



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

January - March 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.

**You are Invited to the
OWL SF Annual Planning Meeting**

January 25, 2014

**11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Meeting Room at 555 Ellis Street**

On the Agenda:

**Membership • Fund Raising
Changes for OWL SF Over the Past Year
Program Priorities • Committees**

Your input is essential as we plan for the OWL SF's new year! We hope to encourage as many of you as possible to attend. In addition to providing your program input, enjoy lunch with other OWL SF members.

The meeting will be led by our President, Gwynne Seidell. Please join us. We need your ideas and want your company! Members and guests interested in OWL are welcome.

**Bring your brown bag lunch
Beverages provided
RSVP necessary
Call OWL office to leave message: 989-4422**

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year, Everyone!

*Look to this day!
For it is life, the very life of life.*

I want to talk to you about what OWL SF really needs – yes, yes, money is on the list, (isn't it always with every non-profit?) but more important is membership. People who want to work and socialize in order to grow and build our community.



Remember what do we do:

We show up—we make sure there is a voice in the room or a letter is written or a call is made. These may sound simple but their value is without measure. If this voice is not heard, it is invisible. It is a critical point of our mission that we bring the voice of Mid-life and Older women where it is needed: City Hall, Washington DC, local communities, wherever action is taking place that may impact quality of life.

We educate—our monthly programs offer insight into current topics of interest and need. From health and wellness to ballot measures. Topics that will or do impact our lives. And they are fun – great conversation ensues and information is shared, resources developed.

We're fun—yes we are! What is more entertaining than rich conversation, give and take, learning new things about our community, neighbors and sharing laughter and caring among women from many walks of life? Nothing. OWL SF is a wonderful community of amazing women, each bring their individuality and gifts from life into the room.

So my New Year's challenge to each of you is to share these things about us! Forward your newsletter to a new person each time you receive it, with a personal note like: "This is a great group and I think you would enjoy them."

It is this simple—we are all aware that if someone we know refers us to something we give it an extra look. That referral makes us more receptive. Help OWL SF grow by doing this and we will become even stronger and more effective in 2014.

It is a critical time for Mid-life and Older Women in the next few years as the 'boomers' start to age – all services will be impacted: housing, health and quality of living. It will be even more important to be a voice in the room.

Let's make 2014 the year for OWL SF and push our friends, neighbors and acquaintances to give OWL SF a look – come to a meeting, meet the membership. I look forward to meeting more of these wonderful women!

See you soon
Gwynne

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

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

CARA News

Tenth Annual Convention

CARA's (California Alliance for Retired Americans) 10th annual convention was held in Sacramento on October 1 and 2. In addition to hearing very interesting speakers and participating in workshops, the membership voted on CARA priorities for the coming year. Consistent with previous years, the first priority was health care, specifically single payer. Second was preservation and strengthening of Social Security, and third was the California state budget, fighting to restore services and working toward a fair and just process,

Ten years! CARA has established itself as a leader in the state for senior issues. In fact, CARA has had national influence as well.

Also at the convention I ran for another term on the CARA board, this time as a representative for OWL SF. (I had been representing OWL-CA, which has closed.) CARA's board is made up of representatives from unions, as well as community organizations.



OWL members Kathie Piccagli and Nan McGuire at the CARA Die-In.

Die-In

Later in October, CARA held a "die-in," to protest budget policies which are literally killing people. This was one of CARA's most spectacular and attention grabbing protests. Participants dressed in black, lying "dead" under tombstones. See Nan McGuire and me in the OWL cemetery plot in the accompanying photo.

Mercy Killers

In November, Michael Milligan's one-man show, written by the actor, toured the state to benefit Campaign for a Healthy California, a CARA partner. It was a stunning portrayal of what happened to one couple, caught in the current health care insurance hell. I was lucky to be one of several OWL's who saw it. It was so moving that every time I tried to tell my husband about it afterwards I burst into tears. *Mercy Killers* may have some return performances, and I hope many more of you are able to see it.

Legislation

CARA is having a real impact on California legislation affecting seniors. It is now a go-to organization for legislators with legislation which will impact seniors. Current priority bills address diverse issues from the safe disposal of prescription drugs to pedestrian safety and include the Disclose Act, legislation that OWLSF continues to endorse.

—*Kathie Piccagli*

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Barbara Gersh
Velma Parness

OWL SF Board News

The OWL SF Board welcomes Joan Downey and Sheila Malkind who were unanimously elected at the December monthly meeting, and thanks Melanie Grossman and Kathie Piccagli whose terms ended in December.

