
Finding aid to the Lisa Ben papers, 1905-2009 Coll2015-019

Loni Shibuyama

ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

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Language of Material: English

Contributing Institution: ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

Title: Lisa Ben papers

creator: Ben, Lisa

Identifier/Call Number: Coll2015-019

Physical Description: 15.4 Linear Feet 16 boxes and 1 oversize item.

Date (inclusive): 1905-2009

Abstract: The collection comprises manuscripts, sheet music, lyrics, poetry, correspondence, personal papers, photographs, sound recordings, musical instruments, and realia, 1905-2009, from lesbian writer Lisa Ben (anagram for "lesbian"), pseudonym for Edythe Eyde. The materials in the collection document Ben's creative writing; her correspondence with family and friends; her employment as a secretary for Hollywood studios; her genealogy and family relationships; and her hobbies in science fiction fandom, folk music, and cat adoption. Also included are clippings and awards recognizing Ben as a pioneer in LGBT history, most notably for creating the first lesbian magazine *Vice Versa* in 1947.

Arrangement

The collection is divided into seven series:

Series 1. Writings and music

Series 2. Correspondence

Series 3. Personal papers

Series 4. Family papers

Series 5. Photographs

Series 6. Sound recordings

Series 7. Musical instruments and realia

Biographical / Historical

Lisa Ben was born Edythe DeVinney Eyde in San Francisco on November 7, 1921, the only child to parents Oscar E. Eyde and Olive Colegrove Eyde. Three years later, the family moved to a fruit ranch in Los Altos, California, where Ben spent her childhood and adolescent years. Ben studied music and attended Palo Alto High School, where she graduated in 1938. Her parents urged her to go on to business school, and she soon after worked in secretarial jobs in Northern California during WWII. Her interests in writing, however, led her to move to Los Angeles in 1945 where she knew young aspiring writers in science fiction fan groups.

Soon after moving to Los Angeles, she met a group of women at her apartment complex and began a conversation with them. One of the women asked her "Are you gay?" She responded, "I try to be as happy as I can under the circumstances." The conversation led to Ben discovering the topic of lesbianism, which subsequently led to her discovering her own sexuality. She went with the group to a Los Angeles lesbian bar known as the If Club where she met others like herself, and soon found herself a part of the burgeoning post-WWII lesbian community.

Two years later, Ben began writing a magazine to discuss gay and lesbian life, which she named *Vice Versa*. At the time, Ben was working as a secretary for an RKO Studio executive who was often away from the office. She was instructed to "look busy" while he was away, so she decided to write a magazine as "a gesture of love-of women loving women, and the whole idea of it. It was an enthusiasm that boiled over into these pages." *Vice Versa*, first published in June 1947, was a modest publication that was passed from friend to friend. It was a labor of love for Ben who wrote the vast majority of the articles for nine issues, while trying to get others to contribute as well. However, with a new job and an increasingly active social life, she did not have the time to keep up her writing schedule and discontinued publication in 1948.

By the late 1950s, she joined the Daughters of Bilitis and wrote articles for *The Ladder* where she adopted the pen name Lisa Ben (an anagram of "lesbian"). It was during this time in the late-1950s and early-1960s when Ben began to write parodies of popular music with gay and lesbian themes (e.g. "I'm Going to Sit Right Down and Write My Butch a Letter.") She would occasionally perform these songs at gay and lesbian clubs in Los Angeles. By the late-1960s, Ben withdrew from gay and lesbian social life and only occasionally attended gay- and lesbian-related events when invited.

Lisa Ben did not have many romantic relationships with other women, and she chose to stay single most of her life. After working as a secretary for nearly forty years, Ben retired in the 1970s and continued to live at her home in Burbank, California.

Sources:

Cain, Paul D. *Leading the Parade: Conversations with America's Most Influential Lesbians and Gay Men*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2002. Print.

