The LLL Alumnae Association
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Continuum

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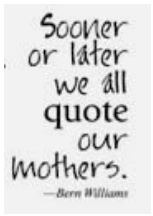

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Mary Ann Jung joined La Leche League in 1963 and became a Leader in 1965. She and her good friend, Nell Ryan, were both involved in LLL's early beginnings. Both their names are mentioned in The LLLove Story (1977). In the article below, we travel with Mary Ann through those early years and read about what she is now doing in "Life after LLL."

LIFE AFER LLL

La Leche League as a Turning Point

From time to time, people pause and look back on the turning points in their lives. La Leche League was certainly one of those for me. As so many young women of the 1950s generation, I married very young, moved to the suburbs and began to raise a family. My first child, Michael, was a boy, born six weeks premature. As was so common in those days, the hospital nurses and my doctor discouraged breastfeeding by saying the baby was much too small and weak. Three days later, they sent me home with a 104° F. fever and kept my little Michael for six weeks until he reached five pounds when I was allowed to take him home.

After my experience, I made up my mind that I would breastfeed my next child. I nursed not only my second child but also my third and fourth children. When I was pregnant with my fifth child, a woman approached me as I left church one Sunday morning. She noticed that I was expecting. She asked if I wanted to nurse my child and if I ever attended a La Leche League (LLL) meeting. She offered to give me a ride to the La Grange, Illinois LLL Group meeting if I was interested. I am not sure to this day why I accepted her invitation because I felt that I had gradually learned through trial and error to be pretty successful as a nursing mother.

But attending that first LLL Group meeting opened my eyes to a whole new world. There were many women and babies attending that first meeting. The Leader was an intelligent, knowledgeable and articulate woman named Nell Ryan (who became my friend from that time on). The series of meetings provided important and relevant information on both childrearing and nurturing. The library offered me more in depth study. I felt the support and breastfeeding help given to young mothers was an extraordinary contribution to family life and community then and I am sure it continues to be now. I continued to attend meetings. After helping with the management of the Group for some time, I was asked to be a Leader of a new Group closer to my home. In 1965, I became a Leader. The large Group had split in two. Attendees chose which Group was more convenient for them.

In 1968, after leading the Group for a year or more, I was asked by La Leche League International (LLLI) to become the Around the World (ATW) New Group Chairman. Ruth Ann Selvey was the ATW Coordinator. She was not only competent but she had a wonderful sense of humor and a sunny disposition. Marybeth Doucette was my boss at LLLI and was very patient as well as a really great trainer for this "eager beaver." My job involved mentoring women who applied for LLL leadership with the aim of starting new Groups outside the United States. It was an experience to work with women from all over the world as they believed in LLL philosophy and modeled it in their particular culture and *(continued on p. 2)*

La Leche League as a Turning Point *(continued from p. 1)*

local communities. Some women were attached to the military where their husbands served or were in government service. Other women were native born and had heard of LLL as had Jane Richie from New Zealand. Jane was a professor at a university and had written a book, *Child Rearing Practices in New Zealand*. She was determined to be a successful nursing mother as well as an author. My most exciting moment as a New Group Chairman was when Princess Grace of Monaco sent an inquiry about starting an LLL Group in Monaco. Her letter was in French and I remember I called the local high school French teacher to hire her to translate the letters for me and then again, running back here to have her translate my letters into French to reply to Princess Grace. I thought that was the only polite thing to do. What a thrill! I later met Princess Grace and Jane Ritchie, too, at the 1971 LLLI Conference in Chicago. I marveled at the fact that Princess Grace was even more beautiful in person than she was on the big Hollywood screen. I was equally impressed with Jane Ritchie and the other Leaders from around the world that I met at that same conference. Around the fall of 1973 I retired from LLL since I began to feel restless when my children were growing older. With the example and encouragement of my friend, Nell Ryan, I returned to school and received a bachelor's degree and then later a master's degree in clinical social work. I worked at a family service agency for eight years. Then I entered a post-doctoral program at the Chicago Center for Psychoanalysis in Chicago. As a psychoanalyst, I worked at the agency and in private practice. Without La Leche League I don't think I would have ever developed the confidence and drive to follow my dreams of education and vocation. Being surrounded by competent intelligent and dedicated women made all the difference. Many women I worked with in LLL went on after their childbearing years to shine in various fields of endeavor-or. They were inspired by what they saw women could do. I believe La Leche League changed the culture for breastfeeding mothers in our area and I believe in the whole country. I am now grateful for my family and my work. My husband and I are the parents of six adult children and we have 17 grandchildren. I still work in my private practice; we both volunteer at church and in our local community. As I pause now to look back, would I say that La Leche League was a turning point in my life? You bet it was!

Mary Ann Jung
Glen Ellyn, Illinois USA

Editorial Note: Under the umbrella of the Red Cross, a type of breastfeeding group was started in Monaco without following the usual protocols for an LLL Group.

Gail Gesley has been an LLL Leader for 17 years and has sons who are young adults. She was recently appointed as the Area Alumnae Representative (AAR) for Northern California and Hawaii (NCA/HI). Gail has held various Area positions including District Advisor, Area Coordinator of Events and was a member of US Western Division Staff–Event Support. Currently, she is a member of the NCA/HI Board of Directors and is a USW Event Mentor. Her hobbies include traveling and yoga. One of Gail's goals is to re-read all of Jane Austen's novels.

Supporting the Alumnae—as Natural as Breastfeeding

It's the easiest and most fun job I've ever had! What is it, you ask? I recently became the Area Alumnae Represent-ative (AAR) for LLL of No. California and Hawaii, liaison between my Area and the Alumnae Association. In the first stage of this job, I decided to focus on getting the Alumnae name out to the Area and building memberships. I started by attending Leader gatherings and workshops. During introductions, I would mention I was the AAR and participants could ask for more information. At the gathering, I'd give a brief description of Alumnae activities and the benefits of memberships. During break times I chatted with small groups of participants and offered membership forms. I've never asked people to join an organization before where I've had such positive responses. People were pulling out their checkbooks before I could finish talking. I believe this reflects the high regard the LLL Alumnae Association is held in by Leaders. In advance of the annual Area-wide Leader meeting, I announced my new position on our Area Yahoo! Group chat list with an advertisement about the Alumnae, a link to the Web site and an attached membership form. The ad was cut and pasted from the Web site, <http://alumnae.llli.org/>so it was very easy for me to make. I told Leaders they could save a stamp by joining at the meeting because I would mail in all the memberships together. I brought a simplified version of the application form to the meeting since I could answer questions in person. I was touched that one Leader returned her membership form and included a small contribution to the LLL Breastfeeding Helpline-US.

