Finding aid of the J. Max Turner Writings

Michael P. Palmer
ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives
909 West Adams Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90007
Phone: (213) 741-0094
Fax: (213) 741-0220
Email: askone@onearchives.org
URL: http://www.onearchives.org
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Finding aid of the J. Max Turner Writings

Collection number: Coll2008-073

ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives
Los Angeles, California

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Michael P. Palmer
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Michael P. Palmer

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Processing this collection has been funded by generous grants from the J. Max Turner Trust, William C. Hein, Trustee, and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Descriptive Summary
Title: J. Max Turner writings
Dates: circa 1954-2007
Bulk Dates: 1976-1999
Collection number: Coll2008-073
Creator: Turner, J. Max, 1922-2007
Collection Size: 3 archive cartons + 2 archive half-cartons 1.7 linear feet
Repository: ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives.
Los Angeles, California 90007
Abstract: This collection consists of the writings, 1954-2006, of J. Max Turner (1922-2007). The materials include drafts and final paper and electronic versions of novels, and final and draft scripts, as well as performance materials (programs, photographs, and newspaper reviews) of plays.
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English
Access
The collection is open to researchers. There are no access restrictions.
Publication Rights
Researchers wishing to publish material from this collection must obtain permission in writing from ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, which holds the copyright to the material.
Preferred Citation
J. Max Turner writings, Coll2008-073, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.
Acquisition Information
Processing Information
Processing this collection has been funded by generous grants from the J. Max Turner Trust, William C. Hein, Trustee, and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.
Biography
J. Max Turner was born in St. Charles, a small village just west of Saginaw, Michigan, on July 25, 1922, the son of a coal miner who abandoned the family when Turner was a young child. He grew up in Saginaw, graduating from Arthur Hill High School in 1940. He then enlisted in the U.S. Navy, following the lead of his four brothers, all of whom were in the merchant marine or the naval reserve. He continued to serve after the United States entered World War II, but was mustered out when the navy established a policy that no two members of a family could serve in the same unit. He later enlisted in the navy, participating in the Normandy invasion and in the Pacific. Early in the 1940s, despite the fact he had an active homosexual sex life, he married, converting to Catholicism to do so. After Turner was mustered out, he and his wife hitchhiked west, and at some time hired on with the Drew Traveling Carnival. They then returned to Saginaw, where their two sons were born; shortly afterwards they divorced in a messy court case, his wife accusing Turner of homosexuality. After the divorce, Turner again took to the road. In Chicago he associated with members of the Ballet Theatre; in San Francisco he worked for some time for the madam, Sally Stanford, as one of her "boys", and became friends with the "male actress" Charles Pierce. He also worked in Morocco as a clerk for an international construction company before returning once again to Saginaw, where he worked as a salesman. In 1961, he became manager of the ladies' shoe department at a department store in Huntington, West Virginia, where he met William C. Hein, the local district manager for Chevrolet Motors. The two became partners in 1962, remaining together until Turner's death. Later that year, Turner and Hein moved to Charleston, West Virginia, where Turner opened a record shop; for six years the couple also operated a successful gay-nineties-themed eatery, "Belle's Sandwich Parlor and Public Pub". When bootleg tapes caused record sales to wane in the 1970s, Turner closed the record shop and in 1979 the couple opened a lampshade and lamp repair business. They moved to Tampa, Florida, in 1984, where they also opened a lampshade store until Turner retired in 1989.

Turner began writing in the early 1950s; his earliest known datable composition, the poem "Lonely Lover", was written during his time in San Francisco, and was published in 1954 as "The Tortures of Being Alone". Later, he was bitten by the acting bug, and for a brief period left his job as a shoe salesman in Saginaw to become an aspiring actor in New York. He wrote his first play, Step Down Into Hell, in the early 1960s; it was staged by the theater department of West Virginia State College, receiving decent reviews and attendance. During the 1970s he wrote several novels, three of which were eventually published in 1999. His humorous book, Pathetically Yours, Sara Muskoil, was published in 1977. Turner and Hein had been involved in the response to the AIDS crisis since the very beginning, and in 1993, after the death of a particularly close friend, Turner wrote a play, It Happens! A local production was favorably received, and from that time until his death Turner concentrated his efforts on writing plays combating negative stereotypes of gays and lesbians and showing instead the fullness, healthy humor, and normalcy of GLBT life. Several of his theater works had local productions, and one, Mama's Ghost, also had an off-Broadway run.

Turner died in Tampa on February 26, 2007, at the age of 84; his survivors included Bill Hein, his partner of 44 years.

Source: J. Max Turner Writings, Coll2008-073, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

Scope and Content of Collection

The collection consists almost entirely of Turner's writings, in particular his plays. The materials include drafts and final paper and electronic copies of novels, and final and draft scripts, as well as performance materials (programs, photographs, and newspaper reviews) of plays. The collection is divided into six series: (1) Personal, (2) Novels, (3) Plays, (4) Other Writings, (5) Electronic Media, and (6) Publications.

Indexing Terms

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

Drama
Fiction
Gay dramatists
Gay fiction
Gay theater
Humorous plays
Plays
Theater
Turner, J. Max, 1922-2007

Finding aid of the J. Max Turner Writings Coll2008-073
Box 1:1-2  Series 1. **Personal 1965-2007**
Physical Description: 2 folders
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series contains materials of a personal nature relating to Turner, including a resume, a biographical account by his partner, Bill Hein, newspaper clippings, and a photograph of Turner and Hein. The series also includes certificates of copyright of various of Turner's works.

