are trying to support: Election Funding Transparency, Social Security, Pedestrian Safety, and so many more. We are also building a video for YouTube that will speak to some of the issues of aging in San Francisco, a topic that is important to us all.

Longtime OWL SF member Fran Moreland Johns will be speaking this month on her new book *Perilous Times: An Insider Look at Abortion Before—And After—Roe vs. Wade*. Fran is such a wonderful speaker, this is sure to be a lively discussion with all of the legal action taking place across the country. So many things we have taken for granted as 'conquered' through years of effort and legislation seem to be unraveling in these crazy times. OWL SF worries for the generations that have come to assume these are their rights, and are not motivated to act against these insidious legal shenanigans!! Will they be too late?

Join us in this discussion and so much more over the next few months, won't you? Tell your friends and bring your neighbors to these important discussions and presentations.

—*Gwynne Seidell, President*

Gwynne Seidell, President
Maxine Anderson
Robin Brasso
Joan Downey
Glenda Hope
Margaret Lew
Sheila Malkind
Nan McGuire
Ruth Strassner
Betty Traynor

Newsletter
Margaret Lew, Editor

Going My Way
Diana Merlo
GPDiana1@sbcglobal.net

Political Advocacy Committee
Glenda Hope
Melanie Grossman
Co-Chairwomen

OWL SF Board meetings: first Monday of the month, 4:00-6:00 pm, 870 Market St.
Phone: (415) 989-4422
Email: owlsf@owlsf.org
Web: www.owlsf.org
Mail: 870 Market St., Room 905, San Francisco, CA 94102

California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) News and State Legislation Update

Legislation

CARA has eleven priority bills this session, including five which make up the Patients Bill of Rights (see article on single-payer on page 4). In this report, I'll focus on three others.

First is SB 52, the California DISCLOSE Act of 2013, (part of Clean Money campaign) which has also been one of OWL's priorities. This is the second year for this two-year bill. The bill requires all political advertising in television, radio, print, and websites to state the three largest funders. This bill passed the Senate last year, but has stalled this year in the Assembly Elections and Redistricting Committee.

SB 1014, the "Drug Take-back Bill," is a bill CARA cosponsored. It requires all drug manufacturers to have a program for safe, convenient acceptance and disposal of unneeded personal prescription medicines at manufacturer's expense, using pharmacies as drop-off points. This bill passed the Senate Environmental Quality Committee, on March 26. The next committee hearing will be April 21, the Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee. OWL SF has sent a letter of support to the bill's author.

A third priority bill is a bill to create an Oil Severance tax. This bill, SB 1017, would impose a 9.5% tax on oil production in California. The fact that California has no oil severance tax, unlike most other states, has been a controversial issue for many years, especially as the State cuts social service programs in times of budgetary shortfalls. It is estimated that this tax would earn some \$2 billion annually, which would be used to fund higher education and Health and Human Services programs.

Convention

This year's one day Regional Convention will be held in Richmond, October 1. CARA alternates yearly between two-day statewide conventions and one-day regional conventions. Save The Date - October 1 there will be more information in the next OWL SF newsletter.

—*Kathie Piccagli*

OWL SF Board News

It is with pleasure that we announce the addition of Betty Traynor to our board. She will begin on April 7th.

Betty, we are so pleased and are looking forward to working with you. Thank you for your interest and commitment.

