

The voice of mid-life and older women

OWL NEWSLETTER

San Francisco



July - September 2023

OWL-SF 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.

Join us for Lunch!

**It's time for our in-person luncheon
where we connect with new and longtime friends!**

When: Saturday, July 22nd, 11:30AM – 1:30PM
Where: St Mark's Lutheran Church

RSVP: No later than Saturday July 15th

**Complimentary vegetarian, non-vegetarian or vegan lunch and beverages
(RSVP should specify meal preference)**

Book swap – bring a book or two to trade

Guest speaker Paul Drexler, author of *Notorious San Francisco: True Tales of Crime, Passion and Murder*, and creator of “Crooks Walking Tours” exploring some of SF’s notorious and mayhem-filled neighborhoods

We are proud to hold the OWL-SF luncheon in St. Mark's beautiful
Heritage Hall

Tour of the historical St. Mark's Church available after lunch

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
1111 O'Farrell Street
(Between Franklin and Gough)

Some parking available, MUNI 38 Geary and 49 Van Ness
Wheelchair accessible

Let OWL-SF know if you need a ride and we will try to find you one.

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

Given A Choice, Would You Choose To Be Embarrassed, Paralyzed, or Dead?

Recently, I had that choice and virtually everyone I have told about it has asked:

“How did you know you were having a stroke?”

- Sudden confusion, weakness, disorientation, can't keep standing – Yes
- Lopsided smile – No
- Eyes differently dilated – No
- Slurred speech – No
- Weakness, numbness, and uselessness of arm and hand on one side – Yes
- Very strong desire to just lie down and sleep – Yes



Strokes hit different parts of your brain so you will not have all the symptoms possible. Do you know what they are? Since I did not have 2, 3, and 4, which are sort of “classic indicators of stroke,” at first I was not sure. Not wanting to sound a false alarm, I called 2 nearby friends to check me out. Dumb. They came instantly. Just before their arrival my left arm went numb and I could not pick up anything with my left hand. That was the tip off. Friends kept me awake until EMTs arrived and quickly confirmed I was having a stroke. My usual hospital is St Mary’s but EMTs said “too far.” I received spectacular care in SFGH trauma Center and 3 days in their Trauma ICU. It was a small clot and a small stroke with small damage. They asked if I wanted the clot busting drug and I responded: Quickly! So many doctors and nurses repeating how lucky I am to have come in so fast.

Too many people succumb to that strong urge to “lie down until I feel better.”

Do you have an Advanced Directive for Health Care on file somewhere? If not, do it! Lying on that bed in ER is no time to be making those decisions and depending on the magnitude of the stroke you might need to have others authorized to make them for you. I had a small stroke but you might have a bigger one. Or, I might since if you have had a stroke there is a definite likelihood you will have another.

In the Fall, OWL–SF will have a program on Preventing, Recognizing and Treating Strokes. Watch for it. Meanwhile, learn symptoms. When in doubt: 911.

—*Glenda Hope*

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

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OWL–SF Board meetings: first Monday of the month, 4:00-5:00 pm, Zoom link available on request

Phone: (415) 712-1695

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Political Advocacy Committee Report Summer 2023

OWL's Political Advocacy Committee has focused on the following health care issues recently: the ongoing privatization of Medicare; continued reduction in community services by nonprofit hospitals; and continued efforts to restore accreditation to Laguna Honda Hospital.

The privatization of Medicare is occurring through efforts to push traditional Medicare patients into Medicare Advantage plans. This drains money from the Medicare Trust Fund through up-coding of patient diagnoses to increase billings; inappropriate referrals to Medicare reimbursed services such as hospice and infusion centers; and selective recruiting of younger and healthier patients. Medicare is further privatized by the buying up of hospitals and practices by private equity firms who manage them with a business model's eye for profits. Look for continued alerts, notices, and membership meetings on these topics, all of which include suggested actions that members can take against these threats.

