

Finding aid of the Dan Turner Papers 1960-1990

Accession number: 1990-10

**Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society
San Francisco, California**

Contact Information:

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society
P.O. Box 424280
San Francisco, California 94142
Phone: (415) 777-5455
Email: info@glbthistory.org
URL: <http://glbthistory.org/>

Processed by:

David Hatfield Sparks and Josué Hurtado

Date Completed:

August, 2005

Encoded by

Rebekah Kim

Funding for processing this collection was provided by
The National Historical Publications and Records Commission

© 2005 Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.
All rights reserved.

Descriptive Summary

Title

Dan Turner Papers, 1960-1990

Accession number

1990-10

Creator

Dan Turner

Extent

14 boxes

5.6 linear feet

Repository Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society
San Francisco, California

Abstract

Journals, correspondence, manuscripts, subject files and other material documenting the life and thoughts of this longtime AIDS activist and writer. Turner was said to be the longest living PWA when he died in 1990.

Administrative Information

Acquisition

Donated by Daniel Turner in 1990.

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

Please contact the Archivist for information about publication rights.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Dan Turner Papers, 1990-10, The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

Biography

Daniel Francis Turner, born in 1947, was an actor, author, composer and gay/AIDS activist. Turner was reared in Bloomington, Illinois in the Hotel Rogers where his father was manager. In 1962 the family moved to Cheboygan, Wisconsin where Turner began acting in high school drama productions and graduated in 1965. He received his B.A. from Fairfield University in Connecticut in 1969, spending a year abroad at Exeter College in England and traveling in Europe. During the late 1960s, Turner also traveled to Malawi in Africa as a Peace Corps volunteer and to Alabama as a VISTA volunteer, where he wrote and produced his early play "Cottonmouth."

In the early 1970s, he studied play writing with Kenneth Cameron at the University of Iowa, writing and producing a play entitled "Light Years. He was, however, asked to leave this program during an anti-gay pogrom, Turner then went to Texas where he was awarded an internship from the Dallas Theater. Center. During this program Turner also experienced homophobic prejudice, being "called before the entire theater company and ordered to choose between gay liberation and the theater." In spite of this prejudice, Turner wrote and produced several plays and musicals in Dallas including: *Getting to Know the Natives* (published by Samuel French Inc., New York, 1974); and "A," a musical based on *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. He received his Masters of Fine Arts from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas in 1974.

In the mid-1970s Turner moved to San Francisco, California where he began his professional acting career, participating in the productions of both regional and gay theater companies and collectives. Turner was associated with several prominent San Francisco gay and straight theater organizations, including Theater Rhinoceros, Gay Men's Theater Collective, Gay Theater Alliance, Bay Area Theater Critics Circle, and the Earnest Player, which he helped form with Daniel Curzon. At the Eureka Theater Turner also taught a course in playwriting during the late 1970s. While he appeared throughout San Francisco and Bay Area theaters and cultural/performance spaces he also performed in Texas and traveled to Los Angeles for numerous acting and publishing opportunities. His theater reviews and interviews also appeared in the *Bay Area Reporter* (B. A. R.) and other gay newspapers and "bar rags." One example found in this collection is an interview Turner conducted with Armistead Maupin, ca 1977.

Besides his own original work and his collaboration with Daniel Curzon and others, Turner directed and acted in many local productions including the "Sex Show. He helped found "The Ernest Players," a gay male focused theater group. Besides Turner's journalistic and critical articles for local gay papers, he continued to write poetry, novels, and short stories, some with erotic content that appeared in gay magazines such as *In Touch and Blueboy*. At this time he also produced a series of educational slide shows for Harcourt Brace Javonovitch. In 1976 Turner contracted hepatitis. In the summer of that same year also became secretary to Tennessee Williams. During 1976 Turner traveled with Williams to New Orleans, New York and Cape Cod. Williams inspired Turner to continue to fight to live and write and, indeed, the late 1970s and 1980s became his most prolific period.