What's most surprising to Leaders in the various meetings I've attended? That the Alumnae is not just for retired Leaders; current Leaders are welcome, too. Indeed, LLL members are welcome to join! Leaders appreciate learning that the Alums are now operating independently from LLLI. I also asked all my friends who are retired or current Leaders. Often it led to a walk down memory lane and favorite stories of conferences, helping mothers and supporting each other as our children grew. La Leche League has been so meaningful in our lives. Giving back by supporting the Alums seems as natural as breastfeeding!

It's not just individuals who are supportive. LLL of No. California and Hawaii has budgeted $50 to help develop an Alumnae group for our Area. They've given me an email address <alumnae@lllnorcal.org> How cool is that! For the initial group of members, I sent a card and a teabag to thank them for joining or renewing. One new member offered her home for a meeting site, so that will be our first activity. As a seasoned Leader, she has a collection of memorabilia. We'll bring the Area scrapbooks, too. We'll discuss what future events we want to plan–a local trip or retreat? Museum tour? Ways to support our Area? Connecting with Alums in neighboring Areas? So many wonderful opportunities to consider!

Gail Gesley
Oakland, California USA

We Needed LLL to Be Part of Our Home Away from Home:
The Beginnings of LLL in France

Karima Khatib began attending LLL Meetings in Whittier, California, in early 1973. She has been a Leader for 35 years. LLL Leader Martha Maxwell encouraged her to become an Applicant. As accreditation grew closer, Karima and her family moved to France in early 1974 when she says, "I could have been a help with the LLL Group." She was accredited in 1975 and it should have been 1974 but there was a postal strike in France shortly after she moved–all the Leader Applicant files stayed somewhere in limbo for months! She brings to life how LLL of France was founded.

In France, we went ahead and held meetings but we were ever so careful to say we were not yet authorized by LLLI to call ourselves La Leche League Leaders yet. I lived in the suburbs of Paris when I was accredited. Another Leader Jini Fairley, who also lived in Paris, was accredited at the same time. Jini and I were put in touch through LLL and we co-founded LLL of France along with several wonderful women who joined us in the grass roots experience. We held two meetings a month–one in Paris and one in Palaiseau, a suburb. I rode the metro to meetings, with a baby in tow and laden with books. The first mothers who attended were those we met on the street and who were English-speaking! One woman had no children yet! The LLL library was a very important part of our lives for those of us living away from home without easy access to breastfeeding information. We needed Americans to talk to and we needed LLL to be part of home.

We submitted articles to *LLL News* (currently *New Beginnings*). Some of my recipes are in *Mother's in the Kitchen,* LLL's first published cookbook. In those days, we were fortunate to be in France because the Co-Founders came to Europe to meet with new Groups.

They all seemed to stop over in Paris to connect to other European destinations. Marian Tompson came more than once. We met Mary White in Germany. We were invited with Mary Ann Cahill to visit Princess Grace of Monaco in her Paris residence. With the Co-Founders, we were invited to meetings with the World Health Organization (WHO). I can't imagine now, how I allowed myself to speak up with my very basic French! We met with Dr. Michele Odent. Some of us had babies at his clinic, as did my daughter Cindy who gave us our first grandson in 1986. Others like Susan Colson went on to work closely with him. Susan was in our first meeting in Paris. She went on from LLL Leader to become a midwife in England, completed her PhD on the topic of breastfeeding in an inclined position, and has worked with Kittie Frantz on the concept of laying back to let the baby crawl to the breast. Now LLL France must be celebrating 30 years or more. Our original members Martine Chazelle, Lea Cohen, Carmen Vandenabeele and Gisele Laviolle are still active and LLL France has mostly French-speaking Leaders and Groups. Martine, Carmen and Gisele were both past LLLI Board Members.

My husband and I went to France with five children, Cindy, Colleen, Rami, Samiah and Abdul Karim. Hana and Aurelia were born in France. After ten exciting years "overseas," in 1983 we returned to California where I gave birth to Ahmad. When I moved back to the US, I immediately joined the West Orange County Chapter of LLL. We spent the last 27 years back in California. LLL has been with us all along the way through homebirths and breastfeeding difficulties (yes, even with an eighth child) and then 12 grandchildren and the deaths of my parents and our son Abdul Karim who died of cancer in 1992 at age 18. LLL friends were always there to support us in the happy and difficult times–all working so hard and feeling happy to put our own lives into it. ❧

Karima Khatib
Huntington Beach, California USA

The Big Umbrella of Midlife: The Years Between 45 and 80

Having the friendships of other women during midlife years can be a survival mechanism for many of us whether we have children living at home or we are adjusting to an empty nest. People born between 1946 and 1964 are referred to as the Baby Boomer Generation, who are about to enter the Era of Golden Boomers that starts on January 1, 2011, when they will be between the ages of 47 and 65. The Silent Generation is the era for those born between 1925 and 1945, now being between the age of 65 and 85. Alumnae members are probably in one or the other of these generations. As LLL alumnae members, the bond of LLL philosophy cements us together at any place, any time. It knows no boundaries because we can talk on a chat list or via a personal email to an Alumnae member we have never met and engage in an extensive and meaningful conversation that leads to friendship anywhere in the world. To age in a healthy way means to keep in touch with others and build a bridge over the miles. We can use old-fashioned written cards or notes, email, the telephone, voice/video calls with Skype over the Internet, sharing photos electronically, text messaging or what-ever works for you. These are ways people are able to feel close to somebody any time. A friend told me once that her "friends were like *synergy sisters*, the most consistent, important thing in her life." Friends can become like one's own extended family. We are living healthier and longer as seen by those in their 60s and 70s who are fine and don't need any help like their parents did at that age. At the same time, the onset of medical conditions can come on gradually from a chronic condition that gets worse or suddenly a stroke or a fall occurs resulting in a fracture, emergency surgery or physical limitations, etc. Do you ever wonder if this can happen to you or a family member? Is it an expectation for one's circle of life as we age?