—*Gwynne Seidell*

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• Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!
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- The results of our 2013 End of Year Appeal letter
 - have been gratifying. Forty members and friends
 - of OWL SF contributed the grand total of \$4,000.
 - We wish to recognize the following members and
 - friends who responded so generously:
- •
 • **Mattie Alperton**
- **Eva S. Auchincloss**
 - **Rosemary Bacy ***
 - **Darlene Ceremello ***
 - **Shirley Costello ***
 - **Gloria Garcia**
 - **Margo George***
 - **Anne Grauzlis**
 - **Andrew Grimstad ***
 - **Melanie Grossman ***
 - **Mary Anne Hickey**
 - **Amy Hittner ***
 - **Lorraine Honig***
 - **Glenda Hope ***
 - **Nancy Ingwersen**
 - **Marie Jobling**
 - **Frances Johns**
 - **Carolyn Lee ***
 - **Evelyn Levin**
 - **Jonee Levy ***
 - **Margaret Lew**
 - **Sheila Malkind**
 - **Sherrie Matza**
 - **Nan McGuire**
 - **Marjorie Miller**
 - **Jane Morrison**
 - **Gloria Nudelman**
 - **Chana Orner**
 - **Mauree Perry**
 - **Gwynne Seidell Peyton ***
 - **Josie Phillip**
 - **Kathie Piccagli ***
 - **Mary Kent Schardt***
 - **Sandy Sohcot**
 - **Ruth Strassner ***
 - **Jane Swinerton**
 - **Mary Twomey ***
 - **Allyson Washburn**
 - **Esther Wong**
 - **Vivi Wyatt**
- • *** Donors of \$100 or more**
 •
- • • • •

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Natividad Jordan
Evelyn Moorman

Political Advocacy Committee Update •••

The Political Advocacy Committee considered the matters in the two following reports and heartily supports them. We will explore ways to become actively engaged with the Campaign for A Healthy California directly, especially the just-beginning 18-month campaign for giving our state a single-payer option. The PAC also discussed ideas emerging from our Pedestrian Safety program, especially working toward a “no right on red” policy for San Francisco and an effort to require bicyclists to pay for licensing as car drivers must do. Joan Downey will be in touch with Walk San Francisco about these concerns.

Visit the OWL-SF website for updates and “what to do” information for actively supporting these initiatives.

—*Glenda Hope*

What Is Happening with Single-Payer Healthcare in California?

Single-payer healthcare has been a priority for OWL since our founding in the 1980’s. Now it isn’t in the news much. Why?

In California, there was single-payer legislation passed by the Legislature but vetoed by the Governor for several years. This year there is not even a bill in the Legislature. This is primarily because legislators are concentrating on supporting legislation which will facilitate operation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Many groups are, in fact, working to promote a plan for single-payer in our state through a coalition organized as Campaign for a Healthy California. CARA is one of the steering committee members, and Michael Lyon, OWL member, is also the SF Gray Panthers representative.

In short, the longer-term plan is to put single-payer healthcare on the statewide ballot in 2016. This would be preparatory to 2017, the year when states can receive waivers under the Affordable Care Act to provide comprehensive health care in alternative ways.

In the meantime, the Campaign for a Healthy California plans to sponsor a Patient Bill of Rights in 2014 that would plug the huge holes in ACA. The Campaign plans town hall meetings and a media campaign to demonstrate that it is the insurance companies, not government incompetence, that is making ACA not work, and that we need single-payer healthcare to get rid of the insurance companies.

A problem in recent years has been the lack of current data on the potential economic costs and benefits of single-payer, and assembling that data is a huge job. The Campaign will push the Legislature to put together a quasi-governmental Payers’ Commission composed of large healthcare purchasers. In 2015, the Payers’

Commission would hold hearings across the state, which would publicize the economic benefits of single-payer healthcare.

—*Kathie Piccagli*

With acknowledgment to Michael Lyon’s article in SF Gray Panthers Newsletter

What is Happening with Social Security and Medicare?

Whew! Social Security cuts are finally off the table, at least for now. All those calls we made and letters we sent paid off; they seem to have gotten the “hands off Social Security” message. President Obama’s proposed budget includes no changes for Social Security.

It is the right time to encourage improving Social Security. Senator Tom Harkin has proposed the Strengthen Social Security Act (S 567), which would both strengthen benefits and insure the survival of the program. A companion bill, HR 3118, was introduced in the House of Representatives, by a representative from California, Linda Sanchez.

Please call your legislators (Senator Feinstein especially) to ask them to support, or better yet, co-sponsor this legislation.

In the meantime, Medicare is under attack. There are attempts to cut benefits, raise costs, raise the eligibility age, etc. As is said by many, cutting Medicare is cutting Social Security. Ultimately, paying more for Medicare decreases your Social Security income.

