V.M. Hanks, Jr. Photograph Collection

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San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco History Center
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2019
Descriptive Summary
Title: V.M. Hanks, Jr. Photograph Collection
Dates: 1940-1997
Collection Number: SFP 72
Creator/Collector: Hanks, Virgil McKnight , Jr.
Extent: 3 cartons, 21 shoeboxes and 2 oversize boxes (approximately 1,000 photographic prints and 17,000 negatives)
Repository: San Francisco Public Library. San Francisco History Center
San Francisco, California 94102
Abstract: The V. M. Hanks Jr. Photograph Collection contains photographs and papers created by professional San Francisco photographer V. M. Hanks Jr from the 1940s until the late 1980s. The photographs include both negatives and photographic prints created by Hanks beginning with his role as U.S. Marine’s photographer and traces the trajectory of his career as a hotel photographer and significant general San Francisco photographer. The bulk of the collection consists of black and white photographic prints and transparencies, as well as a scrapbook, correspondence, newspaper clippings and publications, the bulk of which feature or include photographs of and by Hanks. Photographs document visits to San Francisco by heads of state, public officials and royalty from several countries during the 1940s through the 1960s. In the 1970s – 1980s, there is photographic documentation of numismatic events at the old San Francisco Mint.
Language of Material: English
Access
The collection is available for use during Photo Desk hours.
Publication Rights
Copyright retained by V.M. Hanks Jr. family. All requests for permission to publish from photographs 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
V.M. Hanks, Jr. Photograph Collection. San Francisco Public Library. San Francisco History Center
Acquisition Information
Gift from the children of V.M. Hanks, Jr., 2012.
Biography/Administrative History
Virgil McKnight Hanks, Jr. was born in Decatur, Illinois, on April 17, 1921 to Marie Gladys Batemen and Earl Hanks. He attended Eureka College in Eureka, Illinois. Hanks enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in August 1942 and became a sergeant and combat photographer in January 1943. Hanks saw action at Guadalcanal. While recovering from malaria at a military hospital in Klamath Falls, Oregon, he met Nadine Palmerton, who was a reporter for a newspaper in Klamath Falls. The couple married on June 29, 1947 in Oregon and moved to San Francisco, California as newlyweds. Hanks began his San Francisco career as a photographer, and by the mid-1950s he was one of San Francisco’s leading photographers. During the 1950s - 1960s, he was photographer of record for many of San Francisco’s major hotels and his work appeared frequently in local magazines and newspapers. As a well-known press and commercial photographer for nearly 40 years, Hanks served as a visual diarist for the city, photographing heads of state, visiting dignitaries and numerous other celebrities. During the 1950s, Hanks’ headquarters was at the St. Francis Hotel. From 1957-1958, Hanks was the photographer for The Argonaut for a series called the Pacifica Focus. Later in life, Hanks became a prominent numismatist. A talented designer with a passion for numismatics, he was involved in the design of commemorative medallions celebrating various anniversaries of the Golden Gate Bridge, the cable car and the San Francisco Mint. Hanks lived in San Francisco’s St. Francis Woods at 89 San Pablo Avenue with his wife Nadine, daughters Penny, Lisa and Janet and son Charles. He was a member of the Saints and Sinners fraternal charitable organization, the Disabled American Veterans, the American Numismatic Association and the San Francisco Coin Club. He was also a past member of the Bohemian Club. Hanks died on July 8, 1997 in San Francisco, California.
Scope and Content of Collection
The V. M. Hanks Jr. Photograph Collection contains photographs and papers created by professional San Francisco photographer V. M. Hanks Jr from the 1940s until the late 1980s. The photographs include both negatives and photographic prints created by Hanks beginning with his role as U.S. Marine’s photographer and traces the trajectory of his career as a hotel photographer and significant general San Francisco photographer. The bulk of the collection consists of black and white photographic prints and transparencies, as well as a scrapbook, correspondence, newspaper clippings and publications, the bulk of which feature or include photographs of and by Hanks. Most of the photographic prints document
significant San Francisco events and people including General Douglas MacArthur’s parade and visit to San Francisco; the
Prominent celebrities and musicians photographed include Duke Ellington, Vernon Phillips, Willie McCovey, Joan Crawford,
Peggy Lee, Ingrid Bergman, Shirley MacLaine, and Ed Sullivan. Also included are heads of state, public officials and royalty
from several countries. The transparencies document San Francisco events including San Francisco Opera openings and
galas, Soap Box Derby races. In the 1970s – 1980s, there is photographic documentation of numismatic events at the old
San Francisco Mint. Hanks also worked as a wedding photographer and portrait photographer so there are significant San
Francisco people and their families represented. The majority of the photographs were shot in San Francisco, but there are
some family trips and work assignments outside of San Francisco but in California.

Indexing Terms
San Francisco (Calif.) -- Pictorial works.
San Francisco (Calif.) -- Social life and customs.
Celebrities - California - San Francisco
Hotels -- California -- San Francisco.
Hotel St. Francis (San Francisco, Calif.)
Mints - California - San Francisco.
Weddings - California - San Francisco.
Photographic prints -- 20th century -- San Francisco
Photographic prints, 1940-1950
Photographic prints, 1950-1960
Photographic prints, 1960-1970
Transparencies
Group portraits
Portrait photographs

Finding aid to V.M. Hanks, Jr. Photograph Collection