Another important healthcare concern is the cutting of community programs by nonprofit hospitals in pursuit of profitable bottom lines. Reducing skilled nursing beds, closing specialized services such as psychiatric or drug/alcohol rehabilitation units, or closing less lucrative step-down units are examples of how hospitals make room for more profitable specialties such as cardiology or surgery. Despite these moves away from serving communities, they retain their nonprofit status and reap millions of dollars in tax cuts. A recent example of this process is the request for closure of the Warm Water Therapeutic Pool, serving elderly and disabled patients suffering from arthritis

and other conditions, at Sutter's Davies Campus. OWL and other concerned organizations made their objections known through testifying before the June Health Commission meeting.

The decertification and threatened closure of Laguna Honda (LHH) are familiar to all due to the ongoing calls for action and alerts sent out by OWL's Political Advocacy Committee. Although there has been some progress in halting discharges of patients from the facility, the September 19 deadline for recertification is perilously close. Despite signs of progress, it remains unclear whether the facility will regain certification. Also uncertain is the loss of one third of its beds due to the two beds per room rule that recertification has activated. OWL will continue to advocate for the recertification of LHH with no loss of beds. We also advocate for the halt of the "flow project," that allows San Francisco General Hospital to transfer of their hard-to-place patients to LHH, creating many of the problems that led to loss of certification. Traditionally, LHH has been able to evaluate patients and determine if they were appropriate for admission. We support the return to the traditional mission of LHH, which is to provide a welcoming, therapeutic, and healing environment that promotes the health and well-being of elderly and disabled San Franciscans who often lack resources or family to care for them.

Other issues taken up by the Political Advocacy Committee are safe streets, public transportation, protection for domestic workers, including those working in in home services for seniors and the disabled (IHSS), reducing gun violence in California, and promoting a healthy environment. Join the PAC or contact OWL to suggest issues,
—*Melanie Grossman*



Live Alone? Try A Check-In App

Snug Safety is a free, daily check-in app; I think it's great for seniors who live alone. (You can upgrade to a paid version if you choose to.) It's super easy to use. You download the app "Snug Safety" onto your smartphone and choose the time by which you'll check in. My time, for example, is 9:30 a.m.

To check in, you open the app and tap the green button with the check-mark. They send reminders before your chosen time. After you check in, the app says: thank you, see you tomorrow, and offers a quote of the day. If you don't check in within 10 minutes of your chosen time, the app sends a text to your emergency contact, telling them you haven't checked in, and giving them your last known location.

I've used the free Snug Safety app for a few years. Having it, I know that someone is tracking me at least once every 24 hours! See screens and instructions on the Snug Safety web page. <https://www.snugsafe.com>
—*Cathy Haller*

WELCOME NEW MEMBER!

Ann Berry

Special Offer for 2023 Help OWL-SF Grow

Starting in April 2023 your OWL membership renewal entitles you to invite one other member to join —Free!

Simply send an e-mail to info@owlsf.org with contact information of your Plus One.

Meet Maxine Anderson

‘Dean Scream’ did little to deter first-time campaigner from a life of political activism for social justice and now elder issues.

In 2004, when political hopefuls were lining up to challenge incumbent President George W. Bush, Maxine Anderson yearned for someone to really push a progressive agenda. But she’s not a Democrat.

“I’m a long, long time registered ‘declined to state,’ ” she said. “I don’t believe either of the two parties serve the interests of regular folk well. I also try to not label myself, so I’d have said that to me, as an informed citizen, Bush the younger’s policies were abhorrent to me. As a person I found him vacuous.”

She found what she was looking for when a friend brought up Howard Dean, then governor of Vermont. Here was a strong progressive. Unlike many Democrats, he had opposed the war in Iraq. And although many Democratic presidential nominees favored expanding healthcare access, including John Kerry, who won the nomination but lost the election, Dean’s plan was the most comprehensive. Universal health care was – and still is – a goal of Anderson’s.

“He oversaw the expansion of universal health care for children and pregnant women in his state, which made me feel we could get to universal health care in this country,” she said. So, she volunteered with his campaign, her first – and short but not last – foray into politics.

