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## **Finding Aid to the Chester (Chet) Born Papers 1943-1993SFP 88**

Finding aid written by Christina Moretta

San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

2016

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San Francisco, CA 94102

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URL: <http://www.sfpl.org/sfhistory>

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**Title:** Chester (Chet) O. Born Papers

**Date (inclusive):** 1943 - 1993

**Date (bulk):** 1951-1973

**Identifier/Call Number:** SFP 88

**Creator:** Born, Chester (Chet) O.

**Physical Description:** 1 carton, 3 oversize flat boxes(4 Cubic Feet)

**Contributing Institution:** San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

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**Abstract:** Chester (Chet) O. Born's papers document his professional and public life from the 1940s until his death in 1973, tracing the trajectory of his career as a San Francisco Fire Department photographer; as well as his public life as a public speaker. The collection consists of photographs and color slides; scrapbooks; correspondence; certificates and awards; newspaper clippings and publications, the bulk of which feature or include photographs of and by Born. Most of the photographs document fires fought and rescues by the San Francisco Fire Department between 1959 and 1973. A small number of photos are of Chet Born and other San Francisco Fire Department members. There are approximately 540 color slides which Born used for his public presentations. Many of the photographs are included in the scrapbooks.

**Physical Location:** The collection is stored onsite.

**Language of Materials:** Collection materials are in English.

**Access**

The collection is available for use during San Francisco History Center's Photo Desk hours.

**Publication Rights**

All requests for permission to publish from photograph collections must be submitted in writing to the Photo Curator. Permission for publication is given on behalf of the San Francisco Public Library as the owner of the physical items.

**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Chester (Chet) Born Papers (SFP 88), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

**Provenance**

Gift of Cindy Born-Mylo, daughter of Chet Born. 2007-98.

**Materials Transferred**

San Francisco Fire Department, 1866-1974, The Firehorses of San Francisco, and Lowell High School yearbook 1972 have been transferred to the San Francisco History Stacks.

**Biography**

Chester (Chet) O. Born was born on May 28, 1923 in San Francisco and grew up in the Sunset District on Twenty-first Avenue. Born's interest in fire-fighting began with his neighborhood firehouse 40 Engine by getting to know the firemen and going to fire scenes to take photos. Born attended Polytechnic High School with the career ambition of "Fire Chief" noted in the Fall 1940 yearbook. Born was appointed to the Underwriters Fire Patrol on March 8, 1942 and entered the San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD) on July 1, 1943 as the Fire Patrol was merged into the SFFD by a City Charter amendment. On December 19, 1942 Born took military leave to join the United States Marine Corps. As a Marine in World War II, Born took part in the capture of Iwo Jima in 1945. After active duty in the Pacific Theater, he returned to the department on May 8, 1946. As a young firefighter, Born took photos during his off-duty hours. His photos were first published in the San Francisco Firefighters' Local 798 newspaper, *The Inside Box*. On August 30, 1951 he was granted military leave for the Korean police action, and returned to duty on September 12, 1952. He was a full-time firefighter until an injury prompted Chief William F. Murray to appoint Born as the department's first full-time photographer in 1955. Born was formally designated as Photo One on November 7, 1960. He was appointed Inspector on September 19, 1965. As Photo No. 1 - and the inception of SFFD's photographic unit - Born was responsible for photographing and filming Department activities. Born received numerous national and international awards of excellence for his photography and films which made him a premiere and noted fire photographer. Born was active in presenting many public relations presentations with his color slides throughout the community. During his career he was injured more than 50 times in fires and explosions. In addition to recording fires, "Photo No. 1" had other duties: Born's photos of potentially hazardous conditions aided the Fire Prevention Bureau in their efforts to enforce fire codes; photos of rescues and accidents aided the Division of Training in

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their instruction of new firefighters; his work assisted Arson Inspectors in determining causes of fires. In the 1960s he responded to more than 700 incidents a year. In addition to local press, Chet provided national newspapers and magazines with many spectacular photos of SFFD at work. Along with his still cameras, he also used a 16mm film camera at major alarm fires – which was used for training. Born retired from the SFFD on October 3, 1973. Chester O. (Chet) Born died on June 1, 1987. His Photo No. 1 helmet was donated in his memory in 1993 to the SFFD Pioneer Fire Museum.