As the Baby Boomers age, Paula Span, author of *When the Time Comes*, reports that there are over 35 million adults who will be caring for an older adult, an elderly parent or loved one. Adult children may need to step up to offer help when a parent is no longer able to live independently at home. It's unpredict-able; there is no advance notice! That's when families have to find ways to deal with these circumstances–whether it is close-by or long-distance. *(con't. on p. 4)*

The Big Umbrella of Midlife: The Years Between 45 and 80 *(continued from p. 3)*

Recently, caring for a family member was a topic on the Yahoo! ALLLumnae listserve. Several members shared supportive ideas. Permission was obtained to share their posted remarks. Misty Dunn wrote: "I'm fine with sharing whatever you think might be helpful to others. I think we can all gain from sharing information, affirmations, different perspectives, etc. I think an article will be very helpful to many of us now and maybe to others later." Below are excerpts from those electronic conversations.

Fran Dereszynski
Huntington Beach, California USA

My parents, both age 95, just entered a skilled nursing unit and were independent until this time. Their changes have come rapidly in a sense. They live in North Carolina. I live in Connecticut, five states away and over 700 miles. Since their move, I have flown several times to North Carolina and rented a car to be with them. When I had to leave my parents for several weeks, say good-bye, and head to the airport, it was like saying good-bye to my children at summer camp–I trusted they would be in good hands, but I would not be nearby to be of any assistance.

It's been an emotional, physical and economic challenge for me. I'm in charge of finances, etc. My brother and his wife both work and live three hours away. Along with our spouses, we cooperate and work well together to help our parents. For me, being a long-distance caregiver for my parents is like a role reversal; it is not always easy. My parents are doing amazingly well. After several weeks of being in separate rooms for different health reasons, they are together in a space smaller than they have ever been in! Practically all their lives they had separate bedrooms. Now, after 68 years of marriage, they share a room with separate beds and are happy to be together! I feel the effects of traveling each week to see them. I try to take care of myself, but I wish I had a 40-year-old body instead of a 65-year-old one! I have one more trip coming up next week and then I won't travel so much. I'm glad I was able to do this for them. There are many blessings in that their minds are pretty clear. They have *never* been grumpy or complained. It's been just the opposite; they are very grateful and appreciative.

My brother and his wife have been very easy to work with–real gifts. It seems they easily do what I don't want to and vice versa. Papers have been drawn up and I have power of attorney in a trust, etc., but there is still legal legwork and lots of learning for me to do. I'm grateful we had talks all along about the kind of care *they* want (their comfort and the least medical interventions) and final cremation arrangements. This will make it easier to follow through with their wishes when that time comes. We went through their apartment as quickly as possible. There was little time to make decisions about what clothes to keep and what to do with their papers and letters, etc. Perhaps that has actually worked in my favor. Basically, they also tried to simplify and declutter these last few years. There comes a time when, we do leave all our possessions at one point. I only have one brother and I encourage all families, especially ones with many siblings to have important conversations early and not be in denial. If any of you would like to share ideas and experiences, I would be very appreciative. I feel over-whelmed at the moment. I know there is wonderful collective wisdom in this group. There just aren't many instruction books out for senior citizens helping their parents!

Louise Cox
Windsor Locks, Connecticut USA

Louise, it sounds like your parents have the life of the "oldest of the old" that we would all want for our parents and ourselves. I have a friend in LLL whose parents both entered assisted living/skilled care at the same time and really seem to do so much better when they are in the same room. I found your remark was interesting–that your parents are happy to share a room after 68 years of living in separate rooms. I'm sure that having the other person there helps to keep them oriented and aware. What a gift that you were able to have so many important conversations with them before now. I think that you have managed to keep your parents safe and happy together. Going through their home and making decisions about what to keep and what to discard can't be easy.

My mother died 27 years ago, at age 53. I still think of her nearly every day. My dad is retired and has remarried since then. Since my mother's death, my dad's personal possessions have been distributed except for one room in his wife's home. I know that she knows his funeral wishes. His health has declined since he turned 80 in March 2009. His wife has become his caretaker–a role, which I think, must be difficult after only ten years of marriage. I feel as if I am not doing enough, as if I don't understand what is going on with him. I live about 60 miles away, have three children at home and want to spend time with them as well. I wish I could find a way to communicate better with my stepmother, to help her under-stand that I want to be more aware of what is going on with my dad. If there are times when he is not feeling well and not able to visit us, it concerns me. I wonder if a past illness is recurring? Is he in the hospital? So I take the time to call for an update. I wish I knew what more I could do to help ease the burden for my stepmother, spend more time with my dad and continue to meet the needs of my family at home.

I think that what is hard for me is that I sometimes feel like an outsider when it comes to my own father's health because he is married to someone who is not my mother. I'm grateful for all that she does. Without her, my father would not be able to live independently. My children adore her as the only grandmother they remember well. Their paternal grandmother died ten years ago. It is hard to be the caretaker of parents and children at the same time, plus trying to stay on top of my part-time job and my volunteer work. I carry guilt for not doing more but I am not sure what I should be doing.

