Robert Rosenkrantz Letters Received

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Robert Rosenkrantz Letters Received

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Robert Rosenkrantz letters received
Dates: July 1986-March 1987
Collection number: Coll2008-062
Creator: Rosenkrantz, Robert M., 1967-
Collection Size: 2 records boxes + 2 archive cartons. 3.3 linear feet.
Repository: ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives.
Los Angeles, California 90007

Abstract: Letters and cards of support addressed to gay teenager Robert M. Rosenkrantz, who in 1985 shot and killed the schoolmate who gay-bashed and outed him, during the first months (July 1986-March 1987) of his prison term. Many correspondents write of their own experiences coming out, and a few enclose photographs of themselves. The bulk of the letters date from October through December 1986, following the publication of Dan Siminoski's article on Rosenkrantz, "A Killing in Calabasas", in the November 11, 1986, issue of the Advocate.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
The collection is open to researchers. There are no access restrictions.

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Robert Moshe Rosenkrantz was born in Torrance, California, on May 22, 1967, to Herbert Rosenkrantz, a lawyer, and his wife Barbara. Rosenkrantz first recognized his homosexual feelings at age 12 or 13, but remained closeted, filled with self-loathing and terrified of revealing his feelings to anyone. As a high school student he was outwardly the all-American boy, the best soccer goalie in his league, with a super-fast hot rod, running a successful auto-detailing business, and delivering pizzas. However, through a computer bulletin board he was beginning to contact and make friends with other gay teens. His younger brother, Joey, overheard and taped a telephone conversation Rosenkrantz had with another gay youth, planning a small party at the Rosenkrantz family’s beach house in Hermosa Beach for June 21, 1985, the night of Rosenkrantz’s graduation from Calabasas High School. On that night, Joey and one of Rosenkrantz’s classmates, Steve Redman, who was known for his quick temper and hatred for homosexuals, surprised Rosenkrantz and a friend in the bedroom of the beach house, hoping to catch them in a compromising situation. A fight broke out, in which Redman broke Rosenkrantz’s nose and burned him and Rosenkrantz tazered his brother. Redman then outed Rosenkrantz to his parents. When confronted by his father, who demanded the names and numbers of his gay contacts, Rosenkrantz denied his homosexuality, but left the family home the next morning, sleeping in his car and delivering pizzas. Fearing that his family would reject him if Redman continued his accusations, Rosenkrantz purchased an Uzi, intending to frighten him into recanting. On June 28, 1985, Rosenkrantz confronted Redman demanding that he take back his accusations; when Redman refused, Rosenkrantz shot and killed him, and then fled to Stockton, where he lived with a family whose 16-year-old friend he had befriended. While in Stockton, Rosenkrantz began talking by telephone with Los Angeles psychiatrist Michael Coburn, who had been hired by his parents to be available if he wanted to call, and with two criminal attorneys who had been hired to defend him. Sometime around July 21, Rosenkrantz decided to surrender. On July 22, 1986, he drove to Northridge, where Coburn had him admitted to the psychiatric unit at Northridge Hospital Medical Center and diagnosed him as suicidal and in serious emotional trouble; early the next morning, by prearrangement, Rosenkrantz’s lawyers called the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, which came to the hospital and took custody of Rosenkrantz.

On July 24, 1985, Rosenkrantz pleaded not guilty; the trial began on May 5, 1986. The case of a closeted gay man killing the person who had outed him generated considerable publicity in both the gay and mainstream press. On June 9, 1986, Rosenkrantz was convicted of second degree murder, and on July 7, 1986, was sentenced to 17 years to life imprisonment, the maximum sentence permitted for the crime. Rosenkrantz began serving his term on July 14, 1986, at the California Institute for Men in Chino; on August 5, 1986, he was transferred to the California Men’s Colony in San Luis Obispo. During his time in prison, Rosenkrantz was a model prisoner, expressing remorse for his crime, earning a bachelor’s degree, counseling fellow prisoners, and reaching out to gay youth. In 1996, a three-member panel of the Board of Prison Terms found him eligible for parole; however, despite considerable litigation and several sharply-worded court orders for his release, he was repeatedly denied parole by Governor Gray Davis, whose policy as governor was against parole for convicted murderers. Finally, an order by Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge David Wesley on July 27, 2006, paved the way for Rosenkrantz’s release, and he was freed on August 5, 2006, after serving 20 years in prison.

Sources:
Robert Rosenkrantz subject file, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives.

Scope and Content of Collection
Letters and cards addressed to Robert M. Rosenkrantz in prison, from family and others, offering support; many correspondents write of their own experiences coming out, and a few enclose photographs of themselves. The earliest letter dates from July 1986, the latest from March 1987. The bulk date from October through December 1986, following the publication of Dan Siminoski’s article on Rosenkrantz, "A Killing in Calabasas", in the November 11, 1986, issue of the Advocate. The letters are arranged chronologically by month. The file of miscellaneous materials includes the September-October 1986 issue of the Violet Moon Journal, a hand-drawn calendar for January 1987, and a menu for the
Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

- Closted gays
- Coming out (sexual orientation)
- Gays--Violence against
- Homophobia
- Internalized homophobia
- Murder
- Outing (sexual orientation)
- Rosenkrantz, Robert M., 1957-

Box 1 : 1
Box 1 : 2
Box 1 : 3
Box 4 : 1 (Oversize)
Box 1 : 4-11 ; 4 : 2 (Oversize)

Letters Received July 1986-March 1987

- July 1986
- August 1986
- September 1986
- September 1986
- October 1986

Physical Description: 9 folders.

Box 1 : 12-24 ; 2 : 1-5 ; 4 : 3 (Oversize)

November 1986

Physical Description: 19 folders.

Box 2 : 6-18 ; 4 : 4-5 (Oversize)

December 1986

Physical Description: 15 folders.

Box 2 : 19
Box 2 : 20
Box 2 : 21 ; 3 : 1-4 ; 4 : 6 (Oversize)

Hannukah Cards 1986
Christmas Cards December 1986
January 1987

Physical Description: 6 folders.

Box 3 : 5-6 ; 4 : 7 (Oversize)

February 1987

Physical Description: 3 folders.

Box 3 : 7
Box 3 : 8 ; 4 : 8 (Oversize)

March 1987

undated

Physical Description: 2 folders.

Box 4 : 9

Miscellaneous September 1986-February 1987