VALERIE TAYLOR, 1913 - 1997

Valerie Taylor - author, poet, and activist - died on October 22, 1997, in Tucson, Arizona, where she had lived since 1978. She was eighty-four years old. Born Velma Tate, in Aurora, Illinois, in 1913, Valerie Taylor was one of her pen names. A pioneer in lesbian literature, she published numerous lesbian novels in the 1950s and 1960s and continued writing until her death. She wrote for several Chicago alternative newspapers including Maelstrom Midwest Newsletter, The Chicago Gay Crusader, women's news...For a Change, and The Paper. She wrote almost 200 poems for women's and religious magazines, most under the pen name Nacella Young. Her poems also appeared in The Ladder. She was co-founder of the Lesbian Writers' Conference, first held in Chicago in 1974, as well as its first keynote speaker. In her address, entitled "For My Granddaughters," she said:

So all of us build on the lives of those who have gone before. Today we think in terms of sisterhood - and that's productive. But when a writer reaches sixty, she also begins to look for daughters, for inheritors.

We hope that our work too will help to make a foundation for those who come after us. We hope that young women coming up...will go on where we leave off...We are planting a seed here. Unless male politicians and militarists manage to blow up the human race, I believe that some of you will still be around in the year 2000 to harvest what grows out of this weekend. That's your future and I wish you luck with it.

In addition to being a writer and poet, Valerie Taylor was an activist for peace and justice, women's rights, lesbian and gay rights, tenant rights, and environmental issues and was an advocate for the elderly. She was inducted into the City of Chicago's Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 1992.

A partial bibliography of her work and of articles about her is below. It is excerpted from one prepared for us by Marie Kuda, also co-founder of the Lesbian Writer's Conference and a personal friend. For those interested in researching Valerie Taylor's life and work, Marie Kuda has relevant material in her own archives (in Oak Park, Illinois), including correspondence, books, poems, short stories, videotapes, and so on. Here at LHA we also have most of Valerie Taylor's books, as well as Working Papers #1: Letters to Valerie Taylor from Jeannette H. Foster, Dot Ross and Hazel Toliver. We also have some physical artifacts, including the purse she carried. In addition, Tee A. Corinne, literary executor for Valerie Taylor's estate, has transferred material pertaining to Valerie Taylor's personal and professional life into a special collection at the Human Sexuality Collection in the Carl B. Kroc Library at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. She is asking others with such material to add to that collection (See her letter on the next page).

Valerie Taylor in her home in Tucson, July 7, 1997. Photo by Angela Dawn

Books and Monographs by Valerie Taylor

1959 *Girls in 3-B*, Greenwich: Fawcett-Crest (second printing, 1963)
1964 *Unlikely Others*, New York: Midwood-Tower
1967 *Secret of the Bayou* (as Frances Davenport), New York: Ace In The Netherlands, published as *De Verwoorde Echoppen* in France, as *Le Secret de Marais* (Presses de la Cite, 1968)
1975 *For My Granddaughters*, Chicago: Womanpress
1977 *Love Image*, Bakers, MO: Nalad
1981 *Prism*, Tallahassee: Nalad
1988 *Ripening*, Austin, TX: Banned Books
1989 *Rice and Beans*, Tallahassee: Nalad
1990 *Two Women Revisited*, Austin, TX: Banned Books

Poems by Valerie Taylor

1967 "Lines from Li Po", *The Ladder*, Vol. 8, Mar., p. 7

Short Stories by Valerie Taylor


Articles/Books about Valerie Taylor


Many thanks to Marie Kuda, who provided us with the biographical and bibliographical material on which this article and bibliography are based.
THE SWEET LITTLE OLD GRAY-HAIRED LADY IN SNEAKERS by Valerie Taylor

I am a woman, a lesbian, a poet, a radical, a grandmother, over seventy — an eighty-nine-year-old.

How shall I not be a revolutionary?

How shall I not see my sister in every woman, my brother in every man, my child in every child?

When they dragged Jane Kennedy into solitary, that was my arm the cops were twisting.

When they dropped napalm on the rice paddies that was my skin on fire.

That was my blood running out hot and sticky.

Godness

give me eighteen kinds of strength to fight back.

Dear Friends of Valerie Taylor,

Please forgive the informality of this letter.

