



ArchivesSpace

## Born (Chester (Chet)) Papers

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	San Francisco History Center
<b>Creator - pht:</b>	Born, Chester (Chet) O.
<b>Title:</b>	Chester (Chet) O. Born Papers
<b>ID:</b>	SFP 88
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1943 - 1993
<b>Date [bulk]:</b>	1951-1973
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Cubic Feet 1 carton, 3 oversize flat boxes
<b>Physical Location:</b>	The collection is stored onsite.
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English
<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>Chester (Chet) O. Born's papers document his professional and public life from the 1940s until his death in 1973, tracing the trajectory of his career as a San Francisco Fire Department photographer; as well as his public life as a public speaker. The collection consists of photographs and color slides; scrapbooks; correspondence; certificates and awards; newspaper clippings and publications, the bulk of which feature or include photographs of and by Born. Most of the photographs document fires fought and rescues by the San Francisco Fire Department between 1959 and 1973. A small number of photos are of Chet Born and other San Francisco Fire Department members. There are approximately 540 color slides which Born used for his public presentations. Many of the photographs are included in the scrapbooks.</p>

### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Chester (Chet) Born Papers (SFP 88), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

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Chester (Chet) O. Born was born on May 28, 1923 in San Francisco and grew up in the Sunset District on Twenty-first Avenue. Born's interest in fire-fighting began with his neighborhood firehouse 40 Engine by getting to know the firemen and going to fire scenes to take photos. Born attended Polytechnic High School with the career ambition of "Fire Chief" noted in the Fall 1940 yearbook. Born was appointed to the Underwriters Fire Patrol on March 8, 1942 and entered the San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD) on July 1, 1943 as the Fire Patrol was merged into the SFFD by a City Charter amendment. On December 19, 1942 Born took military leave to the join the United States Marine Corps. As a Marine in World War II, Born took part in the capture of Iwo Jima in 1945. After active duty in the Pacific Theater, he returned to the department on May 8, 1946. As a young firefighter, Born took photos during his off-duty hours. His photos were first published in the San Francisco Firefighters' Local 798 newspaper, *The Inside Box*. On August 30, 1951 he was granted military leave for the Korean police action, and returned to duty on September 12, 1952. He was a full-time firefighter until an injury prompted Chief William F. Murray to appoint Born as the department's first full-time photographer in 1955. Born was formally designated as Photo One on November 7, 1960. He was appointed Inspector on September 19, 1965. As Photo No. 1 – and the inception of SFFD's photographic unit – Born was responsible for photographing and filming Department activities. Born received numerous national and international awards of excellence for his photography and films which made him a premiere and noted fire photographer. Born was active in presenting many public relations presentations with his color slides throughout the community. During his career he was injured more than 50 times in fires and explosions. In addition to recording fires, "Photo No. 1" had other duties: Born's photos of potentially hazardous conditions aided the Fire Prevention Bureau in their efforts to enforce fire codes; photos of rescues and accidents aided the Division of Training in their instruction of new firefighters; his work assisted Arson Inspectors in determining causes of fires. In the 1960s he responded to more than 700 incidents a year. In addition to local press, Chet provided national newspapers and magazines with many spectacular photos of SFFD at work. Along with his still cameras, he also used a 16mm film camera at major alarm fires – which was used for training. Born retired from the SFFD on October 3, 1973. Chester O. (Chet) Born died on June 1, 1987. His Photo No. 1 helmet was donated in his memory in 1993 to the SFFD Pioneer Fire Museum.

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## Scope and Contents

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Chester (Chet) O. Born's papers document his professional and public life from the 1940s until his death in 1973, tracing the trajectory of his career as a San Francisco Fire Department photographer; as well as his public life as a public speaker. The collection consists of photographs and color slides; scrapbooks; correspondence; certificates and awards; newspaper clippings and publications, the bulk of which feature or include photographs of and by Born. Most of the photographs document fires fought and rescues by the San Francisco Fire Department between 1959 and 1973. A small number of photos are of Chet Born

and other San Francisco Fire Department members. There are approximately 540 color slides which Born used for his public presentations. Many of the photographs are included in the scrapbooks.

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## Arrangement

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The collection is arranged in three series: Series 1: Photographs & Color Slides; Series 2: Scrapbooks; Series 3: Miscellaneous Papers.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

San Francisco History Center

100 Larkin Street  
San Francisco 94102

[sfhistory@sfpl.org](mailto:sfhistory@sfpl.org)

URL: <http://www.sfpl.org/sfhistory>

### Access

The collection is available for use during San Francisco History Center's Photo Desk hours.

### Publication Rights

All requests for permission to publish from photograph collections must be submitted in writing to the Photo Curator. Permission for publication is given on behalf of the San Francisco Public Library as the owner of the physical items.

### Provenance

Gift of Cindy Born-Mylo, daughter of Chet Born. 2007-98.

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## Related Materials

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### Materials Transferred

San Francisco Fire Department, 1866-1974, The Firehorses of San Francisco, and Lowell High School yearbook 1972 have been transferred to the San Francisco History Stacks.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Fire fighters - California - San Francisco.
- Fire extinction - California - San Francisco
- San Francisco (Calif.). - Fire Department.
- Slides -- Color --1950-1960
- Slides -- Color --1960-1970
- Slides -- Color --1970-1980
- Photographic prints, 1960-1970
- Photographic prints, 1950-1960
- Scrapbooks.
- Born, Chester (Chet) O.

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## Collection Inventory

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### Photographs & Color Slides, 1946-1993

#### Scope and Contents

The bulk of the photographs and color slides were taken by Chet Born as the San Francisco Fire Department official photographer. The color slides were the slides used in public talks and lectures. The arrangement of the slides is how Born had them organized for slideshow presentations.