Dean was a frontrunner until Iowa, a battleground state. Despite coming in third, Dean vowed to keep on campaigning – in every state. But what may be most remembered is the loud, impassioned “Yeah” that punctuated his rallying cry. It was widely mocked in the media as the “Dean Scream.” After placing third in the Wisconsin primary, he withdrew from the race.

Yet Anderson stuck with him – and his vision. Afterward, she said, she and other supporters “were able to push the Democratic party enough to appoint Dean to head the national committee.” Dean then enacted what she felt were important changes.

One of them, ironically, may have made a difference in his quest. Rather than just campaigning in battleground states, the party began encouraging candidates to campaign in all 50 states. It’s believed that helped Obama get elected, along with his social media fundraising, another strategy picked up from Dean.

Those first tastes of political activism were the launchpad for years of organizing in San Francisco.

In the grassroots

Anderson has helped form or worked with three grassroots political organizations, including the now-defunct San Francisco for Democracy, the League of Women Voters, and the San Francisco chapter of the Older Women’s League, commonly known as OWL.



Maxine Anderson
photo by Colin Campbell

Now 72, the longtime Western Addition resident is still organizing.

She’s working with OWL–SF to stave off the threatened closure of Laguna Honda Hospital, the 157-year-old city institution housing more than 500 medically fragile, mostly low-income residents covered by Medicare or Medi-Cal. The federal agency terminated payments a year ago due to various deficiencies. Some residents were moved out.

The discharges were paused under agreements with the city and state. The hospital now has until Sept. 19 to meet federal remedies. “Without Laguna Honda, patients will be moved to areas away from their homes and even outside the city,” Anderson said. “They need to stay close to their loved ones for support while rehabbing.”

Anderson’s background is solidly blue-collar. She grew up on the west side of Chicago. Her mother worked as a domestic, her father as a janitor.

“My parents taught me the importance of voting, but I learned that wasn’t enough to change policy,” she said. “We the people have to define what matters to us.”

Social media had not yet become a force when Anderson entered politics. Policy not personality has always been her priority, she said. “We saw when that shiny little, glittery candidate goes away, you are left with their policy, and I knew that’s what we needed to focus on,” Anderson said.

She focused on broad social issues, such as health care, criminal justice reform, and local government accountability. As she aged, she directed her energies toward issues important to older women, such as healthcare, aging at home, and the preservation of Social Security and Medicare.

“With aging, our ability to live fuller lives, even if we’re not wealthy, is like pushing a boulder up the hill. But we keep pushing,” she said.

College then SF

Her life isn’t all organizing. Retired after a long career in the insurance industry, Anderson is a history buff who travels widely. She likes to tell the story of a misadventure while on safari in Africa. “I breathed a sigh of relief when a trumpeting elephant who was chasing our vehicle finally broke off and rejoined the herd,” she said, “because the driver knew to maintain a slow speed.”

She takes long walks in the city and sings gospel, jazz and popular music with the CMC Western Addition Choir.

Anderson moved to California in the late 1970s. Prudential Insurance, which hired her after she graduated from the University of Illinois as a history major, offered her a spot in their San Mateo office. She chose to live in San Francisco. “I’m a city girl, so I lived here and commuted until I found another job in San Francisco.” She settled in the Western Addition and eventually bought a home.

Her first venture into local politics was modeled after the progressive political action committee, Democracy for America, that Dean later formed. “We took his action to heart, and in 2004, we founded our own local group.” It was called San Francisco for Democracy.

“SF for D,” as it was affectionately nicknamed, was a non-partisan, grassroots organization dedicated to civic engagement, volunteerism, voter education, and progressive, hands-on activism. It attracted young and old, and people from different political parties, ethnic groups, and socio-economic classes.

‘Backroom work’

Monthly Wednesday night meetings in the backroom of Schroeder’s Restaurant in the Financial District, Anderson said, “gave San Francisco citizens the opportunity to interact with elected officials as well as discussing and brainstorming ways to make change.

“We hosted all kinds of speakers from the police chief to the mayor and the district attorney. Politicians participated. Professors from the local universities debated the pros and cons of local issues including the Occupy SF Movement. But we also expanded our focus and spent a lot of time on the Iraq War.”