Marcus, Eric, and Eric Marcus. *Making Gay History: The Half-century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights*. New York: Perennial, 2002. Print.

Moss, Leland. "An Interview with Lisa Ben." *Gaysweek* No. 49 (January 23, 1978): 14-16. Print.

Conditions Governing Access

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

Conditions Governing Use

All requests for permission to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted in writing to the ONE Archivist.

Permission for publication is given on behalf of ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives at USC Libraries as the owner of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder, which must also be obtained.

Custodial History

Lisa Ben's estate and personal papers were under the stewardship of Patti Dersheim, Lisa Ben's longtime neighbor. In 2009, Ben's personal papers were transferred to Melissa Lopez-Wang and Tom de Simone. De Simone transferred the Lisa Ben collection to ONE Archives in 2015. Patti Dersheim gifted Lisa Ben's collection on November 13, 2014.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Patti Dersheim, November 13, 2014.

Preferred Citation

[Box/folder #, or item name] Lisa Ben Papers, Coll2015-019, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Loni Shibuyama, March 2016.

Scope and Contents

The collection comprises manuscripts, sheet music, lyrics, poetry, correspondence, personal papers, photographs, sound recordings, musical instruments, and realia, 1905-2009, from lesbian writer Lisa Ben (anagram for "lesbian"), pseudonym for Edythe Eyde. The Writings and Music Series includes Ben's short stories, poems, song lyrics, sheet music, and other manuscripts. This series also includes correspondence and related material documenting her participation in science fiction fan groups and folk music societies. The Correspondence Series includes letters between Ben and her family members, friends, co-workers, and others, including gay and lesbian activists and historians who wrote about Ben in articles on LGBT history. The Personal Papers Series includes material documenting her education, her participation in gay and lesbian organizations, her employment as a secretary in Hollywood studios, and her passion for adopting cats. The Family Papers Series includes correspondence with her parents, particularly her father Oscar E. Eyde, and papers documenting the Eyde family genealogy. The bulk of the Photographs Series includes photographic prints, slides and negatives of Lisa Ben and her family dating back to her birth in 1921. The Sound Recordings Series includes folk songs recorded by Ben. The Musical Instruments and Realia Series includes Ben's guitar, violin, and mandolin, as well as a variety of keychains, knickknacks, buttons and other realia.

Separated Materials

The following have been separated to the ONE Archives library:

Adelman, Marcy. *Long Time Passing: Lives of Older Lesbians*. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1986. Print.

Decarnin, Camilla, Eric Garber, and Lyn Paleo. *Worlds Apart: An Anthology of Lesbian and Gay Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1986. Print.

Stearn, Jess. *The Door to the Future*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963. Print.

The following have been separated to the ONE Archives newsletter collection:

Old Lesbians Organizing for Change newsletter, 1991-1996.

San Francisco Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Historical Society newsletter, 1988-1989.

Web of Crones newsletter, 1985-1987.

Related Materials

Jim Kepner Papers, Coll2011-002, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Folk music -- Archival resources

Lesbian writings

Science fiction
Vice Versa
Ben, Lisa

Writings and music Series 1.

Scope and Contents

This series, 1936-2007, comprises Lisa Ben's short stories, poems, song lyrics, sheet music, and other manuscripts, including a photocopy of *Vice Versa*. This series also includes correspondence and related material documenting her participation in science fiction fan groups and folk music societies. Papers include correspondence with science fiction enthusiast Forrest J. Ackermann; folk song parodies with gay and lesbian themes; and several notebooks with song ideas and personal notes.

Arrangement

This series is arranged alphabetically.

