



The voice of mid-life and older women

NEWSLETTER

San Francisco



January - March 2023

OWL focuses 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.

Let 2023 be the year OWL-SF takes flight!

OWL-SF Annual Planning Meeting

Saturday, January 28, 2023

11 AM to 12:30 PM

Zoom Meeting

- Let's make OWL more relevant, inclusive, and vibrant than ever!
- Help us plan:
- Informative, inspiring activities and programs
- Political actions that support our mission to improve lives of midlife and older women
- Membership meetings featuring speakers who bring you the health information you need
- An outlet for our idealistic and creative spirit
- Opportunities for friendship, community and support

Zoom Link and call-in information to follow

**OWL SF * PO Box 170622, San Francisco, Ca. 94117
Phone 415-712-1695 * Web site: www.owlsf.org**

Looking Back at OWL's Busy Year — 2022

In 2022, OWL-SF worked to improve and add quality to the lives of older and midlife women through its programs and activities. The beginning of 2023 seems like a good time to look back at some of our accomplishments.



Owl Alerts

Weekly alerts in 2022 urged OWL members to take on some of the important issues affecting us all. Dozens of alerts on numerous topics were sent to members in 2022 to encourage them to contact state, federal, and local representatives and ask them to support measures affecting older women and their families. Members were encouraged to forward OWL alerts to friends inviting them to take action hoping that our efforts would increase exponentially. Alert topics included strengthening and supporting Social Security, preserving traditional Medicare, guarding against privatization of vital benefits for older women and the disabled, and promoting social justice causes. On the local scene, we advocated for keeping City College a community college serving all San Franciscans, including older adults. We advocated to ensure that Laguna Honda Hospital remain open to serve those who need it, especially older women

Monthly Membership Meetings

OWL membership meetings, both in person and on Zoom, brought important information to our members and the public in 2022. Informational meetings included an update on COVID-19 by Dr. Anna Chodos, of UCSF's Gerontology Department; Older Women and Employment, by speakers from the Felton Institute; Internet Security with speaker Danielle Diebler, Co-founder and CEO of MarvelousAI, a nonprofit that exposes bias and misinformation online; Protecting Social Security and Medicare, presented by Jodi Reid, Executive Director of California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA), on protecting Medicare and Social Security by preventing privatization; Coach Kyra, a well-known exercise trainer who spoke to us about fitness exercise for everyone; Preparing our Important Information for Loved Ones in Case of Health Crisis or Death, with speaker Susan Pollack; Celebrating our Creative Spirit, featuring our own OWL members and their impressive creative contributions; and our annual November Ballot Measures featuring pro and con arguments on selected local ballot measures.

In Person Social Gatherings

OWL members came together in July and December to enjoy box lunches and conversation with old friends and new, reducing the isolation in their lives through community.

Newsletter

The OWL Newsletter, published quarterly, written by and for our members, brought health news, book and entertainment reviews, opinion pieces, reports, and updates on important issues.

Owl Book Club

The OWL Book Club led by Louise DiMattio is a special benefit available to members and their friends. The Book Club meets once a month on Zoom to discuss short stories often written by women and about women's lives. Our discussions enrich the enjoyment and often deepen understanding of the stories we read.

OWL Website

OWL's Website makes us available to women near and far. It includes our mission, calendar, information on resources for older women, lists of alerts and copies of current and past newsletters. The Website also promotes local events of interest to midlife and older women, including the Legacy Film Festival on Aging, the Annual Arts with Elders Exhibition, and CARA events.

As we begin 2023, we look forward to another year of exceptional OWL activities!