On returning to San Francisco, he wrote and produced three musical plays, two of which were in collaboration with Curzon. He also directed several plays including "Beneath the Surface" and "Beer and Rhubarb Pie" for Theater Rhinoceros. In February 1982 Turner was diagnosed with Kaposi Sarcoma and was one of the first patients of Dr. Paul Volberding and San Francisco General Hospital. From this time on Turner, became an aggressive AIDS activists working for and participating in many new and experimental drugs. He visited hundreds of AIDS patients and was invited to speak, as a "long-term survivor," before groups of doctors, scientists, and Persons With AIDS (PWAs). He sent messages and attempted to see both Pope John Paul II and Mother Teresa during their visits to the Bay Area in the late 1980s.

Turner was the recipient of several awards including the "Silver Award" (1979) from the Chicago international Film Festival and the "Certificate of Creative Excellence" (1980) from the U. S. Industrial Film Festival in Chicago. Turner began writing his autobiography in 1981 and continued released an updated version in 1988 with the help of Stuart Rawlings entitled, "One Day at a Time, My Life With AIDS." After eight years of battling the disease, Turner finally succumbed to AIDS on June 4, 1990. At the time he was believed to be the longest surviving PWA. "Dan played an important role for HIV-infected people across the world," said Holly Smith of the Shanti Project, an AIDS support group. "He showed people they can live, they can accomplish things after a diagnosis. He lived every moment." His memorial service was held at Grace Cathedral.

Scope and Content

The Daniel Francis Turner Papers, 1964-1990 (bulk 1980-1989), include correspondence, manuscripts, drafts, research materials, theatrical memorabilia and ephemera, notes, financial, educational and publishing documents, as well as photographs that relate to his career as an actor, author and journalist, composer and gay/AIDS activist. The materials are alphabetically arranged by title or format (e.g. Notebook) when applicable. While in general these papers are not in original order, some effort has been made to keep in original order of those individual folders created by Turner.

While materials related to his personal life and relationships, other than correspondence, are not numerous in this collection, the bulk of the materials document Turner's work in the San Francisco gay theatrical and media communities of the 1970s and 1980s. Also not found in this collection are numerous materials related to Turner's travels as secretary to Tennessee Williams. Some-personal correspondence to friends, however and the manuscript "A Tennessee Waltz" chronicles his relationship with Williams. The collection is arranged in six series:

- 1. Correspondence, 1962-1990**
- 2. Creative Works, 1960-1990**
- 3. Theater/Acting Career, 1961-1986**
- 4. Personal Papers, 1971-1993**
- 5. Works by Others, 1958-1988**
- 6. Audiovisual, 1988**

The Turner papers represent aspects of Turners work and life from his early career to his death in 1990. Turner's work reflects a general interest in American musical theater as well as gay politics and popular culture. Beyond the study of Turner and his writings during part of the most prolific times of his life, this collection also provides insight into the gay male acting and theater community of the 1970s. and 1980 in the San Francisco Bay Area. Also Important are his insights and activism as a long-term PWA and his courage to publicly celebrate his life and death as an gay artist and activist. **Collection Contents**

A copy of the collection register is kept in the first box of the collection (1/0).

Series 1. Correspondence, 1962-1990

12 Folders

This series is comprised of letters from friends, agents, and publishers and is chronologically arranged at the folder level. Besides personal information, theater-related topics dominate the collection concerning various productions, troupes and actors in several cities including New York, Los Angeles, Dallas and San Francisco. Included here are of some of Turner's outgoing correspondence, including early letters sent primarily to his family. Also found here are numerous letters of a sexual nature from correspondents sharing Turner's interest in S/M. Additional correspondence is found throughout the - collection, especially in Series II. Creative Works that also relates to literary, performance, or publication matters. There is also one folder of AIDS-related correspondence found in the Personal Papers series that includes a letter from Michael Callen. Significant correspondents include: James Ashley Bellamy, Robert Chesley, James Thomas Dowell, Arthur Evans, William Hoffman, Arnie Kantrowitz, Robert Patrick, Efrim Ramirez, Rink, Rosalie Turner (his mother and Tim Turner (his brother).