The fight against attacks on Medicare is, in many ways, more difficult. Medicare is part of the Federal budget while Social Security has its own trust fund, and it seems like there are so many more subtle ways to cut Medicare benefits.

—*Kathie Piccagli*

Fran Johns to Speak at OWL SF April Meeting

Come to our April meeting and enjoy a thought-provoking discussion about women’s health and reproductive choice with OWL member Fran Moreland Johns, whose recently published book *Perilous Times: An Insider Look at*

Abortion Before—And After—Roe vs. Wade will be central to the conversation.



This complex issue has been all over the news lately. Issues some of us thought were settled in the 70’s are being reopened. Are we returning to a dark time? What are women’s rights concerning issues of reproductive choice? Bring your questions! The new book will be available for purchase.

Read more by Fran Moreland Johns on her blog: <http://franjohns.net/>

Pedestrian Safety And You!

On February 22nd, a diverse group of speakers contributed information on this vital topic to a full house at OWL's *Pedestrian Safety and You* forum.

Laura Stonehill, an Assistant Engineer from the SFMTA, presented the City's WalkFirst project. WalkFirst is based on data gathered from City agencies that will plan the major improvements needed over the next 5 years to make San Francisco a safer place to walk.

Do you know the key risk factors for pedestrian injuries and deaths? They are:

- **Speed**— 90 percent of pedestrians are killed when hit by a vehicle traveling at 55mph.
- **Drivers' failure to yield**— 70 percent of pedestrian injuries occur at intersections; the top factor cited in pedestrian collisions is driver failure to yield the right of way (over 40%).
- **Left turns**— One-quarter of pedestrians injured in San Francisco are hit by a left-turning vehicle, over twice the proportion of people injured by vehicles turning right (10%).

The OWL SF audience spoke up voicing the opinion that right-turn-on-red was also dangerous for pedestrians and that perhaps OWL SF should take up as a mission getting the law changed for San Francisco. In New York City and in Europe it is illegal to turn right on a red light unless authorized by a sign or signal.

SFPD officers, Julio Bandoni and Mark Hodge, from Southern Station spoke to us about SFPD's campaign to educate distracted walkers. The focus is on pedestrians who text or talk on the phone instead of paying attention. The officers are stopping and talking to people about pedestrian accidents and cell phone robberies – and handing them a postcard with the message. Another important change from SFPD is that they now refer to *collisions* between cars/bikes/pedestrians instead of *accidents*. An accident says there is no one to blame; a collision is when a person's choice creates the conditions for a crash.

District 8 Supervisor Scott Wiener, reported his efforts to improve pedestrian safety in the City. He explained why bulb-outs help pedestrians: Bulb-outs are curb extensions that extend into the parking lane shortening



Pedestrian safety speakers captured the attention of the audience.
Photo by Sheila Malkind

the distance for a crossing, making vehicles and pedestrians more visible to each other, and making it more difficult for cars to speed around a corner.

OWL SF also invited non-profit groups working on pedestrian safety issues to the meeting with the expectation that we could collaborate with them on these important issues.

Natalie Burdick represented Walk SF, whose mission is to make walking in San Francisco safer for everyone, so that our community is healthier and more livable. Some of their successful efforts: making San Francisco the first city in the state with safer 15-mph school zones around 181 schools citywide; securing funds to improve streets for walking, including \$50 million in the 2011 Streets Bond; “watch-dogging” the police and District Attorney to make sure they enforce laws that keep you safe when you walk; improving safety on the city's most dangerous streets, including 19th Avenue, Masonic, and Cesar Chavez Boulevards.

Howard Strassner represented the Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC): PSAC is the official public representative to the Board of Supervisors on pedestrian issues. Their missions include making pedestrian safety recommendations to the Board of Supervisors and other City departments. They also review policies and planning efforts for pedestrians, such as safety, traffic calming, and sidewalk and crosswalk treatments.

Spokesperson Pi Ra came from Senior and Disability Action. Their mission is to mobilize and educate seniors and people with disabilities to fight for individual rights and social justice. Through individual support and collective action, they work together to create a city and world in which seniors and people with disabilities can live well and safely.