—*The OWL-SF Board*

Board Members

Maxine Anderson, VP

Paula Barber

Joan Downey, Treasurer

Melanie Grossman, President

Glenda Hope

Margaret Lew

Betty Traynor, Secretary

Newsletter

Margaret Lew, Editor

Political Advocacy Committee

Glenda Hope

Melanie Grossman

Co-Chairwomen

OWL SF Board meetings: first

Monday of the month, 4:00-5:00 pm,
Zoom link available on request

Phone: (415) 712-1695

Email: info@owlsf.org

Web: www.owlsf.org

Mail: Post Office Box 170622,
San Francisco, CA 94117

It's Time To Nominate Board Members For 2023

OWL-SF needs new Board members to continue to inspire, educate, and meet the needs of older women. Serving on the OWL Board is a great way to meet new people and get involved with meaningful activities. We urge you to participate in adding new members to the OWL Board by nominating new candidates. Please note that any member may nominate themselves to serve on the Board.

Responsibilities For Individual Board Members

- Attend monthly Board meetings
- Participate in one OWL Committee – usually a monthly meeting
- Identify OWL Alert topics – one month of each year
- Propose topics for monthly membership meeting and assume responsibility for one or more monthly meetings. New members will help with meeting tasks to learn how meetings are planned and produced.

Nominating People For Board Membership

- Be sure the nominee is willing to serve on the Board
- Remember that members can nominate themselves

Email your nominee to Betty Traynor: btraynor@att.net or phone OWL and leave a message at (415) 712-1695

Deadline for Nominations

The 2023 Planning Meeting: January 28th. Nominations from the floor can be made at that time. The list of nominees with brief bios will be sent by email or mailed to members who are not online.

Election of Board Members will be held at the beginning of the Membership Meeting on February 25th. Up to 8 people may be elected.

What Do OWLs Want? A Survey of Our Members

To serve OWL Members best in the coming year, we need to hear your ideas and preferences for meeting topics, meeting time, location, format (ZOOM or in person), and more.

If you have not already done so, please take a moment to fill out our brief survey.

We also hope to see and hear from you at our Planning Meeting on Saturday, January 28, 2023. We'll share the survey results at the meeting and make plans for the year with your input.

If you have not received a printed copy of the survey in the mail, or if you have received a link in e-mail that does not work for you, contact the OWL office at: (415) 712-1695 or info@owlsf.org for assistance.

Ruth Strassner Remembered

Long time member of OWL-SF, Ruth Strassner died peacefully on November 8th 2022. OWL was but one of many causes that she supported in her lifetime and she leaves us with warm memories. We were happy to see her at the October 2022 meeting on Creativity— she was a well-known potter among other talents.



Ruth Strassner and her Dahlias.

WELCOME NEW MEMBER!

Muriel Parenteau

Rave Reviews for OWL's November Membership Meeting

In November, Susan Pollack, retired lawyer, and recent transplant from New York City to San Francisco, presented ideas on how to prepare important information for our loved ones in case of a health crisis or even death. She spoke from her extensive work in banking and financing, but also from her own personal experiences during her husband's illness and eventual death. She structured her presentation as "a conversation" between herself and participating OWL members, giving everyone an opportunity to give their own insights and ideas.

According to Pollack, critical information to include ranges from names and contact information of current doctors, lawyers, accountants; to where to find legal documents like power of attorney, advanced care directive; to important contact numbers and passwords; to organizations, clubs, and friends to be notified; to personal wishes regarding pets and possessions.

Members contributed ideas and observations from their own experience. Past OWL President, Glenda Hope, suggested writing one's own obituary and selecting a good photograph of oneself to guarantee that the picture that appears in the paper is one that you approve of, providing a moment of humor and levity to this very serious topic. By the end of the meeting, everyone agreed this topic should be an ongoing conversation among OWL members.

A complete list of Susan Pollock's suggestions about what to include in our information for family and loved ones can be found on the OWL website under News & Events/November 19 Meeting. Click the link on the bottom of the announcement. You may also request the complete list by emailing or calling OWL-SF.