But as with many grassroots organizations, enthusiasm eventually waned. “The people who helped form SF for D were getting older, and the newer generations were reluctant to commit to the backroom work,” Anderson said.

Not at a loss for ways to direct her energy, Anderson became active with the League of Women Voters. Initially known as the San Francisco Center in California, it was established in 1911 when women in California were first allowed to vote. Early successful

campaigns included support for child labor laws, minimum wage, and compulsory education.

Anderson and the league are also involved in keeping the city in compliance with open meeting laws and public access to records under San Francisco’s Sunshine Ordinance. The league was instrumental in getting it passed in 1999 and has a permanent seat on the ordinance task force. “To keep it relevant, we are actively working to ensure the ordinance is updated to reflect technological changes and judicial decisions,” Anderson said.

Among her larger concerns is the threat to democracy in the United States with the open embrace of racism and the rise of fascist attitudes. Civil rights still need champions.

“I keep talking to my nephews and nieces, and I encourage everyone to talk with young people about standing up for what is right,” she said.

—*Jan Robbins*

Source: Senior Beat <https://sfseniorbeat.com/>

Interested In San Francisco History And Stories Of Star-crossed Lovers?

The retirees of City College’s Faculty Union are sponsoring a book reading/discussion of *Frisco*, a novel by Daniel Bacon that has gotten praise from Charles Fraccia, Carl Nolte, and Kevin Starr, and even Herb Caen defended the title, saying “The toughest guys on the old S.F. waterfront, neither rubes nor tourists, called it Frisco, and no effete journalist would have tried to correct them.”

A portrait of San Francisco during the 1930s, *Frisco* is set during the Great Depression and involves a young couple whose families represent the opposite sides of the Longshoreman Strike of 1934, when labor and capitalist interests collided.

Author Daniel Bacon is the one who created the Barbary Coast Trail, the SF walking tour that connects the city’s most important historic sites through bronze medallions set in sidewalks. He’s also the author of two books on the Barbary Coast Trail.

Book reading and discussion: *Frisco*

Date: Friday, August 4, 2023

Time: 1:00 pm

Place: The Martin Paley Room, 3rd floor of the San Francisco Public Library, Main Branch

If you don’t have the chance to read the book before coming, you’re still welcome to attend the discussion.

—*Tina Martin*

Recommended Books

I now belong to four book clubs: The JoMa Book Club my son Jonathan and I co-founded in 2007, OWL's book club under the direction of Louise DiMattio, The Sunset Book Group connected to the Sunset Branch of the SFPL, and WEN, Women's Environmental Network.

WEN has discussed two books so far, Katherine Hayhoe's *Saving Us, A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World*, which gives hints on how to convince people that climate catastrophe is real, and Margaret Klein Salamon's *Facing the Climate Emergency: How to Transform Yourself with Climate Truth*, which recommends radical action a bit beyond civil disobedience. We discussed the latter with Ashby Village and the author herself. Both books are read by the authors on audiobooks.

My son and I recently read *Lucy by the Sea* by Elizabeth Strout, the author of *Olive Kitteridge*, and the Sunset Book Group is reading *The Sentence* by Louise Erdrich, both of which take place during the pandemic, which means they also cover the killing of George Floyd and the election of 2020. It was very interesting to me to see how they differed. I thought *Lucy by the Sea* was a bit conventional although that may sound like a strange description since the fictional Lucy was "rescued" by her ex-husband and whisked away from NYC to Maine to protect her from COVID. Lucy is too much the hovering mother for my taste (and maybe my son's too), whereas the narrator of *The Sentence* isn't a mother at all except in an indirect sense but instead is haunted by a booklover who has died but returns to the bookshop that the narrator Tookie, a Native American, runs. On audio, *The Sentence* is read by the author, who also provides an extensive book list from the fictional Tookie.