—Joan Downey

All Women's Issues Were Not Resolved In 1920

All Women Activists Are Not Wild-Eyed Radicals

Women's Health Care Is Not Adequately Covered

Women's Economic Security Is Not Based On The Charity Of Men

Everything You Need To Know About "The System" Was Not Taught In School

Does Memory Change With Age?

This question was the focus of the OWL SF program on March 15th. A sellout crowd listened to and questioned Joel Kramer, PsyD, a neuropsychology researcher from the UCSF Center for Memory and Aging.

Dr Kramer believes that a decline in memory with age is not inevitable and it may even be a myth. He illustrated this with a series of slides of a large study of 65-95 year-olds and how their memories functioned over time. It showed there is considerable variability in how much and how fast our memories change. In the study one-third of the subjects got worse over time and at least as many got better.

His bias is that age-related declines in cognition are the result of changes to underlying brain structure and function. These changes to the brain are typically pathological. Thus anything that prevents, delays or minimizes the consequence of these changes will help maintain our cognition.

There are many neurodegenerative diseases: Alzheimers, Parkinsons, progressive supranuclear palsy and others. Alzheimer's (AD) is the disease that people fear most for good reason. It is currently affecting over 5 million Americans at a cost of \$200 hundred billion per year. Typical AD early symptoms are: problems with memory specifically remembering new information, and subtle problems with word finding, multi-tasking and complex problem solving.

The vascular risk factors affecting AD vulnerability are: hypertension, high cholesterol, lipids, diabetes, obesity, smoking and getting older. In a 36 year follow up of Kaiser patients who had early measurement of abdominal size and body mass index (BMI), high BMI

was associated with a 3 fold increase of risk of AD. Taking measures to avoid these factors is a way to protect oneself for the future.

Aging can have a significant impact on brain structure and function. But the changes are neither universal or inevitable. Multiple factors influence how the brain changes with age, some of which are under our control. In later life we can do the following things to optimize brain functioning:

Put ourselves in more physically enriched environments by undertaking aerobic activities such as walking, stationary bicycling or running. Physical exercise is associated with a significant reduction in the risk of dementia, increased brain volumes, better cerebral blood flow, and better memory and executive function;

Put ourselves in cognitively stimulating activities such as reading, going to museums, and doing crossword puzzles. Individuals who participate in cognitive stimulating activities may be at a lower risk of developing AD;

Put ourselves in socially enriched environments such as taking classes at senior centers where you are actively learning a skill with others; joining womens' groups that are active in the community and keeping active within your social circle.

To sum it up, the following will keep your neurons happy: genes, physical exercise, cognitive activity, social activity, good sleep, minimizing inflammation and eating a healthy diet.

We only wish more of you had been able to listen to this very interesting talk.

—*Nan McGuire*



Spring Cleaning? Remember The Community Thrift Store

We are grateful to those who donated goods to the Community Thrift Store during the last quarter of 2013: Diane Sidd Champion, Lorraine Honig, Nan McGuire, Kathie Piccagli, Gwynne Seidell and Marcia Soffer. Thank you all!

The Community Thrift Store on Valencia between 17th and 18th Streets gives OWL 40% of the selling price of items that you donate. To deliver your unwanted items: go south on Mission Street, look for Sycamore Alley on the right after 17th Street. Turn right on Sycamore and go to the loading dock near the end. You can park and a person on duty will help you unload. Community Thrift is open seven days a week.

—*Nan McGuire*

April 8 is Equal Pay Day

April 8 will be the day when, comparing the typical earnings of women and men since the start of 2013, women will have caught up to what men earned last year alone.

The National Women's Law Center has a petition to lawmakers to remind them of the pay gap and urge their continued action in closing the gap. Sign at : <https://secure2.convio.net/nwlc/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=OnScreenThanks&id=1149>

Read more about the National Women's Law Center on their web site. <http://www.nwlc.org/>

—*Kathie Piccagli*

Emergency Departments and Care for the Older Patient

To meet the needs of the rapidly growing elderly population, medical centers must “geriatricize” their emergency departments, according to recent research by medical experts in geriatrics.

