

The voice of mid-life and older women

OWL NEWSLETTER

San Francisco



October - December 2024

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.

**Gather With OWL-SF
To Support Efforts to End Alzheimer's
*Alzheimer's Disproportionately
Affects Women***

***When: Saturday, October 19th
9:30AM***

***Where: Pier 27,
Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco***

OWL-SF will be making a donation to this year's WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S, and has created a walking team.

Our team is called OWL-SF Walks.

Look for the OWL Banner: We will gather at Pier 27, Fisherman's Wharf, the Embarcadero, for refreshments, entertainment, information and support. The walk is one mile, but those choosing not to walk can stay at the gathering and cheer others on!

- * Gather outdoors and socialize with OWL Members
- * Support Research on Alzheimer's Disease
- * Get the word out that OWL is still going strong
- * Get Some Exercise (Optional)

RSVP by October 17th! Wear your OWL shirt or purple!

Donation is optional

Access: Muni Line F Parking challenging

OWL-SF * PO Box 170622, San Francisco, Ca. 94117

Phone 415-712-1695 * Web site: www.owlsf.org * E-mail: info@owlsf.org

When a person is grieving Good advice for those who want to Help

In his book *Sympathy & Condolences: What to Say and Write to Convey Your Support After a Loss*, Alan Wolfelt warns against “overestimating the number of people” who show up to offer support. “Don’t assume that they have lots of friends and family members at their side in the immediate aftermath of a loss,” he writes, “because all too often this is not the case.”



What (Not) to Say

All three of the experts we spoke to for this piece stressed that it isn’t what you say but how you say it — with compassion — that means the most. The best thing you can do? Listen.

“Here’s the thing: We love giving advice, and we love fixing people, but people in grief don’t need to be fixed because they’re not broken,” explained David Kessler, founder of the support group Tender Hearts and author of *Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief*. He added: “They just need to be listened to and seen. Everyone wants to be seen, heard and valued.”

Though it’s true that words matter less than actions, there are some phrases to avoid.

Be careful not to “bright side people,” said Kessler. “Bright siding people is [saying], ‘At least they’re not suffering,’ or ‘Isn’t it good that they died quickly?’ We want to allow people to authentically be themselves and grieve. That’s the best gift we can give to one another is just to say, ‘Be yourself. I’ll meet you where you are.’

—Submitted by Glenda Hope

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Karen Crommie
Judith Lewis

Board Members

Maxine Anderson
Paula Barber VP
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

World Veg Fest in Golden Gate Park Sunday, October 20, 2024

I used to think of vegans as people with an eating disorder, but now I know that, as has been said eloquently by the Alternative Baking Company, “No single food choice has a farther-reaching and more profoundly positive impact on our health, the environment, and all of life on Earth than choosing vegan.” *The New York Times* published a quiz showing that following a vegan diet is one of the four most effective ways to lower our carbon footprint.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/12/15/opinion/how-reduce-carbon-footprint-climate-change.html>

We in San Francisco are lucky that the World Veg Fest is held annually in Golden Gate Park—in the County Fair community building right next to the Botanical Garden on 9th Avenue off Lincoln.

You can try free samples of vegan dishes—healthy and junky—watch cooking demonstrations and attend informative workshops. Try it! You might like it, as I did and do!

<https://www.sfvs.org/events-details/world-veg-fest-1>

—*Tina Martin*

SF MUNI: Where are Shelters for Your Riders?

Recently, I caught the J-Church car at Balboa Station 3 blocks from my home, taking it to meet a friend at a Church Street café. Returning home, I waited 15 minutes for the J-Church at a stop with no shelter from the strong, biting wind and nowhere to sit. I wished I had driven my car there. On the way home, I counted 6 outdoor stops with no shelter and nowhere to sit.

It is not only elderly (I am 88) and/or disabled people who are discouraged from using MUNI by being forced to stand longer than we should or being exposed to the weather. Pregnant women, people carrying small children or groceries, leg weary workers returning home after a long day and others may find it better to drive.

San Francisco has spent thousands and thousands of dollars on such things as bike lanes, the Valencia Street fiasco, slow streets, doggie diner heads on JFK Drive and more to accommodate a relatively small number of people. Perhaps the Bicycle Coalition, SF Walk, and other anti-car groups would undertake a survey of the number of seatless, unsheltered outdoor MUNI stops we have and lend their support to fixing this impediment to using MUNI.