As literary executor for the estate of Valerie Taylor, I have worked with Brenda Marston of Cornell University to transfer all material pertaining to Valerie’s personal and professional life into a special collection in the Carl B. Kroch Library. It was Valerie’s wish and dream that her papers not be dispersed, but that they would have a permanent home where researchers could study her work. I am pleased and grateful that her desire has now become a reality.

If you have photographs, letters or other materials pertaining to her, or other material which you think should be included in this collection, please send them to Brenda Marston with the notation that they belong with the Valerie Taylor Papers.

Thank you so much for your support and interest.

Tee A. Corinne

September 17, 1998

IN MEMORY OF THE VOICES WE HAVE LOST

The Archives is in a place to commemorate lost lovers and friends. As a people, we have been deprived of the ritual of communal sorrow. Many lesbians have experienced the pain of silent mourning. Often in newspaper obituaries, a euphemism for the death of a lesbian is “There are no known survivors.” This is not true. We are not alone.

We hope that you will remember the lesbians in your community, your sisters, your friends, through memorials and letters to the Lesbian Herstory Archives, so that we may all honor their lives. Their voices and lives must not be lost or made invisible when we ourselves are no longer here to tell their stories.

Vee Larrson
Dorothy Isabel (Ox) Mitcheltree
Kathleen Rae Moulies
Julia Boyer-Reinstein
Marcia Stock
Valerie Taylor
Cara Vaughan
Bobbie Whitney
Lesbian Woman on Flight 800
Christine Burton
Jan Evelyn Kazof
Elizabeth Anne (Izzie) Harkaug
Sharon McCracken
Pat Ercolano
Dusty Springfield
Charlotte Smith

This year we are celebrating our 25th anniversary! Can you imagine? For twenty-five years this grassroots organization has managed to sustain itself as an all-volunteer group, rooted in consensus, and supported by the worldwide lesbian community. We should all be very proud of this remarkable accomplishment! We were able to purchase our own beautiful home to house our ever-growing collection of special collections, periodicals, books, videos, films, oral histories, audio tapes, music, graphic files, photographs, subject clippings, and ephemera and still continue to collect, process, and preserve lesbian materials.

We have a full year of activities planned to honor our anniversary, so if you are in the New York area in 1999 we hope you will come help us celebrate this extraordinary community institution.

We are planning a big open house on March 21st, followed by a tea dance on May 22nd, and 2 stepping with the Manhattan Mustangs at the Community Center. In June we are joining forces with the Rising Café in Brooklyn to host a block party on Brooklyn Pride Day. Finally, as a grand finale we are planning a major evening event on Oct. 23rd, that will include performances, readings, music, and reflections by both famous and infamous lesbians to commemorate our first 25 years.

As part of this celebration, we would like to ask you to participate by sending us your remembrances.

Lesbian Herstory Archives Newsletter #17, March 1999
©1999 Lesbian Herstory Educational Foundation, Inc.
LHEF, PO Box 1258, New York, NY 10116 718-768-DYKE Fax 718-768-4603

Newsletter Production: Beth Haskell, Joie Rich, Talli Talbott, Maxine Wolfe

The Lesbian Herstory Archives exists to gather and preserve Lesbian lives and activities so that future generations of Lesbians will have ready access to materials relevant to their lives. The process of gathering this material will also serve to uncover and collect our history. These materials enable us to analyze and re-evaluate the Lesbian experience.

25th Anniversary Year Celebration

of the Archives. Maybe it is the first time you learned about the Archives, an Archives Slide Show given in your town, or a visit to the Archives either at the old location on the Upper West Side or the building in Brooklyn. Or it could be just something about how the Archives has affected you or the community you live in. The next LHA Newsletter will feature these remembrances. Send them to us at our mailing address, PO Box 1258, New York, NY 10116 or fax them to 718-768-4603.

Join us in our yearlong celebration! We deserve to Party!

"HOW TO BE AN ARCHIVETTE"

This past year, as a new method of recruiting volunteers, we held five "How to Be an Archivette" workshops. The workshops included a tour of the Archives, a discussion of the principles of the Archives, and an overview of the many types of new project volunteers can create for themselves as well as the ongoing projects they could work on. We also expanded the hours volunteers can work, changing from a single "volunteer night" to a system in which volunteers can work during any of the hours the Archives is staffed. To facilitate this new system, we made each volunteer a monthly calendar showing when the Archives will be open and which volunteer is staffed. This enables her to drop by at her convenience to work on a project of interest. In turn, we can coordinate our schedules with each other.