I like both of these books, but I was still more interested in *The 57 Bus*, a fascinating account of an incident that occurred in Oakland several years ago, and I'm amazed that I didn't read about it at the time it happened. The book jacket begins, "One teenager in a skirt. One teenager with a lighter. One moment that changes both of their lives forever." Sasha is an agender gifted teen with Asperger's who attends Maybeck, a private school in Berkeley. Richard is a teen from a totally different milieu. The book is really written for young adults, but as someone in the Sunset Book Group observed, it doesn't talk down to the reader or over-simplify. Because I have a close friend who teaches at Maybeck, I'm interested that, to her knowledge, Maybeck doesn't carry this book in spite of its many references to Maybeck and the fact that all students—male, female, or other—wore skirts to Maybeck in support of Sasha, when Sasha was in the hospital after the incident!

I'm enjoying the stories the OWL Book Group is reading so much that I often recommend them to friends. *Her Own Accord: American Women on Identity, Culture, and Community*, is written by women for women, but the stories are so engaging that I often recommend particular ones to men. Of course, it helps that Louise DiMattio leads the group, and the group is made up of very bright, interested and interesting women. I recommend that readers get the whole volume. (We in the book group got it for free!) But specific stories can be found online too. Among the ones I found most compelling are "At Odds" by Julia Serano, "Even the Queen" by Connie Willis, "Freedom Fighter" by Perri Klass, "My Father's Chinese Wives" by Sandra Tsing Loh, and "Stories Don't Have Endings," by Janice Gould—which is almost the complete list of what we've read so far. The ones I've recommended are "Freedom Fighter," which deals with two very different women, former college friends, who take a weekend trip together as told from the perspective of the one who's late in her pregnancy, and "My Father's Chinese Wives," which handles pathos with great wit.

—Tina Martin

Play it by Ear:

Why 'tock-tick' does not sound right to your ears.

Ever wondered why we say tick-tock, not tock-tick or ding-dong, not dong-ding; King Kong, not Kong King? Turns out is one of the unwritten rules of English that native speakers know without knowing.

The rule, explains a BBC article is: "if there are three words then the order has to go I, A, O. if there are two words then the first is I and the second is either A or O. Mish-mash, chit-chat, dilly-dally, shilly-shally, tip-top, hip-hop, flip-flop, tic tac, sing song, ding dong, King Kong, ping pong."

"Adjectives in English absolutely have to be in this order: opinion-size-age-shape-colour-origin-material-purpose noun. So you can have a lovely little old rectangular green French silver whittling knife. But if you mess with that word order in the slightest you'll sound like a maniac."

That explains why we say "little green men" not "green little men," but "Big Bad Wolf sounds like a gross violation of the "opinion (bad)- size (big)- noun (wolf) order. It won't, though, if you recall the first rule about the I-A-O order.

That rule seems inviolable: "All four of the horses feet make exactly the same sound. But we always, always say clip-clop, never clop-clip."

This rule even has a technical name, if you care to know it-- the rule of ablaut reduplication-- but then life is simpler knowing that we know the rule without knowing it.

If a word sequence sounds wrong, it is probably wrong.

What Are You Reading?

Devil in the White City by Erik Larson
What do you know about the 1893 World Exposition (aka Fair) in Chicago? Though open only 6 months, over 27 million visitors were recorded. Imagine the available transportation then! New products were introduced there, some of which such as Cracker Jacks and Shredded Wheat, are still with us. At the time, construction of the Eiffel Tower in France had been a humiliating blow to America's pride (who knew?) but the Chicago Exposition featured an engineering marvel which overshadowed that tower. (I will let you discover what that was. It also is still with us.) And there were other things introduced there.

For the first 50 or 60 pages of *Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson, you may find the read a bit tedious. Do not let that stop you from reading this fascinating book and marveling at how this square-mile fair was created with the equipment available at the time. Larson's book is not what I would call a page turner, such as one by Donna Leon or Sue Grafton, but it will hold your attention firmly and make you wish you could have visited this marvel which was so beautiful and awesome it made some people weep at the very sight of it.