Box 1:1  Biographical materials circa 1975-2007
Box 1:2  Copyrights 1965-2006
Box 1:3-9;2:1-5  Series 2. **Novels 1976-1999**
Physical Description: 12 folders.
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series consists of typescripts and page proofs of Turner's novels, in particular the three works published in 1999 by Kalinke Books.

Box 1:3  Novels 1999
Box 1:4-5  *I Might Have Died Never Knowing* April 1977
Physical Description: 2 folders.

Box 1:6-8  *JerryO* 1999
Box 1:6-7  Typescript circa 1999
Physical Description: 2 folders.

Box 1:8  Corrected version October 21, 1999
Box 1:9;2:1-3  *Seven Valleys* 1976-1999
Physical Description: 2 folders.

Box 2:2  Typescript 1999
Box 2:3  Kalinke Books 1999
Box 2:4-5  *Within the Circle* circa 1999
Box 2:4  *Circle of Friends* circa 1999
Box 2:5  Kalinke Books. Page proofs 1999
Physical Description: Incomplete.

Physical Description: 19 folders.
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series consists of materials relating to Turner's plays, including draft and final scripts, newspaper reviews and other clippings, programs, photographs, and other production materials, including materials for the off-Broadway run of Mama's Ghost.

Box 2:6  Plays circa 2007
Box 2:7  *Don't Tie Your Public Hairs In A Knot*. Script December 2006
Box 2:8-10  *A Harvest of Shadows* 2002-2003
Box 2:8  Script. Original November 15, 2002
Box 2:9  Script 2003
Box 2:10  Correspondence 2003
Box 3:1-2  *It Happens!* 1993-2006
Box 3:1  Script 1993
Physical Description: 2 copies.

Box 3:2  Production materials 1994, 2006
Box 3:3-5  *JerryO* 1998, 2002
| Box 3 : 3 | Script 1998 |
| Box 3 : 4 | Script September 1998 |
| Box 3 : 5 | Production materials 2002 |
| Box 3 : 6-10 | Mama's Ghost 1995-1998 |
| Box 3 : 6 | Script. Original 1995 |
| Box 3 : 7-8 | Script 1995 |
| | Physical Description: 3 copies. |
| Box 3 : 9 | Script. Stage Manager's Copy 1995 |
| Box 3 : 10 | Production materials 1996, 1998 |
| Box 3 : 11 ; 4 : 1 | Maybe Tomorrow 1997-2000 |
| Box 3 : 11 | Script 1997 |
| | Physical Description: 2 copies. |
| Box 4 : 1 | Production materials and correspondence 1997-2000 |
| Box 4 : 2 | Paying Respect. Script 1995 |
| Box 4 : 3 | Step Down Into Hell. Program circa 1966 |
| Box 4 : 4-6 | Series 4. Other Writings circa 1954-1980 |
| | Physical Description: 3 folders. |
| | Series Scope and Content Summary |
| | This series contains Turner's other writings, including his earliest datable work, the poem Lonely Lover, three short stories apparently written around the year 1974, and the outline for a musical spoof written about 1980. |
| Box 4 : 5 | Lonely Lover (published as The Tortures of Being Alone ) circa 1954 |
| | Scope and Content Note |
| | Poetry. |
| Box 4 : 6 | Short Stories circa 1974 |
| | Physical Description: 3 items. |
| | Physical Description: 13 items. |
| | Series Scope and Content Summary |
| | This series consists of computer diskettes and CD-ROMs containing electronic versions prepared by Turner of his plays and novels. The DVD-ROM was prepared by ONE Archives staff, and contains copies of all the files on the computer diskettes. |
| | Physical Description: 9 diskettes : 3.5 inches : 1.44 MB. |
| Box 5 : 10 | Plays and Novels. DVD-ROM (copies of box 5, items 1-9) December 2008 |
| | Physical Description: 1 DVD-ROM. |
| | Scope and Content Note |
| | Copies of Box 5, Items 1-9. |
| | Physical Description: 1 CD-ROM. |
| Box 5 : 12 | Kalinke Books. Seven Valleys. CD-ROM 1999 |
| | Physical Description: 1 CD-ROM. |
Box 5 : 13  
**Kalinke Books. Within the Circle. CD-ROM 1999**
Physical Description: 1 CD-ROM.

Box 4 : 7-10  
Physical Description: 4 volumes.

Series Scope and Content Summary
This series consists of published versions of four of Turner’s works: his poem, *The Tortures of Being Alone* (originally titled *Lonely Lover*), the comic *Pathetically Yours, Sarah Muskoil*, the play, *It Happens!*, and his novel, *Within the Circle*.

Box 4 : 7  
**It Happens! A drama about love & AIDS 1993**
Scope and Content Note
Play.

Box 4 : 8  
**Pathetically Yours, Sara Muskoil 1977**
Scope and Content Note
Humor.

Box 4 : 9  
**The Tortures of Being Alone 1954**
Scope and Content Note
Poetry.

Box 4 : 10  
**Within the Circle 1999**
Scope and Content Note
Novel.