Henry Diekow/Baroness von Dieckoff papers

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Henry Diekow/Baroness von Dieckoff papers
Descriptive Summary

Title: Henry Diekow/Baroness von Dieckoff papers
Collection Number: 1992-01
Creator/Collector:
Extent: 10 linear feet (three cartons, one half manuscript box, two small oversize boxes, one medium oversize box, one costume box)
Repository: GLBT Historical Society
San Francisco, California 94103
Abstract: Henry Diekow (1915-1988), known as the Baroness Eugenie von Dieckoff, was a major figure in the Imperial Court System and midcentury Bay Area drag society. Diekow’s papers include photographs, organizational materials, ephemera, and a complete run of Diekow’s diary-as-gossip column, “Bag-a-Drag-by-the-Bay.”
Language of Material: English

Access
Collection is open for research.

Preferred Citation
Henry Diekow/Baroness von Dieckoff papers. GLBT Historical Society

Acquisition Information

Biography/Administrative History
Henry Diekow (1915-1988), known as the Baroness Eugenie von Dieckoff, was a major figure in the Imperial Court System and midcentury Bay Area drag society. Between 1940 and 1958, Diekow kept a diary in the form of a society column, “Bag-a-Drag-by-the-Bay,” the title of which was a parody of Herb Caen’s column “Baghdad by the Bay.” The column narrates the activities of gay and drag luminaries, and also provides coded glimpses of Diekow’s personal life – the Baroness often marries, and at one point adopts a daughter. When the Imperial Court System was founded, Diekow became active in it and held a position on the Council of Empresses. In addition to his drag activities, which allowed him to indulge his fascination with court dress and protocol, Diekow was a member of early gay motorcycle clubs in the 1960s (the California Motorcycle Club and the Sixty-Nine Club, based in London). Diekow’s day job was domestic service; he was butler to Helen de Young Cameron for thirty years, working at her estate, Rose Court (he has a cameo in the film Harold and Maude, essentially playing himself, in a scene filmed at the mansion). After Cameron’s death in 1969, he worked as a freelance butler for the rest of his life.

Scope and Content of Collection
Diekow’s papers include photographs, organizational materials, and ephemera documenting his activity in San Francisco’s drag society and motorcycle clubs. The papers are arranged in two series, the Imperial Court System and Related Materials and Personal Life.

Indexing Terms
Imperial Court System
Drag
Gay men
Motorcycle clubs

Inventory of the Henry Diekow/Baroness von Dieckoff papers