The Archives has a particular collection of material regarding the Lesbian History Project. We are interested in collecting material from anyone who has been involved in the project (including, but not limited to, people who have attended the workshops and "learned" how to do the particular work she is interested in). We have created a "co-writer" section in which we can distribute them at community venues with the headline "Lesbians Come Browse Us." This maintains our visibility in our community and makes it easy for anyone to come and browse without having to call for an appointment.

We are planning to do "How to Be an Archivette" workshops at least twice a year. So, if you'd like to be included in the next one, please call the Archives, and leave a message for either Talli or Maxine. We'll write you (or call you) for the next workshop to start volunteering! Instead, call us, and we can arrange for you to get a brief orientation and start immediately. Or, if you're interested, please let us know. We'll have some more information about the project in our next newsletter. We're sure you'll find some time slot that suits your schedule.
CLOTHES WITH A MESSAGE

THE LHA T-SHIRT COLLECTION

Jennifer Born, an intern at LHA during the summer of 1990, came along as I led a tour group through the Archives. She came to the clothes docket and, with a huge can of soda, all the Archives coordinators, I said: "This is our T-shirt collection" — opening several clothes boxes filled with boxes — and one of those days we were going to get around to cataloging it. Jennifer had been looking for a project, and the T-shirt collection had strong appeal to her as a political activist. She found out, however, that political messages are only one subject adorning — in words and graphic designs — the T-shirts lesbians have created and worn through the years.

Some of our T-shirts are personal, one-of-a-kind, and handmade; with sparkles, sequins, or just a magic marker. They tell the world something about the maker — "New Rage Dyke," how she feels about her lover — "You make me all-happy and labia-laughing," or about her mother — "Daughter of a Dyke" (front), "Dann Proud" (back), Most were silk-screened or printed in varying quantities. Some commemorate events, like "Sisters of Women's Peace Encampment, 1985," "1st World Lesbian and Gay Conference, National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays, 1979 March on Washington, Proud of our culture, Proud of our heritage," "San Diego Women's Music Festival 1975." Others identify groups "Dyke Patrol, 1973, Orange County LA" (which come along with a note saying it was purchased at the Lesbian Conference in Los Angeles in April 1973); "Las Buenas Amigas" with the words "Latinas Lesbians" written inside a triangle with three women's symbols; "Lesbian Avengers" written around their bomb logo (front); and "WE RECRUIT" (back); "Salsa Soul Sisters, Third World Women Incorporation." Still others identify bars or restaurants: "Bonnie and Clyde's" (Manhattan, NY); "Grace and Rubles" (Jewish City, LA); or bars: "The Dykeskates. We're not just a gang, we're a band," or journal: "Common Lived Letters Live" (a graphic of a group of women in a car). There are, of course, the political commentaries: "May the great seal of P'town shift on Aries" (along with a drawing of a seagull); @1977); "Stop Bringer," "Sisterhood is Powerful" (with a fist in a woman's symbol); and "Lavender Menace" (worn during an action by Radicalesbians at the Congress to Unite Women, 1970). And then there are the catchy phrases we all know and love (well, that's debatable): "Thug a dyke," "we are everywhere" (written on a U.S. map); "upsetly women unite!" The graphics include lots of nude women, armaments, single, double, or triple women's symbols, lambies, rainbows, vagina-like flowers, as well as stars and moons... Making up a cataloging form for this collection was fun, but it also proved that a project can seem so simple when you start and get complicated when you try to figure out what someone might want to know about something as usual — in our communities — as a T-shirt. Each shirt is assigned a major category describing whether the focus is lesbian; landscan and gay; lesbian, gay, and bisexual; lesbian; gay; bisexual, and transgender; transgender; AIDS-related; or women/feminist. Then we assign one or two subject descriptions from among a large list which includes: personal, social/community, visibility, religion/spirituality, pride events, political conferences, sports, health, community centers, propaganda, culture/ethnic, restaurant, bars, hierarchy, festivals, business/advertising, bookstores, music, media, marches, and so on. We also code whether the shirt has words only, a graphic only, or both; where these are located on the shirt; and the color of the shirt and the print/design (she is one of the most obvious changes over the years and would be a great subject for a research paper, as would the changing of the symbols we used). We code the style (short-sleeve, tank, etc.), the event, organization, date, city, state and/or country it's from, the donor and the designers, and any information we have or which was sent by the donor about the story behind the T-shirt, its owner, maker, or the event/organization. And we reference it to other parts of the collection as well.

