

Finding Aid to the Bill Beardemphl Papers

(#2022-04)

Repository: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

Collection Title: Bill Beardemphl papers

Collection Number: 2022-04

Physical Description: 1.2 linear feet (one carton, one small oversize box, one oversize folder)

Creator: Bill Beardemphl

Date (inclusive): 1960s-2010s, bulk 1960s-1990s

Language of Material: English

Abstract: Bill Beardemphl (1926-2002) was a journalist, activist, and chef who is best known for founding the Society for Individual Rights (SIR), a homophile organization, and publishing its magazine *Vector*. In the 1980s, he was also the owner of the *San Francisco Sentinel*. The collection contains Beardemphl's journalistic notes, subject files, and photographs, as well as early issues of *Vector*.

Preferred Citation:

[Identification of item], Bill Beardemphl Papers (#2022-04), 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 Randy Alfred in December 2021.

Processing Information:

Finding Aid created by Isaac Fellman in 2022. Processing of this collection was generously supported by a gift from Susanne Garcia in honor of Bill Beardemphl and Johnny DeLeon.

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 Finding aids are themselves historical documents; they reflect the moment in which they were written and often reflect the terms that subjects used for themselves.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: Bill Beardemphl (1926-2002) was a journalist, activist, and chef who is best known for founding the Society for Individual Rights (SIR), a homophile organization, and publishing its magazine *Vector*. In the 1980s, he was also the owner of the *San Francisco Sentinel*. Beardemphl and his lifelong partner, the dancer Johnny DeLeon, moved to San Francisco in 1962. The couple had been used to the culture of relative openness in New York's Mafia-controlled gay bars, and were shocked to find that in San Francisco, the bars were heavily policed, which made dancing and contact unsafe. This recognition was the beginning of Beardemphl's activist career. In 1964, he founded SIR, which published the magazine *Vector* and maintained the SIR Center, a community center which hosted meetings during the day and dances at night. SIR was one of a second wave of homophile organizations, whose perspective was more liberatory and less assimilationist; its mission focused on creating a sense of queer solidarity, changing laws, educating the community about venereal disease, and providing social services and legal aid to queer people. In his later years, in addition to his day job as a chef, Beardemphl devoted much of his time to writing and journalism – publishing the *Sentinel*, with Randy Alfred as editor, and maintaining extensive notes and subject files on contemporary gay news.

Scope and Content: The collection contains Beardemphl's journalistic notes, subject files, and photographs, as well as early issues of *Vector* and cassette tapes which appear to be recorded interviews. The notes and subject files are voluminous, and chart Beardemphl's reading and research into topics ranging from the Coors boycott to Evangelical homophobia to AIDS; some of his commentary is quite acidic, providing insight into Beardemphl and his journalistic persona. The photographs are fairly extensive, ranging from the 1960s to the 1980s; they include early images of Beardemphl's life with DeLeon as well as photographs taken at what appear to be Imperial Court events, with men in tights and elaborate Renaissance costumes. Finally, there are two books, Randy Shilts' *And the Band Played On* and Martin Duberman's *Hidden From History*, with annotations and notes by Beardemphl.

The organization of the collection largely reflects Beardemphl's original folders.

Indexing Terms:

Gay men

Homophile movement

Journalism

Container Listing

Carton 1

- 1:1 AIDS and bathhouses, 1983-1984
- 1:2 AIDS notes and clippings, 1980s
- 1:3 Bob Ross, 1984
- 1:4 Clippings and notes, 1980s-1990s
- 1:5 Clippings and subject files on homophobia, Propositions A and B, 1977-1979
- 1:6 Clippings, notes, writings, 1980s-1990s
- 1:7 Clippings on right wing, 1990s
- 1:8 Clippings (original title: "Basic values for life and politics"), 1990s
- 1:9 Coors boycott, 1977-1983
- 1:10 Coors boycott, 1977-1984, undated
- 1:11 Coors boycott, 1984
- 1:12 Coors boycott, 1983-1984
- 1:13 Ephemera, 1970s-2010s
- 1:14 Gay Atheist League of America Review, 1980-1981
- 1:15 Letters to *Sentinel*, 1982-1984
- 1:16 Mailings – 1992 presidential election, 1992
- 1:17 Material for planned book *Homosexualizing the City*, circa 1980s
- 1:18 Notes for planned book, undated
- 1:19 Notes and sources on California Hall ball
- 1:20a Notes on religion and culture (original title: "Good stuff"), 1996, undated
- 1:20b Notes (original title: "Letters to write/phone calls to make/what?/Sentinel comments from real live critics/arrogance personified"), 1984, undated
- 1:21 Photographs, 1960s-1980s, undated
- 1:22 Photographs, 1960s-1980s, undated
- 1:23 Photographs, 1960s-1980s, undated
- 1:24 Publications, 1981, undated
- 1:25 Reference and testimonial letters; resumes, 1977-1984
- 1:26 Society for Individual Rights publications, 1965-1966
- 1:27 Subject files on Propositions A and B, 1979, undated
- 1:28 Sutro Bath House, 1984
- 1:29 *Symphony #6* notes, undated
- 1:30 *Vector* #1-12, 1964-1965
- 1:31 *Vector* volume 1, 1964-1965
- 1:32 *Vector* volume 2, 1965-1967
- 1:33 *Vector* volumes 2-3, 1965-1966

1:34 *Vector* with cover design, 1968

Oversize Box 1

Cassette tapes

Proposition A and B buttons

Videotape, *Shedding a Straight Jacket*

Oversize Folder 1

San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus poster