Box 1, Folder 1
Box 1, Folder 2
Box 1, Folder 3
Box 1, Folder 4
Box 1, Folder 5
Box 1, Folder 6
Box 1, Folder 7
Box 1, Folder 8-9
Box 1, Folder 10
Box 1, Folder 11
Box 1, Folder 12
Box 1, Folder 13
Box 1, Folder 14
Box 1, Folder 15
Box 1, Folder 16

Box 1, Folder 20
Box 1, Folder 21
Box 1, Folder 22
Box 1, Folder 23
Box 1, Folder 24
Box 1, Folder 26
Box 1, Folder 25
Box 1, Folder 27
Box 1, Folder 28
Box 1,
Folder 29-30
Box 1, Folder 17
Box 1, Folder 18
Box 1, Folder 19
Box 1,
Folder 31-32
Box 2, Folder 1-2
Box 14, Folder 6
Box 2, Folder 3
Box 2, Folder 4
Box 2, Folder 5
Box 2, Folder 6

American Cowboy Songs 1936
Application for Registration of a Claim of Copyright (blank) 1957
Folk music societies documents and clippings 1966-1975
"It's Purring-Time at Edythe's Heyde-away" undated
The Lit: Literary Magazine of Palo Alto High School 1936-1938
Notebook (untitled) 1952
Notebook (untitled) 1952-1973
Notebook (untitled), music and lyrics 1965-1975
Notebook (untitled) 2005-2007
Notebook (untitled) undated
Notebook (untitled), lyrics undated
Notebook, "Crowd Pleasers" lyrics and notes undated
Notebook, "Let's Sing" undated
Notes 1950-1990
Poems 1950-2000
Science fiction and fantasy
Ackerman, Forrest (4E), clippings 2000-2008
Ackerman, Forrest (4E), correspondence and clippings 1960-2004
Correspondence 1936-1947
***Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine 1973**
Membership cards 1940-1950
***Phantom: A Magazine of Weird Tales* 1958**
Science fiction fan groups, minutes and drawings 1941-1945
***Windhaven Fanzine* 1978**
"Witchcraft, Black Magic, and the Occult Arts" 1936
Writings as Tigrina 1937-1955

"Secret Garden" short story 1970-1979
Sheet music without lyrics undated
Short stories and other writings 1960-1975
Songs A-Y circa 1950-2000

Song compilations and set lists undated
Song lyrics undated
Songs by others 1940-1970
Songwriter contracts and agreements 1950-1966
"A Tribute to Hometown Buffet" 2005-2007
***Vice Versa* ("Potomoc Books") 1947-1948**

Correspondence Series 2.

Scope and Contents

This series, 1943-2009, comprises letters between Ben and her family members, friends, co-workers, and others including gay and lesbian activists and historians who wrote articles about Ben in gay and lesbian history publications.

Arrangement

This series is arranged alphabetically.

Box 2, Folder 7
Box 2, Folder 8
Box 2, Folder 9
Box 2, Folder 10
Box 2, Folder 11
Box 2, Folder 12
Box 2, Folder 13
Box 2, Folder 14
Box 2, Folder 15
Box 2, Folder 16
Box 2, Folder 17
Box 2, Folder 18
Box 2, Folder 19
Box 2, Folder 20
Box 2, Folder 21
Box 2, Folder 22
Box 2, Folder 23
Box 2, Folder 24
Box 2, Folder 25
Box 2,
Folder 26-33
Box 3, Folder 1
Box 3, Folder 2
Box 3, Folder 3
Box 3, Folder 4
Box 3, Folder 5
Box 3, Folder 6
Box 3, Folder 7
Box 3, Folder 8
Box 3, Folder 9
Box 3, Folder 10
Box 3, Folder 11
Box 3, Folder 12
Box 3, Folder 13
Box 3, Folder 14
Box 3, Folder 15
Box 3,
Folder 16-18
Box 3, Folder 19
Box 12