Jennifer did a huge amount of work that first summer, getting us off to a good start. Since then, we have finished photocopying, washing, and cataloging several hundred shirts, and we have been creating a comprehensive database. When this batch is finished, we'll begin working on the 100 or more T-shirts donated since we began this work — the ones we pretend not to see so we can have some sense of completion when this first group is finished. Once the data entry is complete, we'll have a preprint of the entire collection and be able to search the file by keywords to create specialized lists.

Do you have one or more T-shirts you no longer wear — or never wore but bought to remember a special event or place to support a group's fundraising effort? We'd love to have them — BUT please call before you clean out your drawers and mail them to us. We'll tell you if we already have that particular shirt. If not, we'll send you a donor form and a blank cataloging form (so you can give us all of the information firsthand) and then look forward to receiving your new addition to the collection.

—Marlene Wolfe

LHA Enters Cyberspace

We are very pleased to announce the creation of our new website. The mission of the website is to provide information regarding the Lesbian Herstory Educational Foundation, its collections, and services that LHA makes available to our community.

Users may obtain information describing the collections such as the Audio-Visual Collection, Books & Monographs, Reference Collection, International Collection; Special Collections, Oral History; Subject Files; Organization Files; Unpublished Papers; Periodicals; Vertical Files; and the Photography Collection. Pathfinders and bibliographies are also available for users who are interested in conducting research.

The Exhibits of Lesbian Herstory and treasures that continue to travel out of the Archives and onto the walls of community organizations across the USA are also available for viewing from our website. Currently, the "Fashion Exhibit," "Queer Covers," and "Keepin' On" are mounted on the site, enriched with bibliographies and video image galleries.

Information is also available regarding the LHA Internship program as well as on how to become a volunteer at the Archives. Persons interested in donating their collections or contributing to LHA financially may find relevant information under the "Support the LHA" section.

Come and visit us at http://www.datahubone.net/for/...
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS – LET YOUR VOICE SING!

SPECIAL collections are an important part of the Lesbian History Archives' collections. We strive to give our visitors a chance to come browse and even start your own. We have over 250 Special Collections from your friends, your favorite lesbian poets, women you may have passed in the street, lesbians from the East Coast, West Coast, Midwest, and Southern Plains. Gay women who died in the 1960's and women who were born in 1970.

A Special Collection is a grouping of someone's personal memorabilia – love letters, manuscripts, financial papers, letters, diaries, drawings, old pairs of glasses. When you view the original exhibit, it is possible to see some of the women coming out. Take out these pieces and see a lesbian in her mid-life years – strong, unique, and proud, with models for others. Scattered the contents, and arrange them again – now you see a political activist and a grandmother. Your Special Collection is a slice of your life. LHA Special Collections are a slice of lesbian life. Let me take you on tour.

The Tour:

First, come into the door. In to the foyer, and take your coat off (hang it over the table). Notice the Lesbian History Archives logo on the wall. Now, look at the art exhibit on the wall. A set of doors leads to a big room, your Yellow Wallpaper Room, named for obvious reasons. Off this room there's a door. Let's go in. This is our first stop in the display area.

In this Special Collections Room, you see floor-to-ceiling metal shelves lining the walls, with over a hundred boxes – all boxes are clearly labeled with the year the contents were archived. How many boxes in the collection, and the name of the person or organization to which the collection belonged. In this highly packed space, the feeling is comforting. There is a smell of close and old books. Open through the shelves if we feel comfortable for long enough, we may be able to hear the participation and potential the boxes contain.

Let's take a Special Collections box off the shelf, go back into the Yellow Wallpaper Room, and open it. Here, in this box, we'll find many documents – diaries, letters, and pictures and coming out.

This box has two diaries, old and worn. A pasture from 1956 is written by an anxious and frightened high school girl in her junior year wanting to create a boy in the upper class. The other diary, from the late 1950's, is from a woman from her late 20's, gifted and nervous, falling in love with a woman five years older than herself. In searching for beauty she scribbles the words "homosexual" small and nearly illegible. In a folder, underneath the diaries, are love letters exuberant and cancellatory, dated mid-1970's. The once unsexual "homosexual" is replaced here with Kool Hawaii's "Lesbian Feminist."

Further down are photos of groups of women posing at parties in dresses, tins, workshops, painter's pants – we are looking at the authors of the love letters. Condensed on one line of text, a group of women in a protest march – we can still smell the day that shirt was worn – pockety, and in different sizes. On the bottom of the box, the baby's first pair of shoes and a birth announcement, "Congratulations: It's a Girl!"

