



# Lives of Lesbian Elders: Looking Back, Looking Forward (Hayworth Innovations in Feminis03studies)

*J Dianne Garner, D. Merilee Clunis, Pat A. Freeman, Nancy M. Nystrom, Karen I. Fredriksen-Goldsen*

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The untold history of lesbian life from those who have lived it!

Lives of Lesbian Elders: Looking Back, Looking Forward illuminates the hopes, fears, issues, and concerns of gay women as they grow older. Based on interviews with 62 lesbians ranging in age from 55 to 95, this very special book provides a historical account of the shared experiences of the lesbian community that is so often invisible or ignored in contemporary society. The book gives voice to their thoughts and feelings on a wide range of issues, including coming out, identity and the meaning of life, the role of family and personal relationships, work and retirement, adversity, and individual sources of strength and resilience.

Cast off and overlooked at best or victims of scorn and prejudice at worst, lesbians in the twentieth century lived dual lives, their full voices unheard—until now. Lives of Lesbian Elders chronicles the life choices they made and their reasons for making them, set against the contexts of culture, politics, and the social mores of the eras in which they lived. Their stories of courage, resilience, resourcefulness, pride, and independence help restore lesbian history that has been forgotten, distorted, or disregarded and provide the information necessary to meet the future needs of aging lesbians.

Lives of Lesbian Elders gives aging lesbians a chance to discuss their thoughts on a variety of topics, including:

- *Coming out*
  - “You didn’t talk about it . . . Until two years ago, I never even referred to a lesbian or would I allow the word to pass my lips”
  - “I used to sneak into libraries and read about homosexuality and back in that era, it was not classy . . . it was classified as a disorder of some type”

### *Identity*

- “The only difference between me and anybody else is that I just happen to be sleeping with a woman”
- “I think I grew up not really knowing who I was and, I think, probably fighting all my life trying to find out who I was”

### *Family*

- “I feel very connected with the lesbian community here . . . I guess I would call that family”
- “Many years ago, my sister said: ‘I think when they’re ready, you need to explain to (the nieces) what a lesbian is, because I want them to hear the correct story . . . I want them to hear what it really is and not all these stupid rumors that go around’”

### *Work*

- “I was going to become a youth minister at one point and it dawned on me in high school that there was no way the church was going to let me work with kids”

- “I didn’t really finish my career . . . I still have dreams about the military and about not finishing . . . It was my choice, but it wasn’t really my choice”

*Aging and the Future*

- “I think financing, of course, is a real big problem for lesbian women”
  - “I have a concern that if anything should happen to my partner—in growing older—of being isolated from the gay community”
  - . . . and much more!
- Lives of Lesbian Elders: Looking Back, Looking Forward also includes appendices that present demographic data on the women who were interviewed for the book, information on historical timelines, and suggested readings on lesbian history. The book is an invaluable addition to the growing collective history of lesbians in the United States.

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**From reader reviews:**

**John Cleveland:**

The ability that you get from Lives of Lesbian Elders: Looking Back, Looking Forward (Hayworth Innovations in Feminis03studies) may be the more deep you rooting the information that hide inside words the more you get considering reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to recognise but Lives of Lesbian Elders: Looking Back, Looking Forward (Hayworth Innovations in Feminis03studies) giving you buzz feeling of reading. The article writer conveys their point in specific way that can be understood by simply anyone who read the idea because the author of this guide is well-known enough. This particular book also makes your current vocabulary increase well. That makes it easy to understand then can go with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having this Lives of Lesbian Elders: Looking Back, Looking Forward (Hayworth Innovations in Feminis03studies) instantly.

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