



Walter J. Lear papers, 1975-1996 : Ms.Coll.5

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Summary Information

Repository:	John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center
Creator:	Lear, Walter J., (Walter Jay), 1923-2010
Title:	Walter J. Lear papers
ID:	Ms.Coll.5
Date [inclusive]:	1975-1996
Physical Description:	7 Linear Feet
Physical Description:	6 boxes
Physical Location:	Collections 7; Hallway
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	Walter J. Lear (1923-2010) was active in civil rights, LGBT rights, and healthcare reform. Lear was a medical doctor who served as Pennsylvania's Southeast Regional Commissioner for Health Services. The Walter J. Lear papers, 1975-1996, consist primarily of printed materials relating to LGBT rights and HIV/AIDS education. There are also a small amount of materials relating to Lear's membership in various LGBT and healthcare reform organizations.

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Biographical/Historical Note

"Walter J. Lear (1923-2010) was active in progressive health issues since the 1940s, the peace movement since the 1950s, civil rights groups since the early 1960s, and gay community services since 1975. Lear received his Bachelor of Science degree from Harvard College in 1943 and his M.D. from the Long Island College of Medicine in 1946. In 1948, he received his M.S. in Hospital Administration from the Columbia University School of Public Health.

"In 1975, while serving as Pennsylvania's Southeast Regional Commissioner for Health Services, Lear came out publicly. That year, he became involved in campaigns to promote a proposed Philadelphia law banning discrimination against people because of their sexual orientation. He remained active in that fight until City Council's passage of the Gay Rights Bill in 1982. He has co-founded, co-chaired, served on the board of directors or played another key leadership role in dozens of national and local lesbian and

gay, medical, peace/anti-war and socialist/left organizations. Lear also has actively supported progressive political issues from official positions within government agencies and commissions.

"His community activities have included: Chairperson, Gay Public Health Workers Caucus of the American Public Health Association (1975-1978); activist in campaigns for a proposed Philadelphia law banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (1975-1982); member of the Board of Directors, Gay Community Center of Philadelphia/Penguin Place (1975-1991); Pennsylvania State Health Department's official delegate to the Governor's Council for Sexual Minorities (1976-1979); various leadership roles in the National Gay Health Coalition (1976-1981); Co-Chair, National Planning Conference of the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights (1979); organizer of Lavender Left of Philadelphia (mid 1970s-1980s) and member of the national organization's coordinating committee (1980s); founding organizer (1980) and Board member (1983-1986) of the Lesbian and Gay Health Program of Philadelphia / Philadelphia Community Health Alternatives; co-organizer, First National AIDS Forum (1982); co-founder, Philadelphia AIDS Task Force (1982); Commissioner, Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (1984-1988 - first openly gay member); member, Philadelphia Mayor's Advisory Committee on Health Emergencies (1986-1987); Chairperson, Committee on AIDS, Medical Care Section, American Public Health Association (1986-1988); Executive Secretary, Philadelphia Contingent to the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights (1987); member, National Advisory Committee to the Lavender Stripe of Jesse Jackson presidential campaign (1988).

"Lear's marriage (1945-1952) produced two children. He has been with his life-companion, James F. Payne, since 1953. In the 1980s, following his last public health job, Lear dedicated himself full-time to historical research and writing about the U.S. Health Left, 1875 to the present.

Bibliography:

Quoted text from: Kelley, Teri. Finding aid for "Walter J. Lear papers, 1987-1988," July 19, 1995. John J. Wilcox Jr. LGBT Archives of Philadelphia, SC 0005.

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Scope and Content Note

This collection consists primarily of newsletters, newspaper clippings, and pamphlets on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) rights and HIV/AIDS education. There are also some newspapers collected by Lear. The collection features a small amount of original correspondence between Lear and HIV/AIDS organizations. There is a large amount of materials relating to the National Gay Men's Health Coalition, including some minutes, and a significant quantity of materials relating to the William Way Center (under its previous names "Penguin Place" and the "Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Philadelphia").

Of special interest are 1988 Jesse Jackson campaign materials. Items include "Gays and Lesbians for Jackson" buttons, a banner, notes, correspondence, flyers for events, campaign brochures and other documents. These provide a look at Lear's appointment to the National Lesbian/Gay Advisory Committee to the Lavender Stripe of the Jesse Jackson Campaign. They are of particular interest to

researchers looking at the relationship between gay organizers, elected officials, and the electoral process.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Conditions Governing Access Note

Contact John J. Wilcox Jr. LGBT Archives of Philadelphia for information about accessing this collection.

Immediate Source of Acquisition Note

Gift of Walter Lear, 1992.

Processing Information Note

Summary descriptive information on this collection was compiled in 2011-2012 as part of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (HCI-PSAR), using data provided by the John J. Wilcox Jr. LGBT Archives of Philadelphia. The HCI-PSAR project was funded by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This is a preliminary finding aid. No physical processing, rehousing, reorganizing, or folder listing was done in the HCI-PSAR project.

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Related Materials

Related Archival Materials Note

Medical Heritage Center: Left-Wing Physicians Collection, 1993-2006, Spec.201107.Left Wing.

University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book & Manuscript Library: Maternity Care Coalition Records, 1960-2009, Ms. Coll. 760.

University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book & Manuscript Library: Medical Committee for Human Rights Records, 1963-2004, Ms. Coll. 641.

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Controlled Access Headings

- AIDS (Disease)
- Gay activists
- Gay men
- Gays
- Health care reform
- HIV infections
- Homosexuality
- Philadelphia (Pa.)
- Sexual minorities
- Lear, Walter J., (Walter Jay), 1923-2010