We look up and laugh because on the wall opposite us is framed the popular cartoon of a doctor holding a baby: "It's a Lesbian!"

As we put the box back, I tell you that this is the beginning of the display. We are starting with a collection of love letters, and we'll be looking at different letters from women in the late 1950's and 1970's. We'll see the coming out process. We start with the confession.

I have been learning from these women since they did the same thing. Some of the letters are filled with tenderness and vibrant, retired, living in New Mexico with her lover. LHA gets a postcard from her every few years, and we'll be sending the contents to her collection.

Now, look around and notice that there are three main areas that Special Collections boxes are stored because they outline the history of the present day: The Archives with life's usual frustrations: work, politics, loneliness, bad hair day. In these boxes, we have all the collections of different types of collections and organizations from different countries. Presenters discovered their interest in community activism, the beginnings of our community's organizations, and how their collections are being stored. Participants, included Cindy Quilij, Street Beat, Victorian, Feminist, GAY & Lesbian Archives, South Africa; Oja, Oaza, Leicht; Archiv Nijmegen, Holland; Oja Stefanik, Polish Lesbian Archives, Chicago; Addas; Joel; London Women's Library, United Kingdom; and London Lesbian Archives, USA. Paternoster.

In this room are some of the most significant collections. This is one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of lesbian and gay collections ever cataloged with excellent collections of written materials and with high ceilings. They had put the workshop in a small, elegant room, thinking we would only have a week-long workshop between the two workshops. So we'll be able to store over 25 women and it was standing room only. The session lasted 3 days and we had very well attended.

By the end of the session, a number of resolutions emerged including: that lesbian women in visibility be included in all future conferences, a special session on Jewish women, a special session on AIDS and women, and a special session on the history of non-discrimination policies in organizations. Since September 27th, there are a few of our GAY & Lesbian Archives histories of Lambda, the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, and the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force. There is a talk at the Granville Church for the Pennsylvania and South Seattle Science Advisory meeting. Speaking! Speaking! Speaking! In Berg B.Jy also marched in their Leather and Gay Pride March.

I am going to bring a box of pictures. In this display room, you will notice the extensive section of love letters. In the box, there are letters from the 1920's, mostly from women who were interested in the Victorian Women's Library, and letters from the 1970's, mostly from women who were interested in the Victorian Women's Library. I am going to bring a box of pictures. In this display room, you will notice the extensive section of love letters. In the box, there are letters from the 1920's, mostly from women who were interested in the Victorian Women's Library, and letters from the 1970's, mostly from women who were interested in the Victorian Women's Library. I am going to bring a box of pictures.

On the other hand, you will also notice the extensive section of love letters. In the box, there are letters from the 1920's, mostly from women who were interested in the Victorian Women's Library, and letters from the 1970's, mostly from women who were interested in the Victorian Women's Library. I am going to bring a box of pictures.

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FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 1997

INCOME FOR 1997

GENERAL FUND
Donations General Fund 20,428.50
Donations Building Fund 8,199.88
Benefits 1,407.00
Honoraria 2,862.00
LHA Items 237.00
Exhibits/Photo Use 150.00
United Way/CUNY Campaigns 766.08
Grants:
  Open Meadows Foundation 1,000.00
  Chase Matching Fund 25.00
SUBTOTAL 35,125.46

INTEREST
Chemical Bank Savings Account 170.84
Chemical Bank Endowment Account 315.82
Community Capital Bank Building Fund 105.95
SUBTOTAL 592.61

TOTAL INCOME 35,718.07

EXPENSES FOR 1997

EXPENSES
Postage 1,914.96
TOTAL EXPENSES 34,164.28

ARCHIVES PRESENTATIONS AND EVENTS
- June 24, 1997. At Home with the Archives: Eliza Dykewomon, Jewish dyke, poet, author, and activist.
- November 30, 1997. At Home with the Archives: The Five Lesbian Brothers, a comedy performance group.
- August 26, 1998 Workshop “What is the New World Conference on the World of Women’s Information.” Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
- September 27, 1998. Slide show presentation. Hope and Unity Metropolitan Community Church, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- September 29, 1998. Presentation. Seminar entitled “Refiguring the Archive: Community Archives.” University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. Sponsored by the Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts.
- October 20, 1998. At Home with the Archives: Mary Dore, Irish writer, poet, and activist.