Some of the recommendations: hire providers trained in caring for older patients; routinely administer brief, but effective, screening tests for dementia and other cognitive impairments; install non-slip flooring and more sound-absorbing materials to decrease the risk of falls and dampen noise levels. Equally important: train all staff members to be more attuned to social factors that can affect care for the elderly, such as the necessity of arranging for transportation to get to follow-up medical visits; the need for walkers, canes and other medical equipment to get around in the the home and for extra help to get prescriptions filled and taken correctly.

Similar changes are already in place to improve pediatric, trauma and cardiac emergency care. But Dr. Ula Hwang, the lead author of the paper in *Health Affairs*, and Associate Professor specializing in emergency medicine and geriatrics and palliative care stated: “Older adults aren’t the patients people gravitate toward. A larger stumbling block remains: getting a greater proportion of hospital administrators, health care providers and the public at large to become interested in care for the elderly.”

Nonetheless, Dr. Hwang and her colleagues’ guidelines have led to the incorporation of such changes in the emergency departments of 50 medical centers, compared to ten years ago, when no changes existed. “We can really become partners in improving care.” Dr. Hwang said. “We can give our elderly patients, our parents and our grandparents the kind of respect and understanding that we owe them.” *(Author’s note: it’s about time!)*

—*Sheila Malkind*

Source: “Emergency Rooms Are No Place for the Elderly”

By Pauline W. Chen, M.D., *New York Times*, March 13, 2014 *Health Affairs*, December 2013, vol. 32, no. 12, 2116-2121

Beverly Rockabrand Volunteer Extraordinaire

Since becoming active in OWL SF in 2005, I have had the pleasure of working on a regular basis with Beverly. Several other board members also have had an opportunity to work with her over the ten years that she donated her time to keep things running. Beverly is the reason the organization was able to function without any paid assistance. She arrived at the OWL office in the Flood Building every Monday, holiday or not, to attend to the issues that had come in over our transom during the preceding week. She also supervised several other OWL volunteers over this time span. Although Beverly has experienced chronic back pain, she almost never let it interfere with her three hours in the office.

Beverly, OWL SF salutes you!

—*Nan McGuire*



Muriel Hoffman Brotsky

Our members will be saddened to hear that Muriel Hoffman Brotsky, a long-time member of OWL SF, passed away on January 27, 2014. Muriel was a talented social worker and progressive activist. She received a MSW from UC Berkeley and her last position was at Jewish Family and Childrens Services where she held a variety of positions, including Director of Family Services. After retiring in 1990, she set up a private practice. She was a generous contributor to OWL SF, and all of those who knew her will miss her.

—*Nan McGuire*



Calendar

For a complete and up to date listing see the OWL website: <http://www.owlsf.org/calendar.php>

April 7 Monday — OWL Board Meeting, 870 Market, room 1185, 4:00-6:00pm

April 25 Saturday — OWL General Meeting, (see cover page & article on page 4 for details)

May 5 Monday — OWL Board Meeting, 870 Market, room 1185, 4:00-6:00pm

May 24 Saturday — OWL General Meeting, 10:00-Noon (topic and details to be announced)

June 2 Monday — OWL Board Meeting, 870 Market, room 1185, 4:00-6:00pm

June 21 Saturday — OWL General Meeting, 10:00-Noon (topic and details to be announced)

Postcards will be mailed to the membership to announce topics and details of OWL SF’s general meetings in May and June.

YES! I WANT TO JOIN OWL!

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY STATE ZIP

TELEPHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Annual dues of \$50 are recommended: When you pay dues to the San Francisco Chapter, you automatically become a member at National and San Francisco levels. (If you are unable to pay the recommended amount, OWL has established a sliding fee scale from \$50 –\$5.) Members receive SF OWL quarterly and National OWL Observer quarterly newsletters.

Make a check out to and mail to:
OWL, SF Chapter
870 Market Street, Room 905
San Francisco, CA 94102

OWL
San Francisco Chapter
870 Market Street, #905
San Francisco, CA 94102

The Founding of OWL

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.

The date on your mailing label is the date your membership expires.