Finding aid of the Clark P. Polak Papers

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Finding aid of the Clark P. Polak Papers

Collection number: Coll 2008-028

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Processed by:
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Clark P. Polak papers

Dates: 1964-1980

Collection number: Coll2008-028

Creator: Polak, Clark P., 1937-1980

Collection Size: 1 archive carton.0.2 linear feet.

Repository: ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives.
Los Angeles, California 90007

Abstract: Correspondence, legal papers, notes, printed ephemera and other material from activist and businessman Clark P. Polak. Polak was an influential activist in the Philadelphia gay community throughout the 1960s, who in 1963 became president of the homophile organization, Janus Society. He also created, published and edited the Society's widely-circulated magazine, Drum. By 1970, Polak relocated to Los Angeles, where he became a real estate investor and art collector. In addition, he continued to be an activist in the gay movement and helped to establish the Stonewall Democratic Club and the Gay Rights Chapter of the ACLU.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
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Preferred Citation
Clark P. Polak papers, Coll2008-028, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

Acquisition Information
Donor and date of acquisition unknown.

Processing Information
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**Biography**

Born on October 15, 1937, Clark Phillip Polak grew up in a Jewish middle-class family in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After dropping out of Pennsylvania State University, Polak became a businessman and owner of Frankford Personnel and Northeast Advertising Service.

An active and outspoken member of the Philadelphia gay community, Polak joined the homophile group, Janus Society, in 1962, and was elected the organization's president in 1963. As Janus Society's president, he was largely responsible for building the Society's reputation as more politically aggressive, publicly visible and sexually liberated than other homophile groups of that period. In addition, he created, published and edited the Society's monthly magazine, Drum, one of the most widely circulated LGBT magazines in the 1960s.

Outside of the Janus Society, Polak continued to own publishing and book service businesses, which produced and distributed pornographic materials. Because of his businesses and his contentious personality, Polak often had confrontations with local law enforcement and subsequently moved to California after being arrested on federal obscenity charges in 1969. He relocated to Los Angeles where he became a real estate investor and art collector, and he continued to be activist in the gay community. In Southern California, he helped to establish the Stonewall Democratic Club and the Gay Rights Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

By the late 1970s, Polak developed problems with hustlers, drugs and money. He committed suicide in September 1980.


**Scope and Content**

This collection comprises correspondence, legal papers, notes, printed ephemera and other material created or collected by businessman and gay activist Clark P. Polak. The majority of the material dates in the 1970s and documents his activities in Los Angeles and its gay community, such as his participation in the Stonewall Democratic Club and the legal committee of the Gay Rights Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. Also included are legal papers from his real estate investments and miscellaneous correspondence.

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

ACLU of Southern California Lesbian & Gay Rights Chapter
Gay activists
Gay liberation movement--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia
Gay liberation movement--California--Los Angeles
Gays--California--History
Gays--Pennsylvania--History
Janus Society
Janus Society of America
Janus Society of Delaware Valley
Polak, Clark P., 1937-1980
Stonewall Democratic Club

**Related Material**

Janus Society Records, Coll2008-027, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California

Box 1 : 1  ACLU Gay Rights Chapter 1976 - 1977
Box 1 : 2  ACLU Gay Rights Chapter Legal Committee 1976
Box 1 : 3  Correspondence 1964 - 1980
Box 1 : 4  Handwritten Notes Undated
Box 1 : 5  Legal Papers - Real Estate 1976 - 1977
Box 1 : 6  Stonewall Democratic Club & Gay Caucus Flyers 1977
Box 1 : 7  Stonewall Democratic Club Correspondence 1977
Box 1 : 8  Miscellaneous 1976 - 1979