Descriptive Summary

Title: Raymond Broshears papers
Dates: 1965-1984
Collection Number: 1996-03
Creator/Collector: 
Extent: 13 boxes (5.2 linear feet)
Repository: GLBT Historical Society
San Francisco, California 94103
Abstract: This collection documents the religious life and community activism of one of San Francisco’s most controversial figures, Ray Broshears. The collection contains correspondence, ephemera, financial records, newsletters, photographs and subject files.

Language of Material: English

Access
Collection is open for research. Funding for processing this collection was provided by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR).

Preferred Citation
Raymond Broshears papers. GLBT Historical Society

Acquisition Information
Gift of Hank Wilson in February 1996.

Biography/Administrative History
Raymond Broshears, one of San Francisco’s most controversial gay citizens, was a community activist and ordained minister in the Orthodox Episcopal Catholic Church. Broshears was born Earl Raymond Allen in Centreville Station, Illinois in 1935. When his mother later remarried, she gave him her new husband’s name, though he was raised primarily by his grandmother and his three aunts. He served in the United States Navy and received a medical discharge in 1955. Broshears, who preferred to be called “Reverend Ray,” formed the Gay Activists Alliance in 1971, the Lavender Panthers in 1973, and was one of the founders of San Francisco’s first gay pride parade in 1972. In addition to his work for gay and lesbian rights, he was also a strong advocate for the poor and elderly communities in the Tenderloin. He founded the Old Folks Defense League and the Helping Hands Community Center to serve this population and also helped produce an annual Christmas Show at Fort Miley Hospital. Broshears was a polarizing figure in San Francisco’s LGBT community as evidenced by the many lawsuits and charges brought against him in his lifetime. He regularly used his newspaper the Gay Crusader to attack and criticize individuals and organizations that disagreed with him. Broshears died at home of a cerebral hemorrhage on January 10, 1982.

Scope and Content of Collection
This collection documents the religious life and community activism of one of San Francisco’s most controversial figures, Ray Broshears. The collection contains correspondence, ephemera, financial records, newsletters, photographs and subject files. There are materials related to the Orthodox Episcopal Catholic Church, the Lavender Panthers and files he collected on other ministries and religious figures. The collection includes scrapbooks documenting the Gay Activists Alliance, which Broshears founded in 1972, and materials related to Helping Hands Center, the gay community center he operated in the Tenderloin, as well as his newspaper the Gay Crusader (also known as the S.F. Crusader). Subject files include correspondence from, and flyers and articles about, the gay rights movement, political campaigns and prominent San Franciscans. The papers also include legal documents relating to lawsuits and complaints filed by or against Broshears. There is very little documentation of his life before moving to San Francisco in 1967.

Indexing Terms
Gay men
Christians
Journalism
Homophobia

Container List for the Raymond Broshears Papers