Brandt, Kate 1988-1993
Brandt, Kate, and Paula Lichtenberg 1990-2001
Cain, Paul 1995-2002
Chapman, Barbara (Amore, Crazy About Cats) 1990
"Doraine" 1968-2000
Doyle, J.D. 2002-2003
Eyde, Camilla 1968
Frankovich 1979
"Fred" 1955-1956
Garber, Eric 1989-1996
Gershick, Zsa Zsa (Joshua) 1995-1997
Giard, Robert 1991-1996
Golove, Degania 1995
Grant Family 1961-1973
Grant, Donabel's "Dear Little True Stories" (and correspondence) 1974-1980
Grier, Barbara; Naiad Press 1977-1978
Hammer, Barbara 1999-2000
Hollister, Sanna 1961-1970
International Gay and Lesbian Archives 1997
Kidd, Kay 1992-2005

Lorraine, Astrid 1968-1975
Neuzil, Tom 2003-2005
Latta, Helen ("Caprice") 1988-1993
MacCulloch, Bunny 1986
Marcus, Eric 1989-1993
Marinell, Larry 1997-2000
Martin, Del, and Phyllis Lyon; Daughters of Bilitis 1965-2002
Music, Lorenzo, and Henrietta 1976
Sherwood Family 1990-2002
Streitmatter, Rodger 1993-1997
Thompson, Don 1944
Wallace, Donna 1975
Waller, John 1989-1993
Williams, Ruth 1977-1981
"Win" 1952-1964
General 1943-2009

General undated
Postcards undated

Physical Description: 5 postcards.

Personal papers Series 3.

Scope and Contents

This series, 1936-2009, comprises clippings, newsletters, employment records, financial records, Hollywood trade magazines, school records, travel-related papers, and other material documenting Ben's daily life and personal interests. Papers document Ben's participation in gay and lesbian organizations; her education and training in music; her employment history in Hollywood studios; and her passion for adopting cats.

Arrangement

Clippings about Lisa Ben are at the beginning of this series. The remaining files are arranged alphabetically with one miscellaneous file at the end.

Box 3, Folder 30
 Box 3, Folder 31
 Box 5, Folder 21
 Box 5, Folder 25
 Box 3, Folder 32
 Box 3, Folder 33
 Box 3, Folder 34
 Box 4, Folder 1-4
 Box 4, Folder 5
 Box 4, Folder 6-7
 Box 4, Folder 8
 Box 4, Folder 9
 Box 4, Folder 10
 Box 4, Folder 11
 Box 4, Folder 12
 Box 4, Folder 13
 Box 4, Folder 14
 Box 4, Folder 15
 Box 4, Folder 16
 Box 4, Folder 17
 Box 4, Folder 18
 Box 4, Folder 19
 Box 4, Folder 20
 Box 4, Folder 21
 Box 4, Folder 22
 Box 4, Folder 23
 Box 5, Folder 1
 Box 5, Folder 2
 Box 11

Articles about Lisa Ben in LGBT publications 1976-1990

Leland Moss article manuscript 1977

Clippings with Edythe Eyde (Lisa Ben) 1946-1993

Address books and contacts circa 1945-1955

Automobile records 1950-1975

Bendix, Fred 1939-1967

Burbank notification regarding cats 1973

Cat People News 1992-2004

Cat-related documents 1964-1984

Clippings, cats 1950-1996

Clippings, gay and lesbian 1970-2001

Clippings, music 1952-2009

Clippings, miscellaneous 1945-2007

Daily planners 1944-1952

Drawings undated

Employment records 1950

Employment records, Universal Pictures 1964-1966

Financial records 1939-2006

Financial records, income taxes 1945-1946

Hollywood trade magazines 1963-1970

Humor, jokes and cartoons 1960-2000

Humor, jokes and cartoons 1961-2002

Identification and business cards undated

Idyllwild Arts Foundation 1963

Letterhead and address labels undated

Magazines 1964-1969

Maps undated

Medical records 1949-1978

Music clippings scrapbook 1936-1972

Scope and Contents

Includes clippings and correspondence related to musicians, symphonies and other performers.

