

Stephen R. Blair papers, 1919-1996

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Blair, Stephen R. (Stephen Richard), 1917-1997
Title	Stephen R. Blair papers
Dates	1919-1996 (inclusive) 1919 1996
Quantity	1 cubic foot (2 boxes)
Collection Number	5172 (Accession No. 5172-001)
Summary	Papers and oral history interview of Blair documenting experiences in the military, the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union, and theater.
Repository	University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Special Collections University of Washington Libraries Box 352900 Seattle, WA 98195-2900 Telephone: 206-543-1929 Fax: 206-543-1931 speccoll@uw.edu
Access Restrictions	The collection is open to all users.
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was partially provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

Stephen Richard Blair was born on July 19, 1917, in a sod house built by his father in Swanville, Minnesota. His parents, Louis and Eva (McPhee) Blair, raised a large Catholic family in Minnesota and Saskatchewan, Canada. Blair attended Duluth Central High School and the University of Minnesota in Duluth. In January 1936 Blair entered the U.S. Army and served as a field paramedic. He was discharged for suspicion of homosexuality in October of the same year. He later moved to San Francisco, where he met his partner Frank McCormick. Blair and McCormick's relationship lasted roughly forty-one years, until McCormick died of lung cancer in the 1980s.

When Blair and McCormick met, McCormick was serving as a union officer for the National Union of Marine Cooks and Stewards (NUMCS). He was also on the executive board of the California Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and was actively involved in the Pacific coast maritime strike of 1936. NUMCS was a small union known for full integration of African American and gay members. NUMCS leaders were blacklisted in the 1950s, and the union was expelled from the CIO in 1955 for communist leadership. Blair became involved in NUMCS while working as a ship's delegate on passenger cruise lines and freighters. He served as a delegate for a union-wide meeting on the S.S. *Aleutian*. Blair earned top wages waiting tables on luxury liners before being blacklisted in the 1950s by the Merchant Marines. He also held positions as an hospital orderly, a medical assistant for an Arctic oil rig named *Kavik*, and a studio prop man on Hollywood movie sets.

McCormick and Blair were born twenty years apart but had similar interests in theater and performance. In World War I, McCormick served in a drag troupe called the Pink Stockings. He also sang in the Fighting American Quartet to entertain troops. In World War II, Blair performed in the United Service Organizations' (USO) theater and entertainment shows. These experiences sparked a continuing interest in theater. Blair played in stock theater shows in Hollywood, San Diego, and Los Angeles, California. After visiting Hawaii with the USO, he decided to stay and work in advertising. He performed under the name "Mickey Blair" in a 1945 Honolulu Community Production of *The Petrified Forest* by Robert Sherwood.

McCormick and Blair moved to Seattle in the late 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, Blair was involved in Democratic election campaigns. In 1980 Blair sang in the Seattle Men's Chorus, which formed in 1979. Blair was also one of five Seattle gay and lesbian elders who performed their own life stories in the 1992 Alice B. Theatre production, *Hidden History: True Stories from Seattle's Gay and Lesbian Elders*. The play was directed by Patricia Van Kirk and was based upon interviews completed as part of the Alice B. Theatre Oral History Project. Stephen R. Blair died in April of 1997.

Content Description

The papers include subject files related to various aspects of Stephen R. Blair's life, including his military service, his participation in the Alice B. Theatre and the Seattle Men's Chorus, and his experiences as a maritime worker and member of the National Union of Marine Cooks and Stewards. Also included are playbills, clippings, correspondence, and the transcript of his interview for the Alice B. Theatre Oral History Project.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

The creator's literary rights have been transferred to the University of Washington Libraries.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

Arranged by type of record.

Custodial History

Before his death, Blair gave a collection of scrapbooks, photographs, and other materials to friends with instructions to make them available to the public. The papers were donated to the Northwest Lesbian and Gay History Museum Project, where volunteers completed initial processing. They were then transferred to Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

Acquisition Information

Donated by the Northwest Lesbian and Gay History Museum Project, November 12, 1999.

Processing Note

Processed by Noella Natalino in 2004.

Four scrapbooks, three photograph albums, 30 negatives, and 137 photographs were relocated to the Stephen R. Blair Photograph Collection, PH Accession No. 2004-083, on April 22, 2004.

