
Donna M. Smith
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Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California
Title: Donna M. Smith papers
creator: Smith, Donna M.
Identifier/Call Number: Coll2006-002
Physical Description: .4 Linear Feet 1 archive carton
Date (bulk): bulk
Abstract: Correspondence, photographs, vacation journals, and educational materials, 1940s to 1992, documenting the life of Donna M. Smith; her relationship with her partner of 40 years, Valerie Jarrard; her relationship to other friends, in particular Celia Hunter, Ruth Poirier and Doris Pressler; and her involvement with lesbian and gay rights, the environment, and animal welfare.
Access
The collection is open to researchers. There are no access restrictions.
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Preferred Citation
Box #, folder #, Donna M. Smith papers, Coll2006-002, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.
Acquisition Information
Collection bequested to the International Gay and Lesbian Archives per the will of Donna May Smith upon her passing in 1992.
Processing Information
Formerly housed in box 103-266 and the following subject files: Donna Smith, Celia Hunter, and Matthew of Glendale. Collection processed by Michael C. Oliveira, October 3, 2006
Processing this collection has been funded by a generous grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.
Additional materials added by Kyle Morgan, 2015.
Biography
Donna May Smith was born on May 2, 1919, and was raised in Los Angeles, California. After graduating from high school, she found employment as a secretary in the offices of a union in the film industry. In 1939, she came out to a small group of lesbians and soon after she met her partner of 40 years, Valerie Jarrard. When Smith's mother learned of the relationship, she had her daughter arrested and committed to a mental institution. This experience was briefly documented in Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community (1985) and in Dorothy Engleman's Pride and Prejudice (1992). In the early 1980s, Smith became increasingly involved in lesbian and gay, animal welfare, and environmental organizations. In her later years she freelanced as bookkeeper and used those skills as Treasurer of the International Gay & Lesbian Archives and of the Society of Senior Gay & Lesbian Citizens' Project Rainbow. She died in Santa Monica, California on February 22, 1992.
Sources:
"In Memoriam: Donna Smith." The SCWU Newsletter, April/May 1992, 12.
Scope and Content of Collection
The Donna M. Smith papers consist of correspondence, photographs, and other materials, primarily of a private nature, that document Smith's life and her interests in lesbian and gay rights, the environment, and animal welfare. The bulk of the collection consists of personal correspondence including: an exchange of letters with Celia Hunter, Alaska conservationist...
Finding aid of the Donna M.
Smith Papers Coll2006-002

and environmentalist; letters and cards from Ruth Poirier and Doris Pressler (Pressler, the first woman civil engineer in the county of Los Angeles also played with Peggy Gilbert and The Dixie Belles); and Suzanne Kushner. The personal correspondence contains postcards to her partner Valerie Jarrard from the 1950s. The General correspondence consists of Smith's letters regarding political and volunteer activities. Other materials include four address books used by Smith and a journal, written in the third person, describing Donna's and Valerie's vacations, 1973-1977. A file of educational materials (1980) from a class sponsored by the Gay & Lesbian Community Service Center includes information on counseling Gays and Lesbians, and the syllabus for the class Theories, Development, and Intervention Strategies for the Homosexualities. Smith's statement to the Franchise Tax Board following Valerie's death (1982) underscores the challenges survivors of same-sex relationships encountered. Other files contain Smith's identification and membership cards, as well as her will and several obituaries. The photographs (1987-1991) depict Smith with friends, and document her involvement in the community, in particular with the Lesbian & Gay Rights Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. Color negatives of many of the photographs also survive in the collection, as well as large-format black-and-white negatives for which no prints exist.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Women conservationists
Lesbian activists
Women environmentalists
Women political activists
Hunter, Celia
Smith, Donna M.
Smith, Donna M.
Kushner, Suzanne
Jarrard, Valerie
Pressler, Doris
Poirier, Ruth

Scope and Contents
Includes medical records, materials about Louise Armer Boyd, and a birth certificate.

Box 1, Folder 1-2 Correspondence 1955-1992
Box 1, Folder 3 Personal 1955-1992
Box 1, Folder 4 Celia Hunter 1983-1991
Box 1, Folder 5 Ruth Poirier and Doris Pressler 1984-1991
Box 1, Folder 6 Suzanne Kushner 1989-1992
Box 1, Folder 7 General 1981-1991
Box 1, Folder 8 Address books 1940s-1990s
Box 1, Folder 9 Vacation journal 1973-1978
Box 1, Folder 10 Personal papers and identification cards 1969-1992
Box 1, Folder 11 Gay & Lesbian Community Service Center 1975-1980
Box 2, Folder 1 Will, obituaries, and financial records 1990-1992, undated
Box 2, Folder 2 Photographs 1987-1991
Box 2, Folder 3 Color & black-and-white negatives circa 1990