#### **Scope and Contents**

Chester (Chet) O. Born's papers document his professional and public life from the 1940s until his death in 1973, tracing the trajectory of his career as a San Francisco Fire Department photographer; as well as his public life as a public speaker. The collection consists of photographs and color slides; scrapbooks; correspondence; certificates and awards; newspaper clippings and publications, the bulk of which feature or include photographs of and by Born. Most of the photographs document fires fought and rescues by the San Francisco Fire Department between 1959 and 1973. A small number of photos are of Chet Born and other San Francisco Fire Department members. There are approximately 540 color slides which Born used for his public presentations. Many of the photographs are included in the scrapbooks.

#### **Arrangement**

The collection is arranged in three series: Series 1: Photographs & Color Slides; Series 2: Scrapbooks; Series 3: Miscellaneous Papers.

#### **Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Fire fighters - California - San Francisco.

Fire extinction - California - San Francisco

San Francisco (Calif.) - Fire Department.

Slides -- Color --1950-1960

Slides -- Color --1960-1970

Slides -- Color --1970-1980

Photographic prints, 1960-1970

Photographic prints, 1950-1960

Scrapbooks.

Born, Chester (Chet) O.

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#### **Photographs & Color Slides Series 1 1946-1993**

##### **Scope and Contents**

The bulk of the photographs and color slides were taken by Chet Born as the San Francisco Fire Department official photographer. The color slides were the slides used in public talks and lectures. The arrangement of the slides is how Born had them organized for slideshow presentations.

box 1, folder 1

box 1, folder 2

ov-flat-box 3,

folder 1

box 1, folder 3

##### **Photographs of Chet Born 1942-1967**

##### **Photographs by Chet Born 1950-1972**

##### **Oversized photographs by Chet Born 1951-1966**

##### **Color Slides, Identified Fires 1952-1969**

###### **Scope and Contents**

Includes list of fires with location of intersection and/or name of building with date. Intersections include Gough & Oak; 14th Avenue & Irving; 22nd Street & Iowa; Washington & Steiner; Francis & Mission; 16th Street & Castro; 17th Street & Capp; 23rd Street & Minnesota; Stockton & Washington; Stockton & Ellis; 48th Avenue & Lawton; Cole & Waller; 4th Street & Brannan; 20th Street & San Carlos; 19th Street & Indiana; Mariposa & Indiana; Arguello & California; Polk & Turk. Buildings and locations include Jefferson School, San Francisco Airport, Gibraltar Warehouse, Thomas Hotel, Cliff House, Hunters Point, Pier 90, St. Mary's Cathedral, Lutz Tire.