Separated Materials

Material Described Separately: [Stephen R. Blair Photograph Collection \(Accession No. PH2004-083\)](#)

Related Materials

Also available in Special Collections are the Alice B. Theatre Records, Accession No. 4199-001, which include the original recording and transcript of Blair's interview for the Alice B. Theatre Oral History Project.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Biographical information, 1998

Box-folder1/1

Incoming letters, 1944-1945

Box-folder1/2

General correspondence, 1942-1996, undated

Box-folder1/3-4

Subject files

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/5	Alice B. Theatre - <i>Hidden History: True Stories from Seattle's Gay and Lesbian Elders</i>	1992-1996, undated
1/6	Alice B. Theatre Oral History Project - transcript of Blair interview	1992
1/7	Democratic campaigns	1972, 1980
1/8	Duluth Central High School (Minnesota) .See also: Yearbook - Duluth Central High School (Minnesota).	1939, 1941, undated

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Employment		
Box/Folder		
1/9	Medic for Arctic oil rig <i>Kavik</i> #1	undated
Passenger Liners		
Box/Folder		
1/10	Photocopies of photographs	circa 1950s
1/11	Miscellaneous	1947-1950, undated
Box/Folder		
1/12	Miscellaneous	1940, 1946, 1954
Box/Folder		
1/13	<i>An Evening at the Garden of Allah: A Gay Cabaret in Seattle</i> by Don Paulson	1996, undated
1/14	Genealogy information	1941-1943, 1991, undated
1/15	Harvest House	1955-1956
1/16	McCormick, Frank	1919-1925, 1962, 1978, undated
1/17	Military service / military issues	1930, 1955, 1974, 1995, undated
National Union of Marine Cooks and Stewards		
Box/Folder		
1/18	Photocopies of photographs	circa 1950-1959

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1/19	Miscellaneous	1947-1951, undated
	Seattle Men's Chorus	
Box/Folder		
1/20	General correspondence	1980, 1995
1/21	Newsletters: <i>Music Man</i>	1980
1/22	Writings regarding organizational problems	1980
Box:Oversize		
2	Clipping: <i>Seattle Gay News</i> - "The Seattle Men's Chorus Celebrates 10 Years with <i>Reprise</i> "	1990
Box/Folder		
1/23	Miscellany	1980, 1994
Box/Folder		
1/24	United Service Organizations Theater	undated
1/25	U.S. Coast Guard - ineligibility for employment	1951-1954

Speeches and writings, undated

Box-folder1/26

Seattle Gay News, 1996

Box-folder1/27

Yearbook - Duluth Central High School (Minnesota), 1940

Box-folder1/28

Magazine articles, 1975, 1996

Box:oversize2

Artwork, 1960, undated

Box:oversize2

Notes, undated

Box-folder1/29

Miscellany, 1944-1996, undated

Box-folder1/30-31

Ephemera

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	Playbills and programs	
Box/Folder		
1/32	Blair, Stephen	1945-1946, undated
1/33-34	Miscellaneous	1942-1963, 1988-1995, undated
Box/Folder		
1/35	Seattle Chorale	1954-1955, 1957

Clippings

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box:Oversize		
2	Communism and blacklisting	1971, 1987, 1996
Box/Folder		
1/36	Health issues	1988, undated
Box:Oversize		

Container(s)	Description	Dates
2	Milk, Harvey	1978
2	Oil industry	1970, 1989
2	Seattle gay community	1992-1996, undated
Box/Folder		
1/37	Miscellaneous	1970-1974, 1991-1993, undated

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Discrimination in employment--United States
 Gay actors--Washington (State)--Seattle--Archives
 Gay men--Washington (State)--Seattle--Archives
 Gay theater--Washington (State)--Seattle
 Gays and the performing arts--Washington (State)--Seattle
 Gays in the military--United States
 Male singers--Washington (State)--Seattle--Archives
 Men's choral societies--Washington (State)--Seattle

Personal Names :

Blair, Stephen R. (Stephen Richard), 1917-1997--Archives

Corporate Names :

Seattle Men's Chorus

Form or Genre Terms :

Clippings (Books, newspapers, etc.)
 correspondence
 Playbills
 transcripts

Other Creators :

Corporate Names :

Labor Archives of Washington (University of Washington)
 (creator)

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Personal Papers/Corporate Records (University of Washington)

2006 (Last modified: 4/11/2018)



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