Robert Coffman Papers

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2020
Descriptive Summary
Title: Robert Coffman Papers
Dates: 1939-2000
Collection Number: 2006-17
Creator/Collector: Coffman, Robert, 1917-2005
Extent: 7 cartons (7 linear feet)
Repository: GLBT Historical Society
San Francisco, California 94103
Abstract: The Robert Coffman papers document Coffman’s theatrical performances in San Francisco, as well as the life he shared with his partner of over 35 years, Arthur Bamberger. There is a small amount of material related to Coffman’s career as a social worker in New York City.
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
Robert Coffman Papers. GLBT Historical Society
Acquisition Information
Gift of Ron Schmidt in March 2006.
Biography/Administrative History
Robert Coffman (1917-2005) was a social worker for the City of New York for 30 years before he and his long-time partner Arthur Bamberger (d. 1988) retired and moved to San Francisco to live openly gay lives. Coffman was an early member of Theatre Rhinoceros, where he appeared in dozens of plays, including the landmark The A.I.D.S. Show: Artists Involved in Death and Survival in 1984 and Unfinished Business: The New A.I.D.S. Show, in 1985. He was best known for his annual holiday readings of Truman Capote’s “The Thanksgiving Visitor” and “A Christmas Memory.”
Scope and Content of Collection
The Robert Coffman papers document Coffman’s theatrical performances in San Francisco, as well as the life he shared with his partner of over 35 years, Arthur Bamberger. The collection includes over 30 years of correspondence between Coffman and Bamberger; materials related to Coffman’s work with Theatre Rhinoceros, the Senior Theater Education Project, his Truman Capote holiday readings, and his other performances. There is a small amount of material related to Coffman’s career as a social worker, including reel-to-reel tapes of his WNYC radio program, Children Can’t Wait. The collection also contains schoolwork, diplomas and awards; travel journals and materials belonging to Bamberger; personal and professional photographs; and audiovisual materials related to Coffman’s theatrical performances. The collection has been divided into five Series: Correspondence; Performances; Personalia; Photographs and Audio-Visual Materials.
Indexing Terms
Gays Drama.
Theatre Rhinoceros (San Francisco, Calif.)
Coffman, Robert, 1917-2005
Correspondence
Container List for the Robert Coffman Papers