Sara Dodder Furr
Lincoln, Nebraska USA

(continued on p. 5)

The Big Umbrella of Midlife: The Years Between 45 and 80 *(continued from p. 4)*

Louise, it sounds wonderful to me that your parents are 95 and now entering skilled nursing! I hope they are appreciative of your care for them–it's hard to do long-distance! I hope, too, that this is a move that they were ready, emotionally, to take. I can only imagine how distressing it must be to accept that you can't be independent any more but must rely on others to care for you. Until their deaths, my husband's parents were an 8-hour drive away. My father-in-law was in an Alzheimer's unit and my mother-in-law was in assisted living for a couple years. We drove to see them about once every month or two and then more often after he passed away and she was alone. It was painful to see them decline, especially when we couldn't be there often. My sister-in-law lived a couple hours away and visited every week or two. It hurt to see my mother-in-law question why she was still living, why she was outliving her friends and two of her daughters. My husband and sister-in-law shared financial and estate responsibilities, were in tune with each other and what they should do. It didn't seem a burden for us. My father, 88, currently lives with us. He takes care of his own financial responsibilities and dressing, showering, etc. Due to heart problems, he is at risk of falling; someone is always here to check on him. We prepare all his meals and take him everywhere since he no longer drives. I love having him live with us. It is actually easier than when he stayed in his own home. We tried that for a while; it was hard to be away from my home (and the computer!) for several hours a day. However, I occasionally find it difficult to always be "on call" and the need to schedule all my activities around whether I can get someone to be here with him if I have plans to be gone. A definite plus is that my dad's health issues have resulted in my more deeply reconnecting with him and family members. My sister lives four miles away; we are in contact every day. She helps me with his care or comes over to take my dad for a walk. We talk more frequently with my brother who lives about a 14-hour drive away. ~

Misty Dunn
Sacramento, California USA

Jody Nathanson became an LLL Leader in 1962 and is one of the co-founders of La Leche League in California. She has continued to be a Group Leader for 47 years. Jody is a past Board member for LLL of So. California/Nevada and was also a member of the LLLI Board of Directors. She reflects on the beginnings of this long-time relationship with LLL and being there to meet the needs of breastfeeding women into the 21st century.

Life Is Full of Surprises: An Exciting Journey

In 1956, I married Sherman Nathanson. In that same year, seven nursing mothers founded La Leche League. In the United States there was no support from health-care professionals for new mothers to breastfeed. Breastfeeding was almost a lost art in our culture. Also, there were no books teaching mothers about breastfeeding. This is when I began my exciting journey in La Leche League (LLL). In 1961, I was taking a childbirth education class and met Adrienne Tierney. We became friends. Fortunately, Adrienne's sister, Marian Tompson (one of LLL's co-Founders), encouraged and supported us with breastfeeding information. Adrienne's husband had a job with the airlines and had stops in Chicago. On a regular basis he picked up packages of information from Marian and we used the materials at meetings.

Our first babies were due January and March in 1962. In April 1962, we visited the childbirth class with our babies and talked about breastfeeding and La Leche League. Roberta Gerds, a registered nurse who was our childbirth instructor, urged us to share breastfeeding information with pregnant and new mothers from her classes. At the first mothers' meeting in my home in the summer of 1962, 19 mothers came. One mother, Mabel O'Donnell was expecting her fifth baby and was determined to breastfeed. Dolly Lee from an earlier childbirth class had the most experience. She had breastfed for six months! Three months later, 50 mothers sat on the floor in my little living room sharing problems and experiences. We learned from each other how to overcome difficulties and continue to breastfeed.

Photo: Jody and Ingrid Slizewski, LLL Leader

Betty Wagner, LLL co-Founder, sent us a list of nursing mothers in California who were starting nursing mothers' support groups in Los Angeles County, Orange County and the San Francisco area. Meanwhile, the Founders and Illinois Leaders developed a format and questionnaire to certify Group Leaders as representatives of La Leche League. In September 1962, I was the first LLL Leader in California to be formally accredited through correspondence with LLL in Illinois. By 1963, Adrienne and I met Mary Louie, Annette Head and Abby Calvin in Los Angeles County and Mary Ann Murphy in Orange County. By 1964 we gathered every few months in Annette's living room in Los Angeles. Each time there were more women who regularly helped other mothers like LLL Leader Kittie Frantz and mothers from the San Fernando Valley who joined us. Becoming a mother and being part of La Leche League's fantastic growth in 1970s and 1980s, was filled with many new challenges.

In LLL's *The LLLove Story* (second or third edition), there are references to a Happy Baby Carrier (HBC), a baby sling/carrier, which Sherman and I produced. HBCs were in answer to a request from Marybeth Doucette, a member of the LLLI Executive Board. It was common to leave babies at home in 1964 but the co-Founders wanted to encourage mothers to attend the 1964 LLLI Conference with their breastfeeding babies (of course). This was a new concept at a time when babies were usually left at home with "the baby sitter." When a surprising number of orders came in the mail, we started a "cottage industry" of mothers to sew Happy Baby Carriers which were sold for $7.95 plus shipping. Did you know that the whole baby-carrying trend was started at that conference? Life is just full of surprises! Through the LLLI Peer Counselor Program, Leaders' support programs, many LLL sources and book translations, LLLI truly became international.

(continued on p. 6)

Life Is Full of Surprises: An Exciting Journey *(continued from p. 5)*

I did not imagine that in 1985, less than 20 years later, I would be one of many LLL Leaders who would become the first International Board Certified Lactation Consultants in a new healthcare profession. Yet, there is still so much to do (or undo) for health and safety in childbirth and for better starts in breastfeeding.

It is interesting how much LLL has accomplished. Marian Tompson used to say LLL would continue until no longer needed. That doesn't seem to have happened yet.

I don't foresee a time in this century that the need for La Leche League's unique mother-to-mother sharing of information will disappear. Breastfeeding is certainly accepted as natural now that more is discussed [in the media, by health care professionals and in newly written books] about it. Breastfeeding percentages may be down. Mothers start breastfeeding and do not get sufficient moral support to use their book-learned information. That's what La Leche League continues to do so successfully–provide the comfort of real mothering experience and understand an appreciation of each individual mother's efforts and cheer her on. We must not forget the reason attitudes changed around the globe since LLL's beginnings in1956–at a time when mothers were rocking their babies and nursing, helping each other prove that you can breastfeed in unusual circumstances and babies proving the benefits. ☙

Jody Nathanson
Redondo Beach, California USA

The following article was originally published in *League Spirit,* Area Leaders' Letter for So. California/Nevada, July-September 2009.