Introducing Board Member Joan Downey

Joan Downey was unanimously elected to the OWL Board at the December membership meeting. She has been an active member of the OWL Political Advocacy Committee for over a year. Joan is a longtime (40 years) friend of OWL Board member, Glenda Hope. They met when Glenda was organizing women's caucuses in large corporations and Joan kept up the work at Standard Oil after Glenda moved on. Beginning in 1995, Joan tutored the children of low income families in a Tenderloin apartment building, encouraging and enabling them to break out of poverty. She remains a mentor for several of them who are now grown, have successful careers, and delight in taking their former tutor to lunch. Joan has been an active member of the MTA Citizens Advisory Council, and a board member of Rescue MUNI and the Cole Valley Improvement Association including serving as the organizer of the Cole Valley Fair for 6 years. She is a member of a weekly hiking group and a monthly book club, attends bridge and yoga classes, and is a frequent traveler.

—*Glenda Hope*

Political Advocacy Committee Update •••

The Political Advocacy Committee held no meetings during November or December. If you would like to join this committee in 2014, please contact Glenda Hope or Melanie Grossman for information about meeting times and activities.

Change the Conversation: Reject Manufactured Crises

The following is taken from a December 18th e-mail letter sent by Michael Phelan of Social Security Works:

2014 is going to be an intense year of struggle against the forces that wish to dismantle our Social Security system. But, we know how to win; we change the conversation and fight to expand Social Security.

The other side has already started laying the ground work for cuts. Just Monday, Rep. Paul Ryan told reporters “We’re going to meet in our retreats after the holidays and discuss exactly what it is we’re going to try and get for [raising the debt ceiling].” We can’t let them gain any traction; we must double down on our calls to expand Social Security. . . . tell Congress we must expand Social Security to deal with the real crisis, the retirement security crisis.

Social Security is the foundation of retirement security, but with disappearing pensions and the Great Recession depressing savings, the real crisis that we can’t afford to ignore is the retirement security crisis, for today’s seniors and especially today’s young people. Tell Congress stop working for Wall Street and start working for the American people, and expand our Social Security system.

Cutting benefits for those most in need is outrageous enough. Let’s be clear, what is under discussion is holding the world economy hostage so that they can push through drastic cuts to Social Security and Medicare benefits for all Americans. We can’t let them get away with it. . . . tell them our Social Security system needs to be expanded.

Our Social Security system needs to be expanded not cut. Cost of living adjustments already fail to keep up with the rising costs that seniors face every day. If Paul Ryan and his band get their way, everyone who receives Social Security now, or who will receive it in the future, will see less and less of what we earned.

Speak out today to reject manufactured crises, and tell Congress to get to work for the American people and expand Social Security.

Social Security Works
<http://www.socialsecurityworks.org/>

CARA’s October Die In A Huge Success

October 16th CARA sponsored Die Ins at Federal buildings in Los Angeles and San Francisco to bring attention to the harm that the budget shutdown and sequester cuts were causing seniors, families, people with disabilities, and children. The events were co-sponsored by many other labor and community organizations and garnered incredible media attention. Wearing black and holding black roses demonstrators laid down next to tombstones to show how the cuts are killing us. These were very powerful events - you can go to the CARA website at www.californiaalliance.org to see photos and videos from both events.

Congress voted to lift the debt ceiling earlier in the day on Oct. 16th, but all they really did was kick the can down the road, and created another deadline of Feb. 7, 2014 to deal with these issues. Cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, along with changes to the Affordable Care Act, to food programs, work programs, childcare and education are still part of the conversation. We need to continue to put pressure on our elected officials to take these essential programs off the table forever.

Call the President and your Congress member and U.S. Senators to say: No cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid!

Call the President (202) 456-1414 (24 hour switchboard) or (202) 456-1111 (comment line 9am-5pm EST).

Call Senator Boxer and Senator Feinstein
Call the Capitol Switchboard and ask to be connected to their offices at (877) 762-8762 (open 24 hours).

Call Your Congressperson at the Capitol Switchboard and ask to be connected to their office at (877) 762-8762 (open 24 hours).



The Chained CPI, as most of you know, is an alternative method of estimating cost of living increases for Social Security, so that over time, adopting the Chained CPI would result in a significant loss of income for older people.

Here’s what you can do on the national level:
Call your representative and say: “No Chained CPI for Social Security”

Nancy Pelosi: (202) 225-0100
Jackie Speier: (202) 225-3531

OWL Celebrates, December Holiday Potluck

You missed a good party if you weren't there on December 14 when OWL SF held its Annual meeting for election of new board members and celebration of the holiday spirit. Joan Downey and Sheila Malkind were elected to the Board of Directors by unanimous votes. Sheila returns to the board where she handled our media relations in the past among many other things. Joan, who has been an active member of our Political Action Committee for the past couple of years will now take on a few more duties in her role on the board.