—*Glenda Hope*

OWL Great Books Group Looks Ahead to 2025

I can hardly believe that it has been close to four years since the OWL Great Books group came into being! The way I measure this is by remembering the two volumes that we have completed together. We began our journey by discussing marvelous short stories in a collection called *Immigrant Voices*. The stories we discussed focused on the experiences of coming to America from diverse countries, followed by stories of the new immigrant experience in America and, finally, stories about going back to one's home country after having lived in the USA for period of time. After a short break, we embarked on our second volume, *Her Own Accord*, my favorite of all the volumes published by the Great Books Foundation in Chicago. *Her Own Accord* features literary works by and about women, including familiar voices like Toni Morrison and Betty Friedan as well as the poetic voices of Denise Levertov, Adrienne Rich and Ann Sexton. Reading one selection a month allows for several readings of the work which enhances a deeper discussion when we get together on ZOOM on the second Tuesday morning of the month.

Our plan for 2025 is slightly different. We will read one short story each month where a link for the story is available on the internet. Works by many famous women writers such as Flannery O'Connor, Edith Wharton, Edwidge Danticat and Katherine Anne Porter are available on line and can be printed at home. This allows us to have a wide variety of reading choices and also allows us to invite any OWL member to join us at any time on a drop-in basis. Look for the postings of the story and the link for the story via email. Happy Reading. We hope that you will join us, beginning in January 2025!

—*Louise DiMatteo*

*Save the Date
OWL General Meeting*

*November 23rd
11:00 - 12:30*

***NUTRITION
&
Recipe Exchange***

*An in-person meeting at
Richmond Branch Library*

*Have a favorite recipe to share?
Bring a copy
Details to come*

My Bakery My Choice

—by Nan Wiener

Many years ago, I spent a year baking desserts in a restaurant in Brooklyn, New York, and I've been doing it on an amateur basis ever since. Periodically, the daughter of a dear friend—who's also my daughter's close friend—urged me to bake professionally again, but I never wanted to. It's hard work. Bakers' hours alone were enough to discourage me. Bakers wake up at some ungodly hour to bake fresh for the day, and if I'd ever had to get up early to earn a living, I wasn't going to get rich (not that I did as a journalist, but that's another story). But then, in 2022, the Supreme Court issued the Dobbs decision, and just like that, women's right to an abortion — a right that had been in place for 50 years — was gone. It was the first time the Supreme Court had ever rescinded a lawfully granted right.

Having been a college student in the 1970s when Roe v. Wade was enacted, I could not believe we were suddenly back where we started. I still can't believe it. Bodily autonomy out the window. Illegal abortions. Women dying from a lack of reproductive care. It's truly stunning how awful the whole thing is. At that point, I had been more or less retired from a career as a book and magazine editor and was looking for something meaningful to do. So, when my friend's daughter called me to say she was planning to have a bake sale in the park to raise money for abortion access funds, did I want to help? I was all in.

I looked over my recipes and came up with five or six that I thought were unusual—and unusually good. I made frosted brownies, raspberry shortbread with raspberry jam filling, snickerdoodle donut muffins, molasses cookies, an insanely delicious version of macaroons that are loaded with butter, and chocolate peanut butter cookies. And with today's dietary restrictions in mind, I added vegan pumpkin bread with non-dairy chocolate chips and a gluten-free mochi muffin. I loaded up a cart with the goodies and lugged them to Duboce Park. We sold out that first day. One hundred percent of the profits went to the National Network of Abortion Access Funds, which helps people find abortion providers and manage fees associated with the procedure, including childcare, lodging, and travel. We earmarked the money specifically for an abortion fund that services five states in the Southeast, where abortion care was particularly scarce. The best thing about that day was how incredibly enthusiastic the customers were. So many thanked us for doing what we were doing. So, we decided to keep going. But first, we had to have a name, and that's where my husband's family came in. They're all dedicated wordsmiths, and when I posed the question in a family Zoom call, my sister-in-law came up with one right off the bat: My Bakery, My Choice. Perfect.

Then we had to figure out how to make it an official business—specifically, a cottage food operation, which means one based in your own home. That's where the red tape came in. First, I had to have my kitchen certified by the Public Health Department, which included submitting a hand-drawn layout. (I still

don't know what they were looking for, other than an assurance that the baking area isn't right next to the garbage.) I also had to take an online class in food management, where I learned all kinds of clever safety tips, like the right order for storing things in the fridge (anything drippy goes on the bottom shelf) and how hot the water needs to be to get things truly sanitized (180 degrees).