—Melanie Grossman

Beginning the New Year A Second Chance

Would you like to have a second chance at beginning this new year? I loved seeing the sun rise over 2023 from Grandview Park early January 1st, but while I was there, I met a woman who makes a ritual of sunrises and sunsets. She told me that she and her father had birthdays close together around the time of the Lunar New Year, so they always went together to watch the sunrise. She recommended seeing the sun rise from Twin Peaks on January 22nd, the first day of the Lunar New year in 2023, when the moon may also be visible.

Curious about other traditions for the Lunar New Year, I was happy to read that at the stroke of midnight on the first day of the Lunar New Year, good luck is supposed to come, so it's forbidden to clean the house the first day because you don't want to wipe away that good luck. Unfortunately, it's not forbidden to clean the second day, and it's traditional to clean the house before the beginning of the Lunar New Year to make way for that good luck that comes at midnight.

—*Tina Martin*



Sunrise on New Years Day
2023. Photos by Tina Martin

11th Annual Legacy Film Festival On Aging

Check out the film program and get your all-fest pass or tickets now.

When: Friday, January 6 – Sunday, January 15, 2023

Where: Online at <https://legacyfilmfestivalonaging2023.eventive.org/welcomelegacyfilmfestivalonaging.org>

Individual Tickets \$12. All-Fest Pass \$65



18 different Programs to choose from, all from the comfort of your own home. Each Program consists of one or more films, and may include a pre-recorded interview with the filmmaker or the film's subject. Programs run from 1 hr. 15 mins. to just over 2 hrs. And here's just one of many wonderful Programs: **The Grands**, which includes the following short films about intergenerational relationships.

Three Grandmas (three separate shorts) — Stories of grandmothers and granddaughters in that time in their lives when they are all grown women. Excerpted from the Israeli series "*Raiding Grandma*".

Tsipa and Volf — A grandson creates a loving portrait of his elderly grandparents, Tsipa and Volf Gamburg. The short film is followed by Sheila Malkind's pre-recorded interview with Director Daniel Gamburg.

Being 97 — Another grandson creates a loving portrait of his grandfather, a philosopher who at 97 is haunted by death and mortality, and begins to appreciate more about life.

Find even more marvelous programming in our Virtual Catalog. Please enjoy and be enriched by all these fantastic films on Aging! And in the interest of intergenerational connections: Thanks to the Pass It On Network, in the U.S. and in Europe, we now have a French connection through the European Grandparents School. (École des Grands-Parents européens, or EGPE).

—*Sheila Malkind, Founder and Executive Director Legacy Film Festival on Aging*

I Worried

by Mary Oliver

I worried a lot. Will the garden grow, will the rivers flow in the right direction, will the earth turn as it was taught, and if not how shall I correct it?

Was I right, was I wrong, will I be forgiven, can I do better?

Will I ever be able to sing, even the sparrows can do it and I am, well, hopeless.
Is my eyesight fading or am I just imagining it, am I going to get rheumatism, lockjaw,
dementia?

Finally, I saw that worrying had come to nothing.
And I gave it up. And took my old body and went out into the morning
and sang.

Do You Podcast?

If you are a book loving person like me, you may have gotten hooked on listening to podcasts. If not, then, perhaps you ask, “What is a podcast?” The easiest way to explain it is by saying that a podcast is a program that you listen to by pressing an icon on your iPhone or iPad, an icon that is purple with a white figure on it surrounded by two circles. Under the icon is the word “Podcasts”. I am sure that you have this icon! Under that icon is an entire world of entertainment, news and information about every topic you can possibly imagine. For a book lover, the discovery of podcasts is, literally (forgive the bad pun), an extravaganza.

So, why am I hooked? Because under that icon, you will find marvelous podcasts about literature. I want to bring attention to a few of those podcasts that I find to be real treasures. The first of these and my personal favorite is *The History of Literature* with host and creator Jacke Wilson whose byline is, “Amateur enthusiast Jacke Wilson journeys through the history of literature, from ancient epics to contemporary classics.” Wilson’s background in literature and the lives of authors is vast and his approach is unique. He regularly pairs each topic with a guest speaker who brings additional light to a particular author or subject. There are a total of about 451 podcasts so far and each one is a gem. Wilson releases a new episode almost every week. Amazing.