A Special Celebration: Moments in LLL History

On May 17, 2009, the La Leche League Chapter of Palos Verdes and Neighbors held a very special fundraiser. We honored a wonderful LLL Leader named Jody Nathanson. She has volunteered her time for LLL for 47 years! Jody has helped so many mothers, Leaders and families during this incredible time with LLL and continues to take phone calls and support LLL Leaders near and far. We look up to her and appreciate all her hard work. People from as far away as Japan participated in this event by creating their own scrapbook pages for Jody. We combined all of the pages into one special memory book. It was a wonderful afternoon, full of touching stories and inspirational acts. Thank you to everyone who participated! We enjoyed seeing all who were there! Special thanks went to everyone who worked so hard to make this event so special. Carolyn Say, an LLL Leader in Palos Verdes, donated her beautiful home to our event and spent many hours preparing for the big day. Ellen Chase, also a Leader with Palos Verdes, worked hard and gave a lot of time and energy to this event. Aimee Popovich, an LLL member, donated her time and wisdom as well. Deborah Adams and Kris Crownover, of the LLL group in Redondo Beach, also put in a lot of hours and effort to make the day just right. Deborah's LLL logo cake was delicious!

It was a real labor of love for all of us! I think we got to know each other a little better and it brought us all closer. Thank you Jody! You give so much and ask for so little in return. Thank you for your undying support and your love of La Leche League! Jody commented, "It was a wonderful day. I am thrilled to be with such wonderful women! My 'thank you' is a raindrop into the ocean of the goodness we share in La Leche League. What a wonderful experience and a cherished memory for my family! I am truly honored to be in such good company!" ☙

Kris Crownover
Redondo Beach, California USA

LLL Leaders who attended Jody's celebration

Back row: Mariela Diaz-Brown, Fran Dereszynski, Jody's daughter-in-law Cathleen Nathanson, Dorothy Patricia Brewster.

Middle row: Michiyo Kobayashi, Karyl Eugene, Jeanne Saso, Jody Nathanson, Granddaughter Emma Nathanson, Nancy March, Deborah Adams, Ingrid Slizewski.

Front row: Daniele Roth, Ellen Chase, Izumi Mitsuoka (from Seattle, WA), Kris Crownover, Carolyn Say.

Present not pictured: Chika Nakatsuka and Lucia Galante Johnson. Present in spirit: Hiroko Hongo who was unable to leave Japan due to swine flu quarantines for return flights to Tokyo.

There is no influence so powerful as that of the mother.
Sarah Josepha Hale (1788-1879) American pioneer, writer, and author of the nursery rhyme, "Mary Had a Little Lamb"

The following ideas were included in recent messages on the Yahoo! ALLLumnae listserve. Those who posted have granted permission to share their posts with Continuum readers.

Preserving Family Memories and Letting Go of Possessions

I recently read an idea. The article's author suggested that you take pictures of things that are meaningful to you and either make a photo album of memories or if you are feeling more creative, make a scrapbook using items of clothing, jewelry, etc. It takes up less room but still fulfills the need to hang on to the item or memory. I think it makes a lot of sense.

Ilene Fabisch
Brockton, Massachusetts USA

Cutting up pieces of fabric to save instead of the whole dress reminds me of what my family did. We had Uncle George's Union Civil War officer's coat for years. Then it was cut up and each family member got a swatch.

Louise Cox
Windsor Locks, Connecticut USA

Another way is to put the photos in an online album, which takes even less space. I understand the need to touch an item to which one may have particular emotional connections. Perhaps it might be possible (with a wedding dress) to save a small part of it.
You could cut off a piece of the fabric, or maybe save just the veil or a garter. Sometimes, however, we just have to keep an item until we no longer need its physical presence.

Norma Ritter
Glenville, New York USA

This is a very interesting idea. Sometimes, I feel the need to actually hold and touch the item, but many times I just want to hang onto an item because I want to remember the event or the person associated with it. So, a picture or even a piece of the item in a scrapbook could reassure me that I will be able to remember!

When my mom passed away in 1998, we donated her work suits to a women's shelter. The suits were one of my mother's few extravagances. She was very petite (4'11") and would buy designer Evan Picone petite skirts and jackets for work because they seemed to be the only ones that really fit well and looked so good on her. They were in excellent condition, even though she wore them a lot. So, we donated them to a shelter that provided clothing for the women residents to use for job interviews. It did feel good to know that these lovely outfits could help another woman feel businesslike, attractive, confident, and ready to interview, which could help her land a job to support herself and her children. We were absolutely sure that my mother would have loved this use of her suits.

Sue Jacobsen
Buffalo Grove, Illinois USA

Some good advice I received about distributing my parents' possessions was to remember that one household cannot and should not take in the contents of another household. My mother had taken in the contents of her mother's house, so there was just too much stuff everywhere. It's emotionally difficult to let go of possessions (some possessions, anyway), but it's necessary. Just try to find the best use for the things.

Margaret Kenda
Sudbury, Massachusetts USA

Taking photographs is a great idea. The local high school drama department was happy to have some clothing from my mother, who now lives on a dementia unit. Some we donated to a charitable organization that had a second hand store and a few women's suits were appropriate for a clothing closet associated with a local job-training program. It makes me feel good to know that all of this stuff was put to good use. When my stepfather died, the funeral director told us that they had need of suitable clothing for "pro-bono" funerals they provide for those who cannot afford one. We donated some men's suits, shirts and ties. I never thought of that. They were somewhat outdated, but in good condition and he was happy to get them.

Meta L. Levin
Lake Bluff, Illinois USA

I am lucky in that one of my daughters-in-law has a degree in costume and theatre. She was happy to have my mother's and my grandmother's wedding dresses! I wonder if theatre departments might be "good uses" for some old clothing, jewelry, etc. In my daughter-in-law's case, they weren't to use in theatre but just to keep as period gowns. She has a whole collection of vintage eveningwear, too, especially for men. She and my son had a casual outdoor wedding; she was able to outfit all the men, including the two dads. My other son and his wife also had an outdoor wedding in the summer and they had white, short-sleeved Mexican wedding shirts for all the males in the wedding party, including the dads. ~