Then, to set up the actual business, I was lucky enough to be referred to the University of California-Berkeley School of Law. They run a free clinic for young (well, mostly), would-be entrepreneurs, giving advice on all the arcane rules and regulations you need to follow. The generous folks at the clinic saved us literally thousands of dollars in legal fees. Once we were up and running, we had to figure out how to get customers. Cottage food operators must sell directly to the consumer, which these days mostly means online, so you have to build up a presence on social media—something I knew I was too tech-illiterate to do. I hired someone to design a website for us, where we take orders (mybakerymychoice.org). But apparently, Instagram is where all the cool kids advertise, and we were stuck on that until an eager young volunteer, for whom this stuff is second nature, showed up and took the reins. Believe it or not, we're still trying to figure out the maze of local laws that determine where you can and can't sell outside. We're also trying to build up a catering option. Just last weekend, we were hired for two events, for which I had to make 550 portions of dessert. (Never again.)

One was for an organization called TEACH, which held an evening of what they called "*Abortion Storytelling*" at the Brava Theater. The other was the San Francisco Opera, which was debuting its production of *The Handmaid's Tale* and saw us as a great tie-in.

In a story aired April 17, 2024, KPIX (CBS News Bay Area) mentions the bakery started by Wiener and a friend to raise funds to help women get access to abortion in states where it is being banned or restricted. All of this is very exciting, but, of course, my partner, Zoe Stricker, had it right when she was asked what she saw as the future of the bakery. A few months back, the local CBS TV station included our effort in a story about Arizona's abortion ban. Asked what was our ultimate goal, my partner said it was to get to a point where the business wasn't necessary. We'd gladly give it up to have Roe codified as federal law, which Kamala Harris—our next president, please god—is promising to do. But even if that happens, securing an abortion has never been easy for millions of women for so many reasons—there's no clinic nearby or they don't have the money or the wherewithal to get one—and that's not likely to change anytime soon. So, we'll keep on baking and, as we say in our logo, "supporting access to abortion, one bite at a time."

Senior Beat Guest Column

<https://sfseniorbeat.com/2024/10/02/baking-for-bodily-autonomy-nan-wiener-tackles-controversial-end-of-roe-v-wade-with-brownies-macaroons-muffins-and-more/>

Marty Maricle a Miracle in OWL's Midst

My first contact with Marty Maricle was when I was a member of OWL's Board of Directors and had her on my call list to remind OWL members of upcoming meetings. These calls usually involve leaving a voice message because people quite often don't pick up, but Marty did. I no longer remember how a real conversation between us got started, but after twenty minutes I, almost phone-phobic, was enthralled and didn't want to hang up. I knew OWL members were very bright women, but here was someone who in the 1950s, when women were supposed to stay home with their husband and 2 ½ children, had traveled on her own to France to pick grapes and then had hitched-hiked all over, returning home only to attend her twin brother's wedding.

Later, when OWL had a luncheon at Jannah's and we were asked to introduce ourselves, I wanted to introduce Marty instead of me because I found her story so intriguing. I finally had my chance to interview Marty at her home this past July, when she invited me to her home and showed me some of the many awards she's gotten for distance running—100 miles in fewer than 24 hours, something she's done five times—and an article written about her in the South End Rowing Club Newsletter in celebration of her 91st birthday May 20th, 2024. Betsy Blumenthal wrote a beautiful tribute to Marty but never put it online. She did, however, give me permission to use it.

Marty is very up-front about having short-term memory issues, but she has very good recall on the distant past, and she's managed to make some of her long-ago achievements current! At the end of her write-up on Marty, Betsy Blumenthal says "SERC is extremely lucky to have her in our midst." Of course, we OWL members feel the same way!

—*Tina Martin*

Long-time South End Rowing Club (SERC) member and extraordinary runner Marty Maricle will turn 91 on May 20th. Please join us in wishing our beloved Marty a very happy birthday!

Long-time South Ender Marty Maricle is a trailblazer. After graduating from Oberlin College in 1955 with a BA in history, she began working for a mobile children's library serving rural Ohio. This had its appeal, but she had a burning desire to see the world, so she bought herself a ticket to Europe. For over a year Marty was a solo explorer, staying in youth hostels, hitchhiking across the continent, and meeting fascinating people, including some dashing young men. With a twinkle in her eye, she told some funny stories about a particularly memorable Algerian chap.... Her parents were none too pleased about their daughter traveling about Europe by herself. This was simply not done by many young women in 1957. Of course, Marty was not your typical American female college graduate.