Another terrific podcast, *Backlisted*, was introduced to me by fellow Great Bookie, Chris Hammer, at the Great Books Weekend at Asilomar last year. Chris urged me simply to try it knowing that one session would do the trick. It did. *Backlisted* bills itself as “Giving New Life to Old Books.” But *Backlisted* is so much more than that. The team of British hosts and their guests are funny, erudite and in awe of the power of great literature. A recent episode highlighted works by Irish writer Maeve Brennan. Others have focused on Elizabeth Gaskell, Annie Dillard and Helen DeWitt. The focus is on great works you may have missed while being caught up by the distraction of the New York Times’ Ten Best List that comes out around this time every year. (Have you noticed how that NYT list fades from view in an incredibly short period of time?)

Other good literary podcasts are the BBC’s *Books and Authors*, *Just the Right Book* with Roxanne Cody and, if you are a poetry lover, try the sublime podcast *Poetry Unbound* hosted by poet Padraig O’Tuama. Listening to this podcast is a spiritual experience. Close your eyes and bask in the beauty.

Of course, like anything else in cyberspace, there is a huge range in the quality of the programming offered by podcasts. For a book lover, that is particularly true. Believe it or not, you can find many podcasts where the speakers spend an inordinate amount of time talking about romance novels. If you doubt me, check out *What Should I read Next?* with Anne Bogel and her on-show guests. I had no idea that romance novels were such a “thing”, so much so that they have their own genre. Oh, by the way, the word genre is very

much in the literary news so be sure to use it when you want to impress. Another podcast that is heavy on the romance novels is *Sarah’s Bookshelf Live*. As a Great Books person I shouldn’t even mention this last program because the show hosts summarily put down the classics genre while praising multiple titles in the romance genre. Good grief!

Oh, did I tell you that there is a “search” function that appears when you click on the purple podcast app? There’s a little spyglass symbol on the bottom right of your screen. You can find all of these and many, many more right there on your iPhone. I hope you experience the thrill of discovery just as I did. Have I missed one? I’d love to hear about it.

—**Louise DiMattio, OWL member and Great Books Leader in the Bay Area**

Editor’s note: you can also find podcasts on your android cellphone or tablet.

Coping With Loss During The Holidays (Or Any Special Times)

Everything in quotation marks is taken from a recent edition of the magazine *Presbyterians Today*. The rest is my musings.

“...the key to helping those who are grieving is listening. ... If they don’t want to talk, sit quietly with them. Don’t ignore their pain or try to cheer them up; just be in the moment with them. Don’t just bring them a meal but also eat with them.”

Avoid talking about your own loss and grief or saying I know just how you feel because we never really know how someone else feels. Be open to the other person’s expressing anger at the one who died or reflecting on how the relationship coulda/shoulda been but wasn’t.

If You Are The One Coping With Loss At These Times

“Set reasonable expectations for yourself. Don’t try to do everything or see everybody.

Don’t be afraid to rethink traditions; even long-standing ones can be changed and can be resumed next year – or not.

Give yourself permission to cut back on holiday decorations and preparations.

Grief is emotionally and physically exhausting. Take time for yourself.

Honor the memory of a loved one. Give a gift or donation in their name.

Be careful about how much sugar you consume. It can actually exacerbate depression. So can lack of exercise.”

Advice given to me by another widow when my husband died the day before Thanksgiving (1997): Accept invitations and don’t eat over the sink.

—**Glenda Hope**

Forgetfulness

by Billy Collins

The name of the author is the first to go followed obediently by the title, the plot, the heartbreaking conclusion, the entire novel which suddenly becomes one you have never read, never even heard of,

as if, one by one, the memories you used to harbor decided to retire to the southern hemisphere of the brain, to a little fishing village where there are no phones.