Alice Ziring
Mercer Island, Washington USA

LLL Publication Update & Reading Recommended by US Breastfeeding Committee

- *New Beginnings, Leaven,* and *Breastfeeding Today* are free on the LLLI Web site: http://www.llli.org/resources/publications.html?m=0,5 Print copies are available for purchase from MacCloud <http://magcloud.com> a third- party vendor and with periodic 25% discounts.
- *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* (WAB) Pre-order soft cover and Kindle editions at: www.llli.org/thewomanlyartofbreastfeeding
- Public health advocates have for years been trying to increase the number of women who breastfeed by educating mothers about health benefits. Breast milk improves babies' immune systems and decreases women's risk of everything from osteoporosis to type-2 diabetes. Reporters have picked up advocates' message and broadcast it widely, yet the number of women who breastfeed remains low. The US Breastfeeding Committee recommends reading this report, "Talking about Breastfeeding: Why the Health Argument Isn't Enough." It explores what's missing from the conversation. For the full text, log on to: http://www.bmsg.org/pub-issues.php#issue18 ~

In 1970 Scottie Pritchard first attended LLL meetings in Sacramento, California. She became an LLL Leader in 1977 when she was living in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Scottie has been an active Leader in New Hampshire, Germany, California, North Carolina and Virginia where she now leads LLL meetings in Grayson County. She has been a District Advisor (DA) in several Areas and is a DA in North Carolina, the state that borders where she currently lives. Scottie has four adult children–three sons and one daughter. They are all graduates of a university in Virginia; three are married. Her oldest son has three sons. Her daughter and her husband are expecting their first baby later this year. Scottie and her husband of 42 years live in their home that is on a gravel road in a hollow in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Near their home, they have a 7-circuit classic labyrinth that is an important part of their lives. Scottie loves to read, do vegetable and flower gardening; she also teaches Celtic and italic calligraphy.

Under a Blue Bowl: The Life of Olive Scott Benkelman Mostly in Her Own Words

Olive Porter Scott Benkelman was a strong-willed, progressive woman who grew up in, and eventually returned to southwestern Virginia. In 1907 she was born into an advantaged family in Elk Creek, Grayson County, Virginia. She probably would have argued with me on the "advantaged" point, as her youth was spent simply, neither in poverty nor apparent wealth. However, her father was the community doctor, respected and revered, and her mother was a pillar in the church and a leader in the local school and women's organizations. I am her only child. I met Bucky Pritchard at Emory and Henry College and we were married in 1968, shortly after he was drafted into the military. He was an Air Force officer and pilot for the next 20 years.

We moved around the country and to Germany as we followed his career and I raised our four children. I was sometimes overwhelmed with homesickness. Mother and I exchanged frequent letters. The cost of long-distance phone calls made that form of communication more expensive than we felt we could afford. In 1974, while living in Plattsburgh, New York, I decided that perhaps Mother and I could exchange talking-cassette tapes. I am sure my first recorded "letter" to her was halting and artificial-sounding as I re-taped it several times. It accompanied a gift tape recorder, which I sent to her for her 67th birthday.

Initially, we both felt shy and inhibited about hearing our own voices and recording our thoughts on tape rather than with ink on paper. We learned to not listen to our own out-going tapes. Often we recorded tapes while sewing or ironing, cooking dinner or washing the dishes, even while weeding a flowerbed. For the most part, we did not read to each other on the tapes, although we each jotted down a list of what we wanted to talk about or questions we wanted to ask, just to keep from becoming sidetracked. Over the next two decades Olive made some forty-odd cassette tapes for me. Many of these were audio letters, chitchat, daily news and musings. Many others were family stories, perhaps because she grew up in a pre-electrification time, before radio or television ruled our lives. Story telling enriched her knowledge of her grandparents, great grandparents, neighbors and community. She had listened to the stories her mother and grandmother told, and she remembered and shared them.

In 1988, my husband retired from the Air Force. He and I, with our four children, moved in across the dirt road from my by-then widowed mother. We shared eight wonderful years as close-and-only neighbors. She and my children developed affectionate relationships. She continued to make cassette tapes, although without her previous frequency or urgency. In the fall of 2000 I enrolled at Radford University to complete the bachelor's degree I started in 1966. One of my first classes was "Introduction to Sociology," with Dr. Peggy Shifflett. I vowed to take as many classes with this vibrant professor as possible. Eventually she was my advisor on my final project required for graduation. "From Under a Blue Bowl" became the beginning of this book. I presented my report, with PowerPoint photos, at the Third Annual National Conference of The Women of Appalachia in the fall of 2001 in Zanesville, Ohio. I like to think this book would have been written eventually, but the university project got it started, which was the hardest part. It was most difficult to listen to that first cassette of my mother talking to me, five years after her death. Her laughter, her occasional trademark throat-clearing, her very passion for life and family stories were at first overwhelmingly sad. I found it easier to listen to the first tapes as I drove the hour and a half to and from Radford University. Gradually my sadness was replaced, first by a bittersweet resignation and eventually with a joy at this lovely connection with Olive. I've learned much about her, my ancestors, and the remote community where she grew up that I now call "home." Published in 2007, much of *Under a Blue Bowl* is written directly from Olive's words, and it is told in her own "voice" until the final chapter, which is of necessity clearly told by me. The exception is Chapter 14 where her brother George Scott tells of his time in the Army during World War II. Olive made a tape of his reminiscences and I transcribed that chapter from that tape. Here is an example of Olive's early memories from one of the recordings:

> *In those days (early 1900s) it was just assumed that babies would be fed at their mother's breasts. I breastfed until I was between three and four years of age. That wasn't at all unusual. Perhaps my life-long good health is related to that good start my mother gave me. I breastfed until I was big enough to stand and nurse while Mother stood in the kitchen preparing meals. One of my earliest memories is of sitting on my mother's lap nursing on one side, sitting up and saying, "I want to get over on that side and get more Bi-pah." Mother had a mole on one breast and I remember playing with that while I nursed.*

By assuming Olive's "voice," I have, in an eerie manner, felt as if I have been walking in her shoes the years that this book has been a work in progress. While I may have used her "voice" and perhaps walked in her shoes, no one can see into another's heart. I think Olive would like this book, and the story of her life which has been ultimately written by the two of us "together." I know I've left out people and events she would have included, and I've included some things she surely would not have. It is with delight that I presented Olive's story to readers.

Scottie Pritchard
Elk Creek, Virginia USA
hillsofhome@gmail.com

The framed photo above, "Tea Party," featured in the book, shows my mother sitting to the left of her best friend for life. Taken in 1914 when Olive was seven years old, I think of the work that went into that little tea party, with the ironing, starching, sewing, and set up.