Box 14, Folder 4
 Box 5, Folder 3
 Box 5, Folder 4
 Box 5, Folder 5
 Box 5, Folder 6
 Box 5, Folder 7
 Box 5, Folder 8
 Box 5, Folder 9
 Box 5, Folder 10
 Box 5, Folder 12
 Box 5, Folder 11
 Box 5, Folder 13
 Box 5, Folder 14

Newspapers 1962, 1964

ONE Incorporated Midwinter Institute program 1972

Open City 1968

Pet Pride 1979-1992

Photograph information and notes 1954-1988

Postcards and greeting cards (blank) undated

Recipes undated

Retirement homes information 1975-1979

Sandoz, (Helen?), poems undated

School, Los Altos Elementary School Reunion 1984

School, Palo Alto High School Reunion 1988

Society for the Study of Sexuality award plaque 1998

Theater, opera and orchestra event programs 1963-1964

Box 5, Folder 15
Box 5, Folder 16
Box 5, Folder 17
Box 5, Folder 18
Box 5, Folder 19
Box 5, Folder 20
Box 5, Folder 22

Travel [binder] 1984
Travel 1970-1979
Videocassette lists 1986-1994
West Coast Old Lesbian Conference packet 1987-1993
Will and testament 1974
Women for Women 1974-1975
Miscellaneous 1944
Miscellaneous circa 1950-1990

Separated Materials

This folder has been separated from the collection due to mold damage.

Scope and Contents

Included are a letter from Kate Brandt (1990), handwritten notes, lyrics and sheet music.

Family papers Series 4.

Scope and Contents

This series, 1914-1993, comprises correspondence, genealogy research, family history documents, funeral records, and other papers from Lisa Ben's family. The bulk of the materials are related to Lisa Ben's father, Oscar Eugene Eyde, who died in 1968.

Arrangement

Genealogy research and family history documents are at the beginning of this series, followed by papers related to Ben's parents, Oscar Eugene Eyde and Olive Colegrove. One document from Camilla Dorthea Eyde is at the end.

Box 3, Folder 20
Box 3, Folder 21
Box 3, Folder 22
Box 3, Folder 23
Box 3,
Folder 24-25
Box 14, Folder 5
Box 3, Folder 27
Box 3, Folder 28
Box 3, Folder 26
Box 3, Folder 29

Genealogy research, correspondence 1984
Genealogy, family history 1991-1993
Eyde, Oscar and Olive 1914-1949
Eyde, Oscar E. papers 1920-1968
Oscar E. Eyde correspondence with Edythe 1952-1968

Oscar Eugene Eyde masons certificate 1954
Oscar E. Eyde medical care and funeral 1961-1969
Oscar E. Eyde; Ethel Stephenson correspondence 1968-1970
Olive E. Colegrove's bible (materials found loose) 1956-1965
Eyde, Camilla Dorthea, will 1990

Photographs Series 5.

Scope and Contents

The bulk of this series, 1905-2003, comprises photographic prints, slides and negatives of Lisa Ben and her family dating back to 1905.

Arrangement

Portraits of Lisa Ben are at the beginning of this series, followed by photographs of Ben arranged in chronological order. The remaining miscellaneous photographs are arranged alphabetically.

Box 6
Box 10, Folder 1
Box 13

Edythe Eyde and family portraits 1921-1968
Edythe Eyde portraits 1938-1968
Edythe Eyde portraits circa 1940-1949

Physical Description: 6 glass plate negatives.

Box 6
Box 7
Box 8
Box 9
Box 14, Folder 2
Box 10, Folder 5
Box 10, Folder 6

Universal Studios publicity photographs with Edythe Eyde November 28, 1966
Edythe Eyde and others circa 1921-1959
Edythe Eyde and others circa 1950-1975
Edythe Eyde and others circa 1975-2003
Lisa Ben photograph circa 1990-2000
Les Baux-en-Provence undated
Buildings at Universal Studios undated

Box 14, Folder 3
Box 10, Folder 7-8
Box 10, Folder 2-3
Box 10, Folder 4
Box 5, Folder 26
Box 10, Folder 9

Cat and lion photograph undated
Cats and other pets circa 1950-1995
Family photographs 1914-1993
Family portraits 1905-circa 1950
Family portraits undated
Publicity stills circa 1950-1965

Sound recordings Series 6.

