Linda Alband collection of Randy Shilts materials

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GLBT Historical Society
989 Market Street, Lower Level
San Francisco, California 94103
(415) 777-5455
reference@glbthistory.org
http://www.glbthistory.org/
2020
Descriptive Summary
Title: Linda Alband collection of Randy Shilts materials
Collection Number: 2003-09
Creator/Collector: Linda Alband
Extent: 6 cartons (6 linear feet)
Online items available: https://calisphere.org/collections/25554/
Repository: GLBT Historical Society
San Francisco, California 94103
Abstract: The Linda Alband collection of Randy Shilts materials documents Shilts’ personal and political work, and dates from 1966-1999. Linda Alband assembled the materials in the collection during Shilts’ life and after his death, working to preserve his legacy.
Language of Material: English
Access
Collection is open for research with the exception of one letter from Jack Green, which is restricted. Contact the Managing Archivist for more information. Funding for processing this collection was provided by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) and the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR).
Preferred Citation
Linda Alband collection of Randy Shilts materials. GLBT Historical Society
Acquisition Information
Gift of Linda Alband in February 2014.
Biography/Administrative History
Randy Shilts (1951-1994) was a prominent, openly gay journalist and author. A freelance television and newspaper reporter in the San Francisco Bay Area, Shilts covered issues facing local LGBTQ communities, most notably the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. Shilts published three books: The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk (1982), And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS epidemic (1989), and Conduct Unbecoming: Gays and Lesbians in the U.S. Military, Vietnam to the Persian Gulf (1993). All three books were published by St. Martin’s Press. Shilts was born August 8, 1951 to a working-class, politically conservative family in Davenport, Iowa. He became involved in liberal politics while attending Portland Community College in Oregon and the University of Oregon in Eugene. He was president of the Eugene Gay People’s Alliance and editing manager of the Oregon Emerald, the University of Oregon student newspaper. Shilts graduated with honors, with a B.A. in English and a B.S. in Journalism, in 1975. Shilts began writing for The Advocate in the fall of 1975, covering lesbian and gay community issues; he moved to San Francisco a few months later. He resigned from The Advocate in 1979. Shilts worked as a freelance journalist for KQED, from 1977 to 1980 and KTVU from 1979 to 1980. He worked for The San Francisco Chronicle from 1981 until early 1994, when his health deteriorated. In addition to covering LGBT issues, Shilts covered local politics, crime, and music; he was, for example, the main Chronicle reporter assigned to the San Francisco earthquake of 1989. In 1982, Shilts published his first book, The Mayor of Castro Street, about Harvey Milk and LGBT political power in San Francisco. Shilts’ extensive research on the development of the AIDS epidemic, a topic assigned to him by the Chronicle, led to his second book, And the Band Played On in 1989. This book chronicled how the national political climate shaped the epidemic’s growth and examined its social ramifications. Critics have commented that Shilts’ final book, Conduct Unbecoming, about how military culture historically shaped a particular kind of homophobia, enabled mainstream readers to see lesbian and gay issues as matters of human rights worthy of national and international priority. In 1987, Shilts was diagnosed as HIV positive; he publicly disclosed his status in 1993. He died of fully developed AIDS on February 17, 1994, in Guerneville, California. Linda Alband was Shilts’ longtime friend and his business manager for the last five-and-a-half years of his life. Alband lived in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1980s and 1990s. She graduated from San Francisco State University in 1994. She worked for several organizations that protested the disempowerment of minority groups, and on a few films related to gay and lesbian and women’s rights. Alband also led efforts to assemble and complete Shilts’ personal and professional papers for donation to the James C. Hormel Gay & Lesbian Center at the San Francisco Public Library. She later donated her own materials on Shilts to the GLBT Historical Society.
Scope and Content of Collection
The Linda Alband collection of Randy Shilts materials documents Shilts’ personal and political work, and dates from 1966-1999. Linda Alband assembled the materials in the collection during Shilts’ life and after his death, working to preserve his legacy. The collection has been divided into eight series: Writings; Correspondence; Biographical Materials and
Personalia; Legal Records; Subject Files; Linda Alband Papers; Audiovisual and Photographic Materials; and Artifacts.

Indexing Terms
AIDS (disease)
Journalism
Gay men

Container List for the Linda Alband Collection of Randy Shilts Materials