Marty's nomadic adventures were cut short by her twin brother Don's engagement. As a dutiful sister, she returned home. After the wedding outside of Boston, she took her new sister-in-law's advice to go to secretarial school. Marty learned dictation and typing, and when the US government came recruiting, she decided to apply with them. A few interviews in, she realized this was no ordinary desk job she was up for, but a position with the CIA. Ever adventurous Marty headed to Washington, where she awaited clearance for her overseas assignment. She was not exactly pleased to learn she was being sent to Tehran, but she packed her bags and off she went. The year was 1960; Eisenhower was President, soon to be succeeded by President Kennedy in November. The Shah was in power, and those working for the CIA were undercover as military attachés or as Department of State employees. While few would ever have suspected that Marty was in fact with the CIA, she certainly fit the mold of the many smart, resourceful, and daring young women employed by the Agency.

Marty took full advantage of her new home in Iran, traveling on weekends, trying new foods, and serving her country. In 1963 she moved to San Francisco, where she continued working for the CIA. She fell in love with the city's natural beauty and took up swimming off the bleachers at Aquatic Park. After having her belongings stolen from the beach, she petitioned for membership at SERC, joining the club in 1977.

Although an intrepid world traveler, Marty has always been a frugal New Englander at heart. When she could not comfortably get into her ski pants, a friend suggested she take up running. And run she did, going on to complete the grueling Western States Endurance Run (100 miles) five separate times, with a personal record of 22:42. For those unfamiliar, Western States is an ultra-competitive 100 mile run across the Sierra Nevada that must be finished in less than 24 hours. Look for the framed photos in the SERC Day Room of Marty's 1980 and 1983 finishes.

To call Marty a trailblazer is accurate, but hardly captures the whole story. Her sense of adventure and determination have taken her great distances, and SERC is extremely lucky to have her in our midst.

— *Betsy Blumenthal*



Marty Maricle at the OWL July luncheon at Delancey Street
Photo by Tina Martin

Music: The Full Body Workout For the Brain and More

This item caught my eye recently. In January, I restrung and tuned the guitar that I had learned to play in my 20s to see whether I could still make music on it. After months of enjoyment relearning notes, hearing the beautiful sounds of accomplishment and bearing with the buzzes of missed frets along the way, it's obvious to me how valuable music is.

Music does wonders for your mood, but did you know it might give your brain a boost, too? In fact, playing music—not just listening to it—has a positive effect on your cognition, even if you're already showing signs of dementia, new research suggests.

For a meta-analysis published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, researchers from the University of Pittsburgh examined nine studies with 495 participants over age 65 who have mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or dementia. The studies specifically evaluated older adults with MCI who took part in improvising music, playing existing music, singing, playing instruments, or other forms of music making.

The finding? Making music has a small but statistically significant effect on cognitive functioning, such as thinking and memory, says lead author Jennie L. Dorris, a Ph.D. student in rehabilitation science and a graduate student researcher in the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Occupational Therapy.

That's because playing music works multiple areas of your brain at the same time. "You are coordinating your motor movements with the sounds you hear and the visual patterns of the written music," explains Dorris. "Music has been called a 'full-body workout' for the brain, and we think that it's unique because it calls on multiple systems at once."

As a bonus, music-making habits also had a positive effect on mood and quality of life—so go ahead and get musical, no matter your age. "Because we saw a positive effect across all different active music-making activities, we know that people have options and can choose the activity that they prefer," says Dorris. "Whether it's singing in a choir, joining a drum circle, or registering for an online music class where you learn how to compose, it's just important that you are actively participating in the music-making process."

excerpt from *The Creative Habit That Might Ward Off Dementia Symptoms, Even if You Start Later in Life*, by Arielle Weg, Prevention,

—Submitted by Margaret Lew

Women in the Spotlight At the de Young and Legion of Honor

These exhibitions, open Tuesday - Sunday, 9:30 am - 5:15 pm, are included with general admission and are free for Bay Area residents every Saturday.

Mary Cassatt at Work

Legion of Honor, October 5, 2024 - January 26, 2025. Marvel at the rich colors and daring gestures of Mary Cassatt's paintings, prints, and pastels, in the first major retrospective on the artist in 25 years. Too often dismissed as a sentimental painter of mothers and children, Cassatt was in fact an Impressionist pioneer.

Tamara de Lempicka

de Young, October 12, 2024 - February 9, 2025. With works that exuded cool elegance and transgressive sensuality, Tamara de Lempicka helped define Art Deco. Experience an Art Deco love story on her canvas, only at the de Young.