Scope and Contents

This series, circa 1940-2008, includes folk songs and an advertising jingle for Hometown Buffet recorded by Lisa Ben, as well as a CD copy of songs performed by Beverly Shaw, a male impersonator who performed in lesbian bars in Los Angeles during the 1940s-1950s.

Arrangement

Recordings by Lisa Ben are at the beginning of this series and arranged alphabetically.

Box 13

Edythe Eyde January 6, 1942

Physical Description: 1 phonograph record (78)

Box 13

(1) "Hometown Buffet"; (2) "Old Country Buffet"; (3) "Hometown Buffet (Save a Place for Me)" May 29, 2008

Physical Description: 1 compact disc.

Box 13

"If Only You Won't Smile at Me," music and lyrics by Edythe Eyde undated

Physical Description: 1 open reel audiotape (1/4 in.)

Box 13

"If You're But a Dream," Edythe Eyde April 8, 1952

Physical Description: 1 phonograph record

Box 13

[Untitled] undated

Physical Description: 1 phonograph record (78)

Box 13

[Untitled] undated

Physical Description: 5 phonograph record

Box 13

Billy Holliday, "Strange Fruit" undated

Physical Description: 1 phonograph record

Box 13

Dean Moore and the Big Action Sound, "Alone and Blue"; "It Just Takes One" undated

Physical Description: 1 phonograph record (45)

Box 13

Miss Beverly Shaw presents *Songs Tailored to Your Taste* undated

Physical Description: 1 compact disc.

Musical instruments and realia Series 7.

Scope and Contents

This series comprises Lisa Ben's guitar, violin, and mandolin, as well as a variety of keychains, knickknacks, buttons and other realia.

Arrangement

This series is arranged alphabetically.

Item 16

Box 15, Item 1

Box 15, Item 2

Box 12

Guitar and leopard-print case undated

Mandolin and case undated

Violin and case with monogram undated

***Best in Children's Books* 1960**

Physical Description: 1 book.

- Box 16 **Books inscribed to Lisa Ben 1976-1997**
 Scope and Contents
 Included are the following books:
 Ackerman, Forrest J. Forrest J. Ackerman's World of Science Fiction. Los Angeles: General
 Pub. Group, 1997. Print.
 Brandt, Kate A. Happy Endings: Lesbian Writers Talk about Their Lives and Work.
 Tallahassee, FL: Naiad, 1993. Print.
 Katz, Jonathan. Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A. New York:
 Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976. Print.
 Martin, Del, and Phyllis Lyon. Lesbian/woman. Volcano, CA: Volcano, 1991. Print.
- Box 12 **Cigar box with miscellaneous toy games and other objects undated**
Box 12 **Holy Bible, Olive E. Colegrove 1905**
 Physical Description: 1 book.
- Box 12 **Horoscope Birthday Book 1945**
 Physical Description: 1 book.
- Box 12 **Leopard drawing undated**
 Physical Description: square drawing
- Box 12 **Leopard print bag undated**
 Physical Description: 1 bag.
- Box 14, Folder 1 **Painting, L. Ridge undated**
Box 12 **Peep show pin-up girl keychain viewers undated**
 Physical Description: 18 keychain viewers.
- Box 12 **Sonoma County Shrine Club Aahmes Temple, Oscar E. Eyde undated**
Box 12 **West Coast Celebration, Impowerment[sic] for Old Lesbians pen April 24-26, 1987**
Box 12 **West Coast Conference and Celebration, Old Lesbian button April 1987**