Long ago you kissed the names of the nine Muses goodbye and watched the quadratic equation pack its bag, and even now as you memorize the order of the planets,

something else is slipping away, a state flower perhaps, the address of an uncle, the capital of Paraguay.

Whatever it is you are struggling to remember, it is not poised on the tip of your tongue, not even lurking in some obscure corner of your spleen.

It has floated away down a dark mythological river whose name begins with an L as far as you can recall, well on your own way to oblivion where you will join those who have even forgotten how to swim and how to ride a bicycle.

No wonder you rise in the middle of the night to look up the date of a famous battle in a book on war. No wonder the moon in the window seems to have drifted out of a love poem that you used to know by heart.

Source: <https://allpoetry.com/poem/14327211-Forgetfulness-by-Billy-Collins>

—Submitted by Joan Downey

December Holiday Party A Little Chaos and Good Cheer

OWLs and their friends celebrated the end of 2022 and beginning of our winter holidays in the sunny recreation hall at St. Mark's Church. The event was a big success thanks to the excellent planning and coordinated work of Louise and her team, with tasty box lunches, dozens of books brought by OWLs to be exchanged, the (chaotic) Yankee gift exchange, holiday singing, meeting and chatting with old and new friends and the sharing of much cheer. Louise commented, "In spite of the chaos, I think that the gift exchange was a fun idea and we had so many laughs especially when Kathy P stole the Mr Coffee from another gal at our table. She was pretty brave!"



Glenda considers a book to take home.

What Are You Reading?

Dying Unafraid by Frances Johns

I've been "collecting" true stories of good deaths for several years (stories available upon request), so *Dying Unafraid* by Frances Johns was of particular interest to me. Far from being morbid, discussing death and what matters at our time of death is,

Johns acknowledges, life-affirming. Her stories of how individuals of all ages managed to die unafraid are inspiring, and include such considerations as physician-assisted death, palliative care, hospice, and the rights of people to forego a long and painful death.

Frances Johns, who worked with terminally ill people for many years, introduced her book during a monthly meeting of OWL in 2022 and offered to send a copy of her book, published in 1999, to anyone interested, free of charge but with the choice of making a donation to End of Life Choices California. <https://endoflifechoicesca.org>. She even pays for the postage!

You may remember that Janet Tom, a CCSF and SF librarian, won an "I love my librarian" award because people were so grateful for her series of workshops on death and dying in 2019, which were very well-attended. I went to the excellent workshop on "Last Wishes: Start the Conversation Now," which included the chance for each of us to go through cards and put them in order according to importance. "To have my family with me," "To have my affairs in order," "To be free from pain," "to be mentally aware," and more than 30 other considerations. Fran Johns' book is the best approach to dying wisely and well that I've witnessed since the library series. You can contact her at fjohns33@mindspring.com

—Tina Martin

Protect Traditional Medicare From Wall Street

It's official: The Medicare Direct Contracting program has now ended...only to be replaced by ACO REACH. As we all know, this change is purely cosmetic. At its core, both REACH and Direct Contracting are convenient names for the infiltration of Traditional Medicare by Wall Street investors and other third-party entities. In the new program, as in the old, these parties will be administering benefits for seniors and adults with disabilities, often without their knowledge or consent.

Between the official start of REACH and the continued growth of Medicare Advantage (MA), our movement is at a crucial crossroads. If we hope to one day achieve single payer, then we need to do everything we can now to prevent the private takeover of our most cherished public health program.

That is why now that REACH has begun, we're encouraging everybody to take action in defense of Traditional Medicare. Learn more about the program at Protect Medicare <https://protectmedicare.net/>

Simple

For years OWL has focused on the need to reduce waste, emphasizing reuse and recycling. We know the world is drowning in waste, from the production of plastic from fossil fuels to the ubiquitous use of plastics not recycled or reused. One way to tackle this is through consumer demand. Using fewer products, particularly products which cannot be reused, helps, as does buying products which are more environmentally friendly. One store which can help us do this is Simple.