Title/Description	Instances	
Photographs of Chet Born, 1942-1967	box 1	folder 1
Photographs by Chet Born, 1950-1972	box 1	folder 2
Oversized photographs by Chet Born, 1951-1966	ov-flat-box 3	folder 1
Color Slides, Identified Fires, 1952-1969	box 1	folder 3

**Scope and Contents**

Includes list of fires with location of intersection and/or name of building with date. Intersections include Gough & Oak; 14th Avenue & Irving; 22nd Street & Iowa; Washington & Steiner; Francis & Mission; 16th Street & Castro; 17th Street & Capp; 23rd Street & Minnesota; Stockton & Washington; Stockton & Ellis; 48th Avenue & Lawton; Cole & Waller; 4th Street & Brannan; 20th Street & San Carlos; 19th Street & Indiana; Mariposa & Indiana; Arguello & California; Polk & Turk. Buildings and locations include Jefferson School, San Francisco Airport, Gibraltar Warehouse, Thomas Hotel, Cliff House, Hunters Point, Pier 90, St. Mary's Cathedral, Lutz Tire.

Color Slides, Box A, 1957-1967	box 1	folder 4
Color Slides, Box B, 1959-1966	box 1	folder 5
Color Slides, Box C, 1957-1960	box 1	folder 6
<b>Scope and Contents</b>		
Includes shots of fires and San Francisco Fire Department trucks and engines.		
Color Slides, Box D, 1962-1966	box 1	folder 7
<b>Scope and Contents</b>		
Unidentified fires and rescue.		
Color Slides, Box E, 1951-1963	box 1	folder 8
<b>Scope and Contents</b>		
San Francisco Fire Department trucks and engines.		
Color Slides, Box F, 1955-1964	box 1	folder 9
<b>Scope and Contents</b>		
Unidentified fires and accidents.		
Color Slides, Box G, 1956-1965	box 1	folder 10
<b>Scope and Contents</b>		
Unidentified fires.		
Color Slides, Box H, 1971-1973	box 1	folder 11
<b>Scope and Contents</b>		
Unidentified Fires.		
Color Slides, Box I, 1959-1970	box 1	folder 12

## Scope and Contents

Unidentified and identified fires. Identified fires includes lumber yard at 99 Bayshore Blvd and San Bruno & Army.

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Color Slides, 1959-1965	box 1	folder 12
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## Scope and Contents

Includes shots of fires at Hunters Point and at 19th Street and Indiana.

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Copies of family photographs, 1946-1990	box 1	folder 13
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Copy prints of San Francisco Fire Department, 1950-1970	box 1	folder 14
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## Scope and Contents

Copy prints collected by Chet Born of San Francisco Fire Department employees, fire trucks and engines and fires. None of the photographs were taken by Chet Born.

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Photographs of presentation of Born's helmet to SFFD Pioneer Fire Museum, 1993	box 1	folder 15
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See also:

### See also

Box 1 / Folder 23

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Copy print of Marines Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima, [undated]	box 1	folder 16
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## Scope and Contents

Photograph signed by Joe Rosenthal.

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## Scrapbooks, 1946-1973

Title/Description	Instances	
Scrapbook #1 by Chet Born, 1948-1971	ov-flat-box 2	volume 1
<h3>Scope and Contents</h3> <p>Scrapbook compiled by Chet Born includes original photographs of and by Born, newspaper clippings, correspondence and certificates.</p>		
Scrapbook #2 by Chet Born, 1961-1972	ov-flat-box 2	volume 2

## Scope and Contents

Scrapbook compiled by Chet Born includes publications and newspaper clippings with Born photos.

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Scrapbook #3 by Chet Born, 1961-1973

ov-flat-box 3

volume 1

## Scope and Contents

Scrapbook compiled by Chet Born includes publications and newspaper clippings with Born photos.

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Scrapbook #4 by Chet Born, 1946-1973

ov-flat-box 4

volume 1

## Scope and Contents

Scrapbook compiled by Chet Born includes original photographs of and by Born, newspaper clippings about Born and with Born photos, correspondence, badges, certificates and announcements.

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School Pictures and Friends Scrapbook by Cindy Born, 1962-1968

box 1

folder 24

## Scope and Contents

Scrapbook of photographs compiled by Chet Born and Cindy Born, Chet Born's daughter. Photos include Commodore Sloat School class pictures between 1962 and 1967 and Cindy posing with identified classmates. Photos by Chet Born include Cindy posing on fire trucks and Cindy at San Francisco Fire Department events.

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## Miscellaneous Papers, 1943-1993

### Scope and Contents

Includes clippings about or with Born's photographs. Other printed materials include magazines and journals about Born or with Born's photographs.

### Arrangement

Arranged by type of document, then chronologically.

Title/Description	Instances	
Correspondence: from Chet Born to Betty Grant, 1943	box 1	folder 17
Correspondence: from Joe Rosenthal, 1972-1980	box 1	folder 18
Correspondence: to Chet Born, 1972	box 1	folder 19
Publications: with Born photographs reproduced, 1963-1972	box 1	folder 20
Certificates and awards to Chet Born, 1971-1973	ov-flat-box 3	folder 2

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Memories of Chet Born, 2007

box 1

folder 21

**Scope and Contents**

Written memories about Chet Born by Cindy Born-Mylo, Chet's daughter, and Ralph Pujular, fellow SFFD firefighter.

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Correspondence and clippings: in memory of Chet Born, 1987

box 1

folder 22

**Scope and Contents**

Correspondence and meeting minutes in memory of Chet Born. Newspaper clippings and publications include obituary and remembrances.

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Publications: presentation of Born's helmet to SFFD Pioneer Fire Museum, 1993

box 1

folder 23

See also:

**See also**

Box 1 / Folder 15

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