<u>Box/Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1/1	1962-1969
1/2	1977
1/3	1978
1/4	1979
1/5	1980
1/6	1981-1987
1/7	1985-1987
1/8	1988
1/9	1989-1990
1/10	Undated
2/1	Outgoing correspondence, 1968-1987
2/2	Theater and career-related correspondence, 1980-1981

Series 2. Creative Works, 1960-1990

83 Folders

The bulk of this series consists of notebooks, manuscripts (often including multiple annotated and corrected drafts) of poems, novels, short stories, an autobiography, plays, musicals as well as television or film scripts and newspaper reviews and interviews. Also found in this series is correspondence, notices and flyers of public performances.

This series is divided into three sub-series: *Plays and Musical, 1974-1988*, *Fiction, Poetry and Prose, 1960-1990*, and *Notebooks, 1971- 1989*. While drafts of plays/musical, short prose dominate the Creative Works series, also present are numerous creative notes and outlines, including "four page treatments" for film. Nonfiction prose works include several drafts of chapters for Turner's autobiography written in collaboration with Stuart Rawlings. Notes for and partial drafts of works are often interfiled with manuscripts.

The folders often contain numerous manuscripts and/or related notes, proposals, and correspondence. Many of the drafts of poems are written verso (reverse side) of other incomplete manuscripts by Turner. This series contains both published and unpublished material, which are identified whenever possible.

The sub-series *Plays and Musicals* consists of drafts, annotated and corrected typescripts, notebooks, notes for musicals, plays or dramatic treatments. Also found here are drafts of works and proposals for future work in various formats (holograph, typescript, photocopy) and stages of preparation (whole pages and page fragments). This sub-series also includes clippings of newspaper reviews for performances. Manuscripts found here include "A" and a second manuscripts entitled "The Scarlet Letter" based on the same material derived from Hawthorne's novel. Also found here is the musical "Born in Hollywood" whose central character is either a drag queen or a transsexual person and two non-musical plays, "Getting to Know the Natives" and "Renovations." Together with Daniel Curzon and other collaborators, Turner co-authored or contributed musical scores and directorial expertise to numerous works represented in the series. His collaborations with Curzon were numerous and include: "Cinderella II," "Comeback," and "No Minced Pies." Also found in this sub-series are miscellaneous photocopies of songs in score form.

The sub-series *Fiction, Poetry, and Prose*, includes drafts of Turner's creative prose which is often, but not exclusively, focused on gay male and erotic, themes. Unpublished Manuscripts of Turner's novels found here include: "The Curve of Clancy's Bubble," and "Roach." Manuscripts of short prose found in this sub-series include drafts of four short stories tentatively entitled "Quickies: A Collection of Gay Short Stories." and another story entitled "Nice Men Do Not Go Out Alone." Autobiographical works include "A Tennessee Waltz," which concerns Turner's time with Tennessee Williams and several differently titled chapters from his unfinished autobiography. Also present here is the autobiographical manuscript entitled "Vista-Peace Corps." One folder of Turner's journalistic piece, that includes and interview with and photographs of Armistead Maupin is also found in this sub-series. Many of the manuscripts found here are accompanied by numerous holographic fragments, revisions, critical notes, publicity, and related correspondence.

The sub-series *Notebooks* includes creative and personal spiral-bound type holograph notebooks as well as travel journals that consist of lists of names and addresses, brochures, maps, and other travel documents. Turner's titles for these notebooks have been preserved throughout this sub-series. Some early notebooks, such as 'Nature Object/Theater Philosophy, includes notes from academic course work and related projects. Several notebooks include related notes and correspondence inserted between pages. Several notebooks actually serve as drafts for dramatic ideas such as "Plays, 1976-1977", "Vista" and "A Dialogue for Six." There are several untitled notebooks, especially a series of five representing the decade of the 1980s. Other daybooks, including a typescript of daily entries kept during his last days, is found in Series IV, Personal Papers, 1971-1993. Turner's work, found in these notebooks, while focused in gay male themes, also reflects a general interested in American theater traditions as well as politics and popular culture.

