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AGING LESBIANS HAVE FEW RIGHTS

by Marylou Hadditt

"If you think old heterosexual people have it bad, you just try to be an aging lesbian or gay man. You'll find you have almost no rights," commented a woman at the NALGG (National Association of Lesbian and Gay Gerontology) conference held in San Francisco last summer.

Conference workshops pointed out that today, in the United States, lesbians and gay men are denied all legal rights relative to their partners. They are not allowed hospital visits to the sick room, especially at a time of serious or life threatening illness. This is because "family," defined as parents, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters, has precedence. A lesbian or gay partner is not considered "family." Lesbians and gay men have no benefits from medical insurance of their partners, as do heterosexual married couples, nor are lesbians and gay men entitled to any social security benefits their partner may have accrued. Often, an inheritance is contested by blood relatives and the lesbian or gay male partner is left penniless.

Furthermore, lesbians and gays are often denied proper medical care or sympathetic treatment in nursing homes. An example cited told of a nurse who refused to help a seventy-five year old lesbian bathe — the nurse was afraid of her.

Specific activities directed toward change are beginning to take shape. In New York City, a lesbian retirement community is being formed. For more information, write to:

Chris Almvic, Coordinator
Women's Community
306 W. 93rd St. Rm. 34
New York, NY 10025

An outreach and support program for older lesbians and gay men has been formed. For more information, call or write:

Operation Concern
1853 Market St.
San Francisco, CA 94115

In addition, Chris Almvic has just written **THE INVISIBLE MINORITY: AGING AND LESBIANISM**, published by Utica College of Syracuse University at \$11. Orders may be mailed to:

Institute of Gerontology
Book Order Department
Utica College of Syracuse U.
Utica, NY 13502

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