Spotlight on LLLife from the LLL Group to the LLLI Office

I have been married for 48 years to Ed, my high school sweetheart. We have four sons and one daughter. My interests are family and music, choirs, fishing, sewing, reading and bridge. I first went to a La Leche League (LLL) meeting in White Bear Lake, Minnesota in February 1967. My doctor told me I would need to nurse my third child at least two years because of allergies. Then he told me about a new group, La Leche League, which was starting in my town. I went to the meeting without my three-month-old baby and was surprised to see mothers there with babies. The rest is history.

I became a Leader 42 years ago, in the summer of 1968, just before the LLLI Conference in Denver, Colorado. I was active with a Group in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, and later moved to Mankato, Minnesota, where I worked with Jan Riordan, Betty Ann Countryman and Liz Crofts to develop the Professional Liaison (PL) Department. I was the first PL then later became a Regional PL. When we moved to Valparaiso, Indiana, in 1975 I started to work on Physician Seminars. In 1981, I became a part time member of the LLLI Staff coordinating Physician Seminars, Continuing Education (CE) sessions at LLLI Conferences, and later to start LLLI Lactation Consultant Workshops. I was able to do this since the LLLI Office is about 55 miles from my home. In 1991 I was full time on the LLLI Staff and was asked to Chair the LLLI Conference Team.

Then in 1992 I became involved in a study for future LLLI Conferences and then led the Conference Team for the next seven LLLI Conferences, 1995-2007. With the use of the Internet, the team developed into an international team mostly of volunteers. I loved doing LLLI Conferences. I always felt like I was throwing a party for my best friends. I also became a Certified Meeting Professional.

Since the 2007 LLLI Conference, I worked to make sure that evidence is behind LLL's publications and I continue to work with the accreditation agencies mentioned below. Up until a year ago I worked full time at the LLLI Office as the Director of Education and Member Services and coordinated a staff team involved with the Peer Counselor Program, Center for Breastfeeding Information, Meetings, Customer Service, Membership, and Reception. I currently work for LLLI and telecommute halftime as the Director of Education. In the past two years I have been working with a team of experts to facilitate updates of LLLI tear-off sheets, making sure that the evidence is behind the anecdotal knowledge. Right now we are working on nine tear-offs. I also review mother support materials for the US Department of Health and Human Services that includes online services and free publications, *Easy Guide to Breastfeeding* and *A Lifetime of Good Health: Your Guide to Staying Healthy*. This is important not only for the information but also for the references to LLL.

I work with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on the Coalition Group for Breastfeeding. I also am on the expert work group for the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), updating their materials for AAP's *Bright Futures* program. I continue to complete accreditation work with the American Academy of Continuing Medical Education (AACME) and the International Board Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBLCE). Through LLLI's Community Network (CN), Professional Liaison Leaders and the Center for Breastfeeding Information volunteers are kept informed of electronic information and updates whether it is research or information from other organizations.

LLLI was one of the founding members of the United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC). At this time I continue to represent LLLI at the meetings as well as the Breastfeeding Promotion Consortium with the Department of Agriculture (WIC). I also am a member of the editorial review groups for LLL publications, *Breastfeeding Today*, *Leaven*, and *New Beginnings*. I take phone calls from mothers who call the LLLI Office with tough questions.

Technology is great. I think about when we wrote a letter from the LLLI Office years ago and then waited for a reply in the mail. Now we just send an email, forward calls, or communicate on social networks, etc. Information comes much quicker!

Carol Kolar,
Valparaiso, Indiana USA

Mary Kolar is Carol Kolar's daughter-in-law. She has been an LLL Leader for 25 years and recently became a grandmother.

The Excitement of Being a First-Time Grandmother

A baby being born happens everyday but becoming a grandmother doesn't. My son, Eddie married a wonderful woman, Angela, last summer. On March 10, 2010, Maureen Elle Kolar, their first child and my first grandchild, was born. When Angela was first pregnant, she asked me about La Leche League meetings and I gave her the information. My sister-in-law Allison offered to go with her to her first meeting. My family is very fortunate because many immediate family members live in the same town. My husband's parents, two of his brothers, and three of my brothers live in Valparaiso, Indiana. Angela and Eddie decided not to find out the baby's sex ahead of time. To my amazement that was unusual. Most parents-to-be nowadays find out the baby's sex so they can decorate the nursery a certain way, pick out clothes, and even pick out the name before the child is born. They did plan for a natural childbirth. Also supportive of their choice was a wonderful nurse and a midwife who would be at the delivery. Angela's labor was very typical for a first-time mother. She gave birth without any medications and drew support from Eddie, the nurse and me. We were so excited to be at the baby's birth. All of us gushed over this new family member until finally the midwife picked up the baby to announce she was a girl! Then she placed her on Angela's tummy. Angela drew the baby up to her breast as she snuggled in. *(continued on p. 10)*

The Excitement of Being a First-Time Grandmother *(continued from p. 9)*

After about ten or fifteen minutes, baby Maureen latched on and nursed for about twenty minutes. There were many nurses and even some doctors who stopped by her room to see "the mother who delivered a baby without medication." Angela and Eddie were so empowered by the delivery. Even though Angela's labor was hard and very long, they made it through. The baby is very healthy. Even with some sleepless nights, the nursing and parenting are going along wonderfully. As an LLL Leader for 25 years, I have helped many mothers. I feel that mothers who have a natural childbirth are those that have the fewer problems with nursing and parenting.

Mary Kolar
Valparaiso, Indiana USA

Celebrating Five Generations of a Leader's Family

This is a five-generation picture with my daughter-in-law Mary who has been a Leader for 25 years. Mary, Angela, Lillian are I are married to one of the four family members who have the same name–Ed Kolar! My husband's mother, Lillian, is 92. She has 8 grandchildren, 16 great grandchildren, and 1 great great-grandchild. In this picture, Angela holds her new daughter, Maureen, who is three-months-old.