The sub-title is *Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair that Changed America*. Don't miss it.
—*Glenda Hope*

Rough Sleepers by Tracey Kidder
Pulitzer Prize winning author Tracey Kidder tells the inspiring story of Dr. Jim O'Connell, a Harvard Educated M.D. who dedicated his career to bringing healthcare to Rough Sleepers the most vulnerable homeless on the streets of Boston, and while doing so, developed a national model for homeless healthcare.

In this book the reader travels with the author and O'Connell, getting to know his patients the difficult, the charming, the self destructive, the brave, revealing the humanity and challenges of those living on the streets. In the process, our cultural myths about who the rough sleepers are and how they end up living on the streets are exposed. I find greater empathy towards the homeless after reading this book.

As the complexity and intractability of this problem is detailed, it becomes clear that there are no easy fixes for homelessness. Its going to require economic and social change on a grand scale. The good news of this book is that there are things that can be done that make a difference, and selfless, dedicated individuals like Jim O'Connell who dedicate their lives to doing them.

—*Steve Leonoudakis*

Readers: What are you reading?

Share your reviews and recommendations, send them to the editor: Email: info@owlsf.org

The Risk of Extinction from AI

“Mitigating the risk of extinction from A.I. should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks, such as pandemics and nuclear war.”

That's the full text of a succinct yet potent statement released today that has so far been signed by over 350 executives, researchers, and engineers who work on artificial intelligence - including the CEO of OpenAI, the company behind the infamous ChatGPT.

Last week, Microsoft called for the U.S. government to regulate what it and other Big Tech companies are doing with artificial intelligence. Other major A.I. companies have also requested government intervention.

A few thoughts:

- These companies are not wrong. Public Citizen has been pressuring the federal government to move urgently and aggressively on regulating artificial intelligence.
- But it is, to put it mildly, uncommon for a multinational corporation like Microsoft - one of the richest and most ubiquitous on the planet - to *ask* to be meaningfully regulated.
- In fact, as you know, businesses [like](#) Microsoft spend a lot of money - bankrolling politicians, funding lobbyists, generating propaganda, and hiring armies of lawyers - blatantly trying to weaken regulations (or prevent them from being enacted in the first place) and fighting them in court.

If A.I. makes even the tech titans rushing it into existence nervous enough to beg for government oversight, maybe they should just stop working on it.

—*Robert Weissman,*
President of Public Citizen

Source: *Public Citizen* <robert@citizen.org> May 30, 2023.

Public Citizen is a nonprofit consumer advocacy organization that champions the public interest in the halls of power. We defend democracy, resist corporate power, and fight to ensure that government works for the people - not big corporations. <https://www.citizen.org>

The OWL Book Group

We meet every month on the second Tuesday. Join us by contacting Louise DiMattio who will send you the current book being read: *Her Own Accord, American Women on Identity, Culture, and Community* and who will provide you with the ZOOM connection. You can participate by computer or by phone call.

Discussion time is one hour 10:00-11:00AM. Meeting dates: August 8, September 12, October 10, November 14, December 12.

Contact: Louise DiMattio ladimat@aol.com

Lantern Floating Memorial Day in Hawaii

Every year on Memorial Day in America, people remember and honor those who have fallen in service to their country. Several sources account for its origins, among which is the tale of women in the South who visited a cemetery to decorate the graves of Confederate soldiers after the Civil War. Disturbed by the sight of the neglected graves of Union soldiers, they offered flowers on their graves as well. In recent years, the custom has grown to decorate the graves of all departed loved ones in addition to honoring all who died in battle.

When the founder of Shinnyo-en visited Hawai'i in 1970, he paid respect at Punchbowl and the Arizona Memorial. Profoundly moved by this experience, he was inspired with the wish to hold a lantern floating where people could share their hopes for peace. His successor, Her Holiness Shinso Ito, further inspired by the tale of the Southern women, carried out his wish in the form of Shinnyo Lantern Floating Hawai'i on Memorial Day, 1999.

For its first three years, Shinnyo Lantern Floating Hawai'i was held at Ke'ehi Lagoon on the south shore of O'ahu. In 2002, the ceremony was moved a few miles down the coast to Ala Moana Beach.