Box/Folder Contents

2/3-6/11	Plays and Musicals, 1974-1988
2/3	Typescript of musical play "A", 1975
2/4	Aunt Adelle and Uncle Aloysin, Undated
2/5-3/1	Born in Hollywood,
2/5	Typescript, 1986
2/6	Bound typescript, 1986
3/1	"Character Notes" for Born in Hollywood", 1986
3/2	Cinderella II, 1984
3/3-4/2	Comeback, written with Daniel Curzon
3/3	Bound typescript, 1979
3/4	Typescript, Undated
3/5	Photocopies of manuscript, 1979
3/6	Typed drafts, 1979
3/7	Musical score and Illustrations, 1979
4/1	Typescript, 1979
4/2	Miscellaneous annotated drafts of music, 1979
4/3	The Cop, The Nun, and the Fag, 1980
4/4	A Dialogue for Six: A Dance Poem, 1986
4/5	Frigid in Figi, undated

4/6 "Getting to Know the Natives" (M. F. A. Thesis), 1974
 4/7 Giraffes are Dreaming, Undated
 4/8 In Search of a New Moon, type script of a one act play, 1975
 4/9 Last Resort, Undated
 4/10 Loophole, Undated
 4/11 The Mummy, 1988
 5/1-5/4 No Minced Pies
 5/1 Bound typescript, 1981
 5/2 Typescript draft, 1982
 5/3 Photocopy of draft, 1981
 5/4 Miscellaneous, Undated
 5/6 Pearls of Wisdom, Undated
 5/7 "Playwriting", Undated
 5/8 The Queen is Dean, Undated
 5/9-10 Renovations (2 folders), 1978
 6/1 The Scarlet Letter, 1976
 6/2 Shakespeare Rap, 1987
 6/3 The Silent Pharaoh, 1988-1989
 6/4 The Statue of Love: A Fairy Tale in Two Acts, Undated
 6/5-6 Sunny Day
 6/5 "Second Draft", 1974
 6/6 Miscellaneous annotated and corrected drafts of scenes, nd
 6/7 Time Order and Time Cues, Undated
 6/8 The Workout, Undated
 6/9 Untitled Dialogue for Four Actors, Undated
 6/10 Untitled play, Undated
 6/11 Music scores of various musicals, Undated
 6/12-8/15 Fiction, Poetry and Prose, 1960-1990
 6/12 Aliens, Undated
 7/1-4 Autobiography, (4 folders) 1976-1988
 7/5 Berlin Birthday Revue, 1988
 7/6 The Boy in the White Suit, Undated
 7/7 Caddie in the Rough, Undated
 7/8-8/3 The Curve of Clancy's Bubble (5 folders), n.d
 8/4 Fill 'er Up, Undated
 8/5 Four Poems, Undated
 8/6 The Girl Who Had Bumps on Her Head, Undated
 8/7 Hotel Poems, 1960-
 8/8 Interview with Armistead Maupin, 1977
 8/9 Life on Grove Street, Undated
 8/10 Nice Men Do Not Go Out Alone, Undated

8/11	Poems/Pensees, Undated
8/12	Quickies: A collection of Gay Short Stories, Undated
8/13	Rags to Riches, Undated
8/14	Roach, Undated
8/15	The Sensual Body, Undated
8/16	Son of Sally Bowles/Chapter One, 1976
9/1-2	A Tennessee Waltz (2 folders), 1990
9/3	Three Stories: "Taught to Obey", "Fill 'er Up", and "The 24 Hour",
Undated	
9/4	Vista-Peace Corp, Undated
9/5	Why Trees Lose Their Leaves, 1977
9/6-10/9	Notebooks
9/6	Columns, 1977
9/7	Companions, Undated
9/8	Ideas, Undated
9/9	Nature Object/theater Philosophy, 1971-1972
9/10	Plays, 1976-1977
9/11	Poetry Notebook, 1976-1977
10/1	Vista and A Dialogue for Six, Undated
10/2	Zit Mania, Undated
10/3	Three Untitled Notebooks, 1989
10/4	Two Untitled Notebooks, Undated
10/5	Untitled Notebook, 1981
10/6	Untitled Notebook, 1984
10/7	Untitled Notebook, 1985-1988
10/8	Untitled Notebook, 1987-1988
10/9	Untitled Notebook, 1987-1989

Series 3. Theater/Acting Career, 1961-1986

4 Folders

This series includes scrapbooks and collections of various memorabilia and ephemera of not only Turner's performances, but artifacts from other gay theatrical productions of the 1970s and 1980s. This includes performances by groups of which he was a member (e.g. Earnest Players), but also other now legendary groups including the Angels of Light and the Gay Men's Theater Collective. Much of the ephemera and correspondence found here are also evidence of Turner's journalist career as a drama critic for the Bay Area Reporter and other local newspapers and "bar rags."