I can hardly believe it! I am a great-grandmother! Our first-born grandson Edward William Kolar IV and his beautiful wife Angela gave the Kolar family another gift of life. This is a whole new role for me. I know how to be a grandmother. I have had the good fortune of never being without a baby in my life since our son Edward III was born. When he and his wife gave birth to Kirstin, my first grandchild, Mark (our youngest son) was not quite five-years-old. I remember we had to get Mark an "I am the Uncle" t-shirt.

We are expecting our 14th grandchild in June 2010. Being a grandmother is something I love; I enjoy each and every one of my grandchildren. I have also been very fortunate to support and enjoy the long-term breastfeeding experiences that my grandchildren have had. Before Maureen was born, I asked myself, "What is the role of a great-grandmother?" So I did what many Leaders often do–ask a long-time Leader friend how she handled that experience herself. I asked Pat Young, who has several great-grandchildren, "What makes this different?" Pat gave wise advice. She said to just enjoy and love the family and leave all the rest up to the new grandmother. Now that I have only been at this for a few months, I know that it is so much fun to watch this new little girl grow. I know she will grow up with two of her cousins, my grandchildren, who live here in town. It is so wonderful to have Angela ask questions about breast-feeding and mothering and to learn from the extended family of experienced aunts. Just this weekend an aunt showed her how to nurse her baby in a sling. The most wonderful part is enjoying my beautiful daughter Mary bragging about her new grand-child and doing all the things that we did when she was a new mother. So Pat's advice works for great-grand-mothers: enjoy the baby and let the new grandmother do all the things that you did for them. Remember, grand-mothers will buy all those cute dresses!

Carol Kolar
Valparaiso, Indiana USA

Editorial Note: Carol's daughter, Cheryl, is also a Leader in Indiana. Daughter-in-law, Mary in the photo, worked on the LLLI 800-Line for many years and now does telephone helping in her community.

World Breastfeeding Week 2010

Breastfeeding–The Baby Friendly Way, the 2010 World Breastfeeding Week Celebration (WBWC) theme, recognizes the importance of supporting a mother at the beginning of her breastfeeding experience as the key in achieving success in her goal to breastfeed her baby. This year La Leche League Groups keep 80% of their WBWC proceeds. Prizes include the new edition *of The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*. Log on to: www.lllusa.org/wbw to join a WBWC near you–24 Areas plan a WBWC; 14 events are listed so far.

Your Help Is Needed

Remember to renew your membership to maintain *Continuum* mailings and participation on an Alum listserv. If LAST ISSUE is on the address section of this issue, it is your reminder to renew by August 31 to keep you on the mailing list. **If you move**, send your new address to Membership Coordinator, Sue Steilen at: Suesteilen@comcast.net. Forwarding notices for the post office do not forward bulk mail and periodicals. Remember to include your email address (if applicable), new phone, along with the new address. This helps us keep you informed through *Continuum* mailings and email messages that may be sent through the new Alum Yahoo! Group. Thank you.

From the Mailbag

Are you in full swing for summer? Perhaps you may be spending time with family at picnics, taking a fun family trip or trying to stay cool. My husband and I plan to do activities close to home where family can visit us. Our summer garden is coming along. We look forward to tomatoes, red beets and fresh corn.

This issue came together with an assortment of articles tapping into the past and the present: what a former Leader has done since she retired from LLL, Leaders who co-founded LLL in California and France continue to help mothers breastfeed, a new AAR's sparkling energy for the Alums, a Leader's book about her mother born in the early days of the 20th century, and a culminating, priceless photo of five generations of women. Interspersed in the stories of these long-time Leaders, you will discover daughters and daughters-in-law who felt the desire to become LLL Leaders, too. They are carrying LLL into the 21st century where technology is the norm. Emailing and texting are part of the culture in contrast to typing and handwriting notes and letters that previous generations toiled over in yesteryear.

I received an email from Nancy Barry, who lives in Idaho Falls, Idaho. She wrote: "I enjoy receiving *Continuum*. Although I used to read *New Beginnings* the minute it came into my mailbox, now I download it to read later. I really have to make an effort to read it. I find that I don't remember what I read on the computer screen like I do with a hard copy. Maybe it is because I am old. New mothers may do better at computer reading than I do, but I am afraid that there may be some who just skim the issue. I love *Continuum* in the hard copy because I can read in my easy chair, my bed or even my hot tub. Keep up the interesting variety of articles."

That's my goal for the next issue: to have a "variety of articles." But I need your help! I need to know what topics inspire you? What articles would you like to read in the next issue? What experience can you share with other Alum members? How about your LLLife after LLL? Travel tips, places to visit? Where to find deals? Share how you handled a challenge in the years after your children have grown? You don't necessarily need to write it yourself. I can try to put out the word for someone who is interested in writing on that subject or similar experience. Gosh, you probably think someone else will write these articles? I wish it were so. However, articles trickle in periodically, one at a time via a handwritten article or via email. Experiment with a confident thought. Jot down a few words and phrases to produce an article that is uniquely yours. A good recipe for my next issue starts with getting your articles. I look forward to those ingredients coming my way! Send articles by August 1, 2010. Articles may be edited for length, clarity, and adherence to LLL journalistic guidelines.

If writing an article is not something you can do, send me an email to let me know what you liked about this issue. I love readers' feedback! Keep your membership current to maintain participation in Alum listservs and receiving *Continuum*. Encourage friends to become members. New members receive an invitation to join the ALLLumnae Yahoo! listserve where members share enriching, electronic conversations from time to time.

Until next time,

Fran

Printed June 15, 2010.

Donations Received in Memory of Co-Founder, Vi Lennon

Thank you to the following donors who made a donation to the La Leche League Alumnae Association in memory of co-Founder, Viola Lennon. Total donations: $635. Her memory lives on in the continuing work of the Alumnae Association. Vi was a champion for the Alumnae Association, and we benefitted greatly through Vi's involvement for many years.

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Join the Alumnae!

Yes, I want to keep in touch and support the LLL Alumnae Association. Dues are $20/year. Make checks payable to "LLL Alumnae Association." You may renew for more than one year at a time. Send checks to:

Susan Geil, LLL Alumnae Treasurer
4868 N. Hermitage Ave., Chicago, IL 60640

Questions? Contact Susan at: <srgeil@yahoo.com>

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