<https://lanternfloatinghawaii.com/history/>



Celebrations of Remembrance

This year I was in Hawaii over Memorial Day. In Honolulu they put flags and leis on each military grave and I joined the volunteers in sewing leis. The flowers were mostly plumerias. There was Hawaiian music and hula dancers kept us entertained.



I also took part in the Lantern Floating Festival (my sister's lantern is the one in the foreground). Lanterns are floated in memory of one who died in the past year. This year the festival was revived for the first time since 2019.

—*Joan Downey*

Gun Violence in America OWL SF May Membership Meeting

The topic for the OWL's May membership meeting was gun violence in America, featuring speaker Ruth Bornenstein, Legislative Chair for Brady California. A number of eye-popping facts were presented by the speaker: deaths from gun violence exceed those from vehicle accidents everyday in America; the United States ranks highest for gun homicide among other countries; and the per-capita civilian gun ownership in our country is by far the highest worldwide.

Although mass shootings and automatic weapons often garner headlines, they are far from the only problems. Guns used in suicide, unsafe storage of guns by gun owners, risky gun practices by those handling guns, and the increasing availability of "ghost guns," which can be assembled from gun parts legally shipped through the mail, are also a great concern. According to the speaker, gun violence against women is another persistent problem: every 16 hours, a woman is shot dead by her current or former partner, and the incidence of children seen in emergency rooms due to injury caused by guns is rising in hospitals across the county.

Common sense gun laws will save lives, these include a national system of background checks, strong gun storage laws, and a ban on assault weapons. The NRA and other gun lobbyists continue to maintain a powerful hold over federal and state legislation, especially in the US Senate. Despite slow progress, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act was passed and signed in 2022. This bill enhanced the background check review process for 18 to 21 year-olds, closed the "boyfriend loophole" for restraining orders, added new federal prohibitions on straw purchasers and gun traffickers, created new requirements for federal licensee designation, and increased funding for state red flag and extreme risk laws, plus mental health services.

Although these laws were certainly not as strong as Brady and other gun control advocates were hoping for, it was a start and will hopefully save lives. Brady California continues to work hard to strengthen California gun laws and invites OWL members to join Brady grassroots advocates by voting for "gun-sense" candidates, talking to friends and family about safe gun storage, and signing up for action alerts and news of local events at sf@bradyunited.org

—Melanie Grossman



Falling Alone

Recently I heard from an 80-something friend in England who had experienced a fall while gardening. She had tripped against a planter box in front of her home and ended up on her back on a gravel path unable to get up. Her husband was at home, but napping out of hearing. She laid face up in the sun for over an hour. Fortunately, she was rescued by two people who were posting leaflets at homes in her neighborhood. Falling in the garden is regrettably common it seems. Several women I know have had falls there, some quite badly injured.

I often work in my backyard garden, alone. Even awake in the house, my husband would not be able to hear if I called him from outside. Last month my plastic garden stool tipped over backwards and I ended up on my back with legs in the air. I knew how to get

up from the ground, but had to think how to avoid putting my knees on the rough cobblestone path. Mashing an agapanthus was the option I chose. On the opposite side of the path, the cactuses sighed a bit in relief — I did too.

It might have been bad though, and I was thankful that my companions in the garden are my smart phone and watch. While I weed and prune I listen to music or audio books and don't feel alone; and if my upset had been worse I could have phoned for help and been heard. My friend in England will be taking her smart phone outside to garden when she has recovered from her scratches and bruises.

Explore the features of your smart devices to help you feel and be safe too.

—Margaret Lew

Calendar

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

July 3 Monday — OWL Board Meeting 4:00-5:00pm (via Zoom)

July 22 Saturday— OWL Luncheon 11:30am-1:30pm (See Cover Page for details)

August 7 Monday — OWL Board Meeting 4:00-5:00pm (via Zoom)

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

September 23 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-SF has established a sliding fee scale from \$10 -\$50.) Members receive the quarterly OWL SF Newsletter, advocacy Alerts and invitations to monthly meetings.

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 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.

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

Comments or questions? Please contact the OWL-SF Office at (415) 712-1695;
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