Simple is a unique eco-market that offers a full range of zero-waste items, including a large selection of refillable products for the home and body, with a focus on local goods and local makers. The store opened in November and is on the corner of Stanyan and Carl.

Abbe Clemons, the proprietor, has a background in environmental planning. She's knowledgeable about her products and has interesting stories about many of them. She's passionate about her mission to "serve the community and, ultimately, the planet" by eliminating waste in the form of single-use plastics; consciously choosing items that are safe for the environment, our bodies, and our homes.

You can use your own containers for the refillable items or use the containers there. You can also bring in your extra containers that will be cleaned for others to use. Abbe reports that for the refills "our main priority was to find businesses that operate within a closed loop system. That means that all of the businesses and makers that we work with take back the empty

containers to be refilled and sent back to us, thereby creating a closed loop and preventing any waste from entering the landfill. This is the case for all of our refill products except for our liquid sunscreen, which cannot be sent back (but we do intend to reuse the gallon container when empty.)

"Our other products come to us either unpackaged or minimally packaged in compostable containers. We contact every business to ensure that there is no plastic anywhere in the process and that businesses aren't simply removing plastic packaging before sending it to us. So, while not completely 'zero-waste,' we are as low-waste as we could possibly be and are learning every day!"

There's also lots of interesting zero-waste products: dishcloths; scrub-pockets that use soap pieces; razors where the blades can be returned and are made into picnic utensils; and many more. Abbe spends a lot of time researching every product carried at Simple so customers can be confident that they are getting quality products made of good ingredients that are produced ethically. She does the work so you don't have to! What's next? Olive oil? Wine?

There's a 10% discount for seniors.

Workshops, classes, and community gatherings are planned for the near future. Check out Simple on Instagram @simpleshop.sf and the web at simple-sf.com<<http://simple-sf.com>>

—Joan Downey

Cleaning up? Downsizing?

Take your items to the
Community Thrift store
623 Valencia Street
(on the corner of Valencia and
Sycamore, near 17th street.)
(415)861-4910



Access the loading dock from
Mission onto Sycamore between 17th and 18th. Tell
them: ***These are for the Older Women's League of San
Francisco.*** OWL SF receives 40% of anything that sells!

Free COVID-19 Home Tests Available

Take an at home test:

- If you begin having COVID-19 symptoms like fever, sore throat, runny nose, or loss of taste or smell, or
- At least 5 days after you come into close contact with someone with COVID-19, or
- When you're going to gather with a group of people, especially those who are at risk of severe disease or may not be up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines.

Get Free Home COVID-19 Tests at: [COVID.gov/tests](https://www.covid.gov/tests)

Calendar

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

January 2 Monday — OWL Board Meeting 4:00-5:00pm (via Zoom)

January 28 Saturday— OWL Planning Meeting 11:00-12:30pm (via Zoom) (See Cover Page for details)

February 6 Monday — OWL Board Meeting 4:00-5:00pm (via Zoom)

February 25 Saturday— OWL General Meeting 11:00-Noon The Environment (via Zoom)
(Details to be announced)

March 6 Monday — OWL Board Meeting 4:00-5:00pm (via Zoom)

March 25 Saturday— OWL General Meeting 11:00-Noon (via Zoom) (Details to be announced)

YES! I WANT TO JOIN OWL SF!

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY STATE ZIP

TELEPHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Annual dues of \$50 are recommended. (If you are unable to pay the recommended amount, OWL has established a sliding fee scale from \$10 –\$50.) Members receive the quarterly OWL SF Newsletter, advocacy Alerts and invitations to monthly meetings.

OWL SF will not share or sell our membership list or any information about our members.

Make a check out to and mail to:

OWL SF
PO Box 170622
San Francisco, CA 94117

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The Founding of OWL

OWL was born in 1980 in Des Moines, Iowa, during one of the pre-conferences held around the country 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) 712-1695;
e-mail: info@owlsf.org