

Finding Aid to Skip Aiken papers

(#1994-29)

Repository: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

Collection Title: Skip Aiken papers

Collection Number: 1994-29

Physical Description: 1.25 linear feet (one carton)

Creator: Bedford Elias “Skip” Aiken, III

Date (inclusive): circa 1976-1987

Language of Material: English

Abstract: Skip Aiken was a computer programmer who was very active in San Francisco’s leather and uniform fetish scenes; he was also a recovering alcoholic and American Sign Language interpreter who often volunteered his services at his Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. Aiken’s collection contains extensive and deeply personal correspondence with family, friends, and lovers, as well as other materials relating to sobriety, kink, and AIDS.

Preferred Citation:

[Identification of item], Skip Aiken papers (1994-29), The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

Conditions Governing Access:

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights:

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Acquisition Information:

The collection was donated to the GLBT Historical Society by Kenneth Teise in 1994.

Processing Information:

Finding Aid created by Isaac Fellman in 2019.

This finding aid uses terminology for LGBTQ people that was in current use at the time of its creation. Descriptive language for queer identities evolves quickly and some of these terms may now be dated or even offensive. Finding aids are themselves historical documents; they reflect the moment in which they were written and often reflect the terms that subjects used for themselves. Please contact the GLBT Historical Society Archivist with questions or comments.

Biographical/Organizational History Note: Skip Aiken was a computer programmer who was very active in San Francisco's kink scene, as both a leatherman and a uniform fetishist (with particular interest in police and Nazi uniforms). He was also a recovering alcoholic and American Sign Language interpreter who often volunteered his services at his Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. In the 1980s, Aiken lost a lover to AIDS. He also had a significant relationship with a Deaf man who was apparently the impetus for his learning to sign. Aiken was a founding member of Gay Fathers and the Society of Janus. In 1990, he died during surgery following a heart attack.

Scope and Content: Aiken's collection contains extensive and deeply personal correspondence with family, friends, and lovers, as well as other materials relating to sobriety, kink, and AIDS. The latter include clippings, personal notes and writings, professional papers, newsletters, erotica, the script for a musical drama to be performed at a queer AA conference, and genealogical research. Of particular note is a lengthy glossary with American Sign Language translation notes for AA jargon. Coverage of the death of Aiken's lover is also significant, and includes journal entries, a typed chronology, and correspondence.

Indexing Terms:

Gay men

Gays--Alcohol use--United States—History

Leather lifestyle