



Donna Mae Stemmer photographs and ephemera, 1981-2010 : Ms.Coll.42

Finding aid prepared by John Anderies on

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Summary Information

Repository:	John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center
Creator:	Stemmer, Donna Mae, 1933-2015
Title:	Donna Mae Stemmer photographs and ephemera
ID:	Ms.Coll.42
Date [inclusive]:	1981-2010
Physical Description:	4 Linear Feet (5 boxes)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	Donna Mae Stemmer was a lawyer, Korean War veteran, fashion icon, and trans activist from Pennsauken, New Jersey. The collection includes thousands of 3 1/2 x 5 in. and 4 x 6 in. color photographs of Stemmer dressed in nearly as many outfits, as well as personal documents, LGBT material, ephemera, and two articles of clothing from Stemmer's wardrobe.

Preferred Citation

Donna Mae Stemmer photograph and ephemera collection, 1981-2010, John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center, Philadelphia, PA.

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Biographical / Historical

Donna Mae Stemmer was a lawyer, Korean War veteran, fashion icon, and trans activist from Pennsauken, New Jersey. Born April 29, 1933 in Brooklyn, New York, to parents Ellen Johnston and Joseph Stemmer, she was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and Temple University Law School. Stemmer served in the U.S. Army for more than 30 years, serving in the Korean War, and attaining the rank of Lt. Colonel. She was decorated 25 times, including receiving a Distinguished Service Award and Commemorative Medal in 2008. She was known in the Philadelphia area for her long-time support of the City of Brotherly Love Softball League (CBLSL) and was a member of the Key West Wolves team. Recognized for her myriad cheerleader outfits, she received the CBLSL Steve Lehman Community Service Award in 2008. Stemmer lobbied Arlington National Cemetery in 2008 for the right to use her female name on her headstone, but her petition was denied. She died on June 23, 2015

and is buried in Brigadier General William C. Doyle Memorial Cemetery for veterans in Wrightstown, N.J. where her tombstone is marked by her name given at birth.

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Scope and Contents

The Donna Mae Stemmer collection includes thousands of 3 1/2 x 5 in. and 4 x 6 in. color photographs of Stemmer dressed in nearly as many outfits. Mostly taken in her home, they highlight Stemmer's vast wardrobe and love for fashion. In addition to these, there are also photographs from bars, restaurants, pride parades and sporting events. Some photos include friends of Stemmer as well as performers in drag. A small number of photos are identified including those taken at the "Westbury Bar and Restaurant," the "Venture Inn," "Roxy's birthday," the "Lambda Awards," "Les Miz," the "Fuschia Gown Trial," "Atlantic Citya," "Karley's," "Prom," "Halloween at Venture Inn," "New Hope," and "George and Maria's Wedding." Most of those which are identified are from 1987-1988. Some photographs are time and date stamped giving a range of 1999-2010. A small number of photographs are from as early as 1981. In addition to the photographs there are some personal documents, LGBT material, ephemera, and two articles of clothing selected from Stemmer's wardrobe at Philly AIDS Thrift following her death.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research use.

Conditions Governing Use

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Related Materials

Related Materials

Additional photographs from Stemmer's collection and parts of her wardrobe are maintained by Philly AIDS Thrift, Philadelphia, PA.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Korean War, 1950-1953 -- Veterans
- Photographs
- Transgender people
- Stemmer, Donna Mae, 1933-2015
- City of Brotherly Love Softball League (Philadelphia, Pa.)

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances	
Personal documents (including copy of birth certificate, benefits information, and a letter requesting suppliers of "petticoats and ruffled lingerie"), 1995-2000	Box 1	Folder 1
LGBT material (flyers and brochures on City of Brotherly Love Softball League, the Millennium March on Washington, AIDS Walk Philly, the Jaded Lounge, and gays in the military), 2000, undated	Box 1	Folder 2
Clippings (from <i>Au Courant</i> , <i>Philadelphia Gay News</i> , <i>Philadelphia Bulletin</i> , and the <i>Courier Post</i> , including article about transgender woman Leslie Phillips, who Stemmer represented in <i>Phillips v. Plotkin</i> (12 Pa. D. & C. 3d 54 (1979)), 1978-2008, undated	Box 1	Folder 3
Oversized photographs, 2000, undated	Box 1	Folder 4
Negatives, undated	Box 1	Folder 5-8
Photographs, 1981-2010, undated	Box 2-4	

Clothing (red leather jacket with "Donna Mae" emblazoned in rhinestones, beaded "Bingo Queen" cap), undated

Box 5