box 1, folder 4

box 1, folder 5

##### **Color Slides, Box A 1957-1967**

##### **Color Slides, Box B 1959-1966**

box 1, folder 6	<b>Color Slides, Box C 1957-1960</b> <b>Scope and Contents</b> Includes shots of fires and San Francisco Fire Department trucks and engines.
box 1, folder 7	<b>Color Slides, Box D 1962-1966</b> <b>Scope and Contents</b> Unidentified fires and rescue.
box 1, folder 8	<b>Color Slides, Box E 1951-1963</b> <b>Scope and Contents</b> San Francisco Fire Department trucks and engines.
box 1, folder 9	<b>Color Slides, Box F 1955-1964</b> <b>Scope and Contents</b> Unidentified fires and accidents.
box 1, folder 10	<b>Color Slides, Box G 1956-1965</b> <b>Scope and Contents</b> Unidentified fires.
box 1, folder 11	<b>Color Slides, Box H 1971-1973</b> <b>Scope and Contents</b> Unidentified Fires.
box 1, folder 12	<b>Color Slides, Box I 1959-1970</b> <b>Scope and Contents</b> Unidentified and identified fires. Identified fires includes lumber yard at 99 Bayshore Blvd and San Bruno & Army.
box 1, folder 12	<b>Color Slides 1959-1965</b> <b>Scope and Contents</b> Includes shots of fires at Hunters Point and at 19th Street and Indiana.
box 1, folder 13 box 1, folder 14	<b>Copies of family photographs 1946-1990</b> <b>Copy prints of San Francisco Fire Department 1950-1970</b> <b>Scope and Contents</b> Copy prints collected by Chet Born of San Francisco Fire Department employees, fire trucks and engines and fires. None of the photographs were taken by Chet Born.
box 1, folder 15	<b>Photographs of presentation of Born's helmet to SFFD Pioneer Fire Museum 1993</b> <b>See also</b> Box 1 / Folder 23
box 1, folder 16	<b>Copy print of Marines Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima [undated]</b> <b>Scope and Contents</b> Photograph signed by Joe Rosenthal.
	<b>Scrapbooks Series 2 1946-1973</b>
ov-flat-box 2, volume 1	<b>Scrapbook #1 by Chet Born 1948-1971</b> <b>Scope and Contents</b> Scrapbook compiled by Chet Born includes original photographs of and by Born, newspaper clippings, correspondence and certificates.

ov-flat-box 2,  
volume 2

**Scrapbook #2 by Chet Born 1961-1972**

**Scope and Contents**

Scrapbook compiled by Chet Born includes publications and newspaper clippings with Born photos.

ov-flat-box 3,  
volume 1

**Scrapbook #3 by Chet Born 1961-1973**

**Scope and Contents**

Scrapbook compiled by Chet Born includes publications and newspaper clippings with Born photos.

ov-flat-box 4,  
volume 1

**Scrapbook #4 by Chet Born 1946-1973**

**Scope and Contents**

Scrapbook compiled by Chet Born includes original photographs of and by Born, newspaper clippings about Born and with Born photos, correspondence, badges, certificates and announcements.

box 1, folder 24

**School Pictures and Friends Scrapbook by Cindy Born 1962-1968**

**Scope and Contents**

Scrapbook of photographs compiled by Chet Born and Cindy Born, Chet Born's daughter. Photos include Commodore Sloat School class pictures between 1962 and 1967 and Cindy posing with identified classmates. Photos by Chet Born include Cindy posing on fire trucks and Cindy at San Francisco Fire Department events.

**Miscellaneous Papers Series 3 1943-1993**

**Scope and Contents**

Includes clippings about or with Born's photographs. Other printed materials include magazines and journals about Born or with Born's photographs.

**Arrangement**

Arranged by type of document, then chronologically.

box 1, folder 17  
box 1, folder 18  
box 1, folder 19  
box 1, folder 20  
ov-flat-box 3,  
folder 2  
box 1, folder 21

**Correspondence: from Chet Born to Betty Grant 1943**

**Correspondence: from Joe Rosenthal 1972-1980**

**Correspondence: to Chet Born 1972**

**Publications: with Born photographs reproduced 1963-1972**

**Certificates and awards to Chet Born 1971-1973**

**Memories of Chet Born 2007**

**Scope and Contents**

Written memories about Chet Born by Cindy Born-Mylo, Chet's daughter, and Ralph Pujular, fellow SFFD firefighter.

box 1, folder 22

**Correspondence and clippings: in memory of Chet Born 1987**

**Scope and Contents**

Correspondence and meeting minutes in memory of Chet Born. Newspaper clippings and publications include obituary and remembrances.

box 1, folder 23

**Publications: presentation of Born's helmet to SFFD Pioneer Fire Museum 1993**

**See also**

Box 1 / Folder 15