Box/Folder Contents

11/1	"Publicity Info" for Miss Stanwyck is Still in Hiding, 1979-1980
11/2	Scrapbook, 1978-1981
11/3-5	Theater memorabilia and correspondence (3 folders), 1971-1986

Series 4. Personal Papers, 1971-1993

10 Folders

This series consists primarily of daybooks and scrapbooks dating from his college career and study abroad (1967-1968) to AIDS-related materials and correspondence from the late 1980s. One holograph daybook found here details the last two years of his life. This daybook is written verso of other manuscripts, particularly chapters from his autobiography and "A Tennessee Waltz," the latter of which chronicles his travels as secretary to Tennessee Williams. Only a few items relating to his travels with Williams - airline and theater tickets - are found in this collection. Some medical records, including correspondence from doctors, are present. Also found here are financial records, including various bank accounts and a few records concerning his estate. These latter papers concern the disbursement of funds from "The Dan Turner Memorial Fund" and agreements/contracts concerning his autobiography project. Several legal and educational papers such as his diplomas, Last Will and Testament, and eulogies given by friends at his memorial service are also found here.

Box/Folder Contents

12/1	AIDS-related Material, 1986-1989
12/2	AIDS-related Correspondence, 1986-1989
12/3	Clippings and media research, 1986-1988
12/4	Daybooks, 1965-1967
12/5	Daybook of European Vacation, 1967-1968
12/6	Loose-leaf Daybook, 1989 1990
12/7	Scrapbook, European Vacation, 1967-1968
12/8	Financial, and Medical Records, 1969-1989
12/9	Legal and Educational Papers, 1969-1990
12/10	Tennessee Williams, 1976

Series 5. Audiovisual, 1988

8 audio cassettes, 1 record, 1 reel-to-reel tape

The series is comprised of sound cassette tapes and one sound recording, the latter titled *What Love Can Do*, by Will Williams (1988). Also included are three cassette tapes labeled "Music to Score" and another tape (possibly by the Angels of Light) for "Cinderella II". Also found here are AIDS and healing related voice tapes by Louise Hays, a popular New Age health teacher of the late 1980s. Also found in this series are numerous photographs (in manuscript box 14)

Box/Folder Contents

13/1	"Create Your Health" and "Louise Hays"
13/2	"Brigadoon" and "South Pacific" (1 audio cassette), Undated
13/3	"Bloomer Girl" and "House of Flower," undated
13/4	Music to Score, Undated
13/5-7	Scoring (3 audio cassettes), Undated
13/8	Scoring for Cinderella II (1 audio cassette), Undated
13/9	Selections from Haverly (reel to reel tape), 1978
13/10	"What Love Can Do", by Will Williams, 45 RPM sound recording, Stereo, 1988
14/1	AIDS Activism, Undated
14/2	Gay Day Parade (City Unidentified), Undated

- 14/3 From Correspondence and Theater Files, Undated
- 14/4 Negatives, Undated
- 14/5 Extras, Undated
- 14/6 Family Wedding, Undated
- 14/7 Polaroids, Undated
- 14/8 Childhood, Undated
- 14/9 Photo Set From *Goddess* (by and for Tides Foundation) , Undated
- 14/10 Camping with Friends, Undated
- 14/11 Family (probably), Undated
- 14/12 Visit to Taos, Undated
- 14/13 Portraits by Rink, Undated
- 14/14 Castro Street Fair, Undated
- 14/15 Gay Games II, 1986
- 14/16 Europe, Undated
- 14/17 Young Adulthood, circa 1966-1970
- 14/18 Traveling with Friends, Undated
- 14:19 Slides, Undated