Journals of Peace —Retired Peace Corps Volunteers Commorate Founder JFK on 21 November 1988

Scott Walker wrote on X: "Voters are long over January 6th," but most Americans have not forgotten that day in 2021. The security ramifications of hundreds of people storming the U.S. Capitol building promises even more limited access for citizens to their halls of elected officials. Looking back now after the "insurrection," I marvel that, in 1988, four hundred of us RPCVs were invited to spend 24 hours in the Capitol Rotunda with little more than the directive that we provide our names and social security numbers—and that was after closing hours! We Returned Peace Corps Volunteers were invited through the Fall 1988 issue of this magazine, *WorldView*: "Come join for this singular event. A 24-hour vigil Nov. 21-22 commemorating the founder of Peace Corps, John F. Kennedy, in this 25th year since his death. Hundreds of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers will read from their Peace Corps journals—passages explaining what we learned in Peace Corps and what Peace Corps meant to us individually." The event took place from noon to noon, beginning November 21st, when we volunteers read from our diaries, letters home, or whatever we felt best crystalized our experience in the Peace Corps.

This reading was followed by a Commemorative Service at St. Matthew's Cathedral led by Rev. Theodore Hesburgh and Bill Moyers, and it was covered in the *Washington Post* and other periodicals. In fact, the morning after I'd read in the Capitol Rotunda, I asked my father whether he'd heard of USA Today, and he said, "Yes. It's a piece of trash." "Well," I told him. "My picture and some of what I said is on the front of this piece of trash today."

—Tina Martin

What Are You Reading?

Send reviews to info@owlsf.org

The Art and Science of Connection by Kasley Killam
It is so easy, even tempting, to sit at home slowly succumbing to laziness, lethargy and resultant loneliness. A downward spiral. “Yes, I should, could go to that exercise group but I really want to finish this book so I can find out whodunit.”

Killam documents for us what we already know: “Social health is the missing key to living longer, healthier and happier lives.” But it is easy to overlook or shortchange and we are among those privileged to attend to our physical, mental and social health. There are so many people who cannot do that.

The book gives copious illustrations of how and where and why people are coming together to promote social health. Killam cites our friends in the Community Living Campaign as examples of this, naming OWL member Marie Jobling as a leader in creating programs for people over 60 who desire physical, mental and social health for themselves and their communities. The Community Connectors, a program of CLC, is singled out as a prime example. Several OWLs are involved with the Connectors. Check out the CLC website to find a Connector group near you, as well as learning of the many resources CLC offers for free.

Stay in touch with OWL, as well, as we continue advocating for and providing avenues to full, longer, healthier and happier life.

—*Glenda Hope*

Save the Date

OWL-SF

December Holiday Luncheon

*December 21st
11:00am - 12:30pm*

Catered by Savor

***San Francisco County Fair Building
Rec Room***

details on location and RSVP to come

Patterns of Childhood by Christa Wolf

“A novelistic memoir—seeking moral shapes, discounting answers—by East Germany’s most impressive writer,” *Kirkus Reviews*. “What is past is not dead; it is not even past. We cut ourselves off from it; we pretend to be strangers.” Thus begins Christa Wolf’s *Patterns of Childhood*, an account of the author’s years growing up in Nazi Germany, as seen through the prism of a brief trip in 1971 back to her native town, accompanied by her husband, her younger brother, and her teenage daughter, Lenka, who inevitably asks certain unavoidable, probing questions about the past. After the trip, Wolf returns home to write about the experience, about her childhood (adopting the role of an external narrator), and about the difficulties of writing her story with any sort of objectivity or clarity. *Patterns of Childhood* is no sentimental journey; it is a plea to remember and to learn from the past.” These words are from *Google Books*’ review.

I was fascinated by the honesty of author’s attempts to find answers. In the end this book evoked compassion for the known victims of Nazism but even too for the “normal” ordinary citizens living in such poisonous times. All suffer from such regimes.



For something entirely different, I enjoyed two books by English writer David Nichols, who writes with feeling and humor of love in modern times. Protagonists from age 16, *Sweet Sorrow*, to 40, *You are Here*, suffer loneliness, fear, painful divorce or family breakups. Eventually the glimmer of hope saves characters that one grows to care for as the chapters unfold. *You are Here* is set on the cross country walk from the Atlantic to the North Sea and features bad weather (rain) and rugged trails. I learned a lot about the sights on this famous trek across England. Maps were provided.

—*Margaret Lew*

Calendar

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

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

October 19 Saturday— OWL General Meeting 9:30-2:00pm, *Walk with OWL for Alzheimers on the Embarcadero (in person - see details on cover page)*

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

November 23 Saturday— OWL General Meeting 11:00 - 12:30, *Nutrition (in person at Richmond Public Library, details to come)*

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

December 14 Saturday— OWL Holiday Luncheon 11:00- 12:30 (SF County Fair Bldg, Golden Gate Park, details to come)

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;
e-mail: info@owlsf.org