The food brought by OWLs this year was particularly delicious and there were few leftovers. Our special treat was a talk by long time OWL SF member Helen Fama. Helen, a member early on after OWL's founding in 1980, reminisced over her years of activism and told how she has captured these years in her book *While I Still Have All My Marbles*.

—*Nan McGuire*

Health and Well-Being at OWL's November Meeting

At our November membership meeting, OWLs gathered at 30th Street Senior Services Center. Irene, a lively trainer for the Always Active program which is tailored to people over 60, led us in 30 minutes of exercises for improving balance, flexibility and strength. I think many of us blanched when she said "30 minutes" but found this was very possible with Irene's understanding and challenging leadership. The Always Active program is administered by 30th Street Senior Services and is available in many other senior centers in the City.

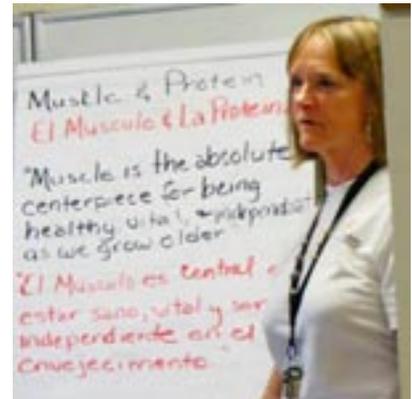
Valorie Villela, award-winning Director of the Center, gave a very informative presentation about nutritional challenges of older adults, as well as information on how to avoid developing problems from nutritional deficiencies. Valorie is very current with the latest research about this topic. She underscored the vital role that vigorous exercise plays in well-being including even the health of our brains and our eyes. Besides learning a lot about our bodies and how to improve health and function, we had fun! After the program, Valorie gave a tour of this amazing facility with its many programs and resources for seniors. Several of us gladly accepted her offer to take our lunches into the Center's beautiful gardens and to linger there in the sun (or shade) as long as we liked.

—*Glenda Hope*

October Meeting: Social Security and The Affordable Care Act

On October 26th OWL SF presented an update on issues surrounding Social Security and the Affordable Care Act, co-sponsored by CARA, the UCSF Institute for Health and Aging and the Grey Panthers of San Francisco. The two speakers: Carroll L. Estes, Ph.D., Founder and Former Director of the UCSF Institute for Health & Aging, Professor Emerita, UCSF School of Nursing, and Board Chair of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare Foundation; and Jodi Reid, Director of the California Alliance for Retired Americans; brought a wealth of experience on health care and Social Security. After a conversation between the two experts, the program continued as they addressed questions from audience members.

—*Margaret Lew*



Valorie Villela explains nutritional requirements for older adults. Photo by Marie Jobling.



At the 30th Street Senior Center, OWLs follow Always Active leader Irene in 30 minutes of gentle but effective aerobic exercise. Photos by Marie Jobling.

Helen Fama: ***While I Still Have All My Marbles***

Memoir of a women's advocate through her political activities and extensive travels, both domestic and abroad. (Self-published, available on Amazon.com).

A longtime OWL member who was a community leader and problem-solver. Amazing energy; worked hard all her life, I would say—she would probably say: 'But I was having fun at the same time!' A dedicated mother, who went to college with her sons (but not in the same classes: they wouldn't allow that); a charter member of the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women, and a candidate for public office. One of her many funny stories is how she helped elect a dead sheriff. (Read the book, to find out!) Also a friend of Supervisor Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone, both of whom were assassinated by Supervisor Dan White.

A realtor, a dancer, a swimmer, a traveler—she bought herself a minivan and traveled solo around the Midwest and Western states visiting friends and relatives—a feminist: she was inspired by OWL founder Tish Sommers, joined OWL, and later went to the Soviet Union with three OWL SF members (Sylvia Newport, Liz Sasek, Lilly Layman), as well as representatives of other organizations—all as Diplomat Citizens for Peace. She described OWL members as like-minded women: "the best part was that no matter how serious the activity, we seemed to laugh a lot." A fundraiser. Many, many adventures and exciting times, including romances. A very physically active woman who had two knee replacements, a heart problem, now resolved, and is still dancing at her senior club —although she insists that she needs two strong men to dance with at the same time to hold her up. Plus: at 91 years old, she is adorable, and still has all her marbles!



Helen Fama.
Photo by Sheila Malkind

My one criticism: as dedicated as she is/was to her extended family, I found it outside of the main structure of the book. But enough interesting material throughout to hold one's interest.

—**Sheila Malkind, OWL SF Board Member**

What are you reading?

Share what you have been reading to share with us!

Gwynne Seidell:

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston.

Hurston (1891-1960) an American folklorist, anthropologist, and author during the time of the Harlem Renaissance is best known for this fine novel.

The Secret River by Kate Grenville

Set in early nineteenth century Australia and based on the story of one of Grenville's convict ancestors. She uses that story to explore a wider theme: the dark legacy of colonialism.

Kathie Piccagli:

The Circle by Dave Eggers

Particularly relevant in this time where we read daily of the tech mentality and how it affects our city and our lives, this is a picture of the large tech culture (think Google or Apple) carried to its not so unlikely extreme. It particularly deals with privacy and individuality. It is not all that remote, and it is frightening. A good read, too.

The Good Lord Bird by James McBride

This National Book Award winner is a real romp, telling the fictionalized story of John Brown through the eyes of Onion, a former slave child who is a boy mistakenly taken to be a girl. If this sounds crazy, it is, but McBride manages to pull it off. Definitely recommended.

Margaret Lew:

The Treasure Hunt by Andrea Camilleri

I wait impatiently for translations of Camilleri's Inspector Montalbano mysteries. Even better than the tv series!

The Last Italian by William Murray

Illuminating samples from Murray's "Letter from Rome" *New Yorker* columns. The volume closes with a portrait of "the last Italian," an aging emigrant living in the Casa Costanza in San Francisco's North Beach.

Going My Way

“Going My Way” is a special OWL program for members who want to meet new people, explore new places in San Francisco, and share new experiences with other OWL members.

Through ‘Going My Way’, any OWL member can plan an event of interest to them and invite other members to come along. Simply call or send an email to Coordinator Diana Merlot (650-756-0755, or GPDianal@sbcglobal.net) with your activity, choose a date and Diana will send out the information to the OWL membership.

In 2013 groups viewed murals in the Mission, strolled among the outdoor sculptures of Mark de Savero at Crissy Field, hosted a book signing with OWL member Helen Fama, and toured the recently re-opened Cayuga Park with its whimsical sculptures.

—*Melanie Grossman*

Hearing From A Longtime OWL

One day in December when I checked voice mail in the OWL Office I found a message from Eleanor Gettman, calling to tell us of her new address and telephone number. She mentioned that she now needs a wheel chair to get around and has had to move out of her home in the Mission to an assisted living facility per her doctor’s orders. A longtime OWL member, she said that she really enjoyed hearing from us and being kept informed.

I decided to return her call and I had the pleasure of meeting perhaps the oldest member of our chapter. It was a pleasure to talk with her. She is 96 and trying to adjust to the move which she admits is not easy. She said she thinks our new President has brought some good, new energy to the organization. I told her I would send her our newly revised brochure so she could see what some of us looked like.

Do we have a member who can beat Eleanor’s age? Let us hear from you.

—*Nan McGuire*

Windows

The ocean should be blue.
Sunssets should be color full.
Grass is always greener
On the other side of the window.

But people don’t do windows anymore,
So the ocean, the grass, the sun,
Are the blur of a murky mirror,
The soiled splatter of wintry sleet.

Those poets rave about an ocean’s azure blue,
They cross the globe: Egyptian blue, Prussian blue.
To Tibet for a prayer-shawl teal,
Or underground: cobalt, lapis lazuli.

They go to gemstones to pick up green:
Emerald. jade. malachite.
Or, pushed for a simile,
Might talk of “greenbacks” and “olive green.”
Grass like greenbacks? Not the poets.

When taking on a sunset, they take a gardener’s tool.
Peach. Orange. Violet.
And borrow a painter’s brush to
Push the sun across the sky.

From a dusty window
The ocean’s like faded wallpaper,
Peeling away like an outgrown skin.
The grass has misplaced its shimmer.
Autumn sunsets, even falling leaves,
Lose their color, fade to black and white.

Poets: Rub your hands across the window
So she’ll see the world again,
Like when she was young
And able to name her colors.

—*Arlene Silverman*

Calendar

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

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

January 25 Saturday — **OWL Annual Planning Meeting**, 11:00am-3:00pm (*see cover page for details*)

February 3 Monday — **OWL Board Meeting**, 870 Market, room 1185, 4:00-6:00pm

February 22 Saturday — **OWL General Meeting**, 10:00-Noon (*topic and details to be announced*)

March 3 Monday — **OWL Board Meeting**, 870 Market, room 1185, 4:00-6:00pm

March 22 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 February and March.

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.