

**The New York Public Library
Stephen A. Schwarzman Building
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

Guide to the
Arthur Bell papers
1970-1978

Forms part of the International Gay Information Center (IGIC) Collection

Compiled by John Stinson, December 1990

Summary

Creator: Bell, Arthur, 1933-1984

Title: Arthur Bell papers, 1970-1978

Size: 1.89 linear feet (5 boxes)

Source: International Gay Information Center, 1988

Abstract: Arthur Bell was a journalist, writer for the VILLAGE VOICE, and gay rights activist. His papers include research notes, scripts and clippings of articles, minutes, memoranda and correspondence. The papers reflect his career as a free-lance journalist reporting on the gay liberation movement. Included is a script of an interview with Christopher Isherwood and papers relating to his activities as chairman of the publicity committee of the Gay Activists Alliance.

Access: Apply to Manuscripts and Archives Division for access at <http://www.nypl.org/mssref>.

Preferred citation: Arthur Bell papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Creator history

Arthur Bell was a journalist, writer for the VILLAGE VOICE, and gay rights activist. Arthur Bell (1939-84) writer, journalist and gay rights activist, was born in Brooklyn, New York. His father, Samuel Bell, was a manufacturer of children's clothing. His mother, Claire Bodan Bell, was a designer. While he was in junior high school the family removed to Montreal. Returning to New York in 1960, Bell became director of publicity for children's books at the Viking Press (1960-68) and afterwards at Random House (1968-70). Joining the struggle for gay rights, he was one of the founders of the Gay Activists Alliance and served for a time as chairman of its publicity committee corresponding under the pseudonym "Arthur Irving". In 1970, having accepted an offer by Simon & Schuster to write a book about his experiences in the gay liberation movement, Bell resigned from publishing to devote full time to writing. A year later he also ceased his activities with the Gay Activists Alliance. In addition to his book *Dancing the Gay Lib Blues: A Year in the Gay Liberation Movement* (Simon & Schuster, 1971) Bell also published: *Kings Don't Mean a Thing: The John Knight Murder Case* (Morrow, 1978). During the last decade of his life he wrote many articles for the gay and mainstream press including *Gay Power* (for which he wrote a bi-weekly column), *Gay*, *Esquire*, *Playboy* and the *New York Times*. From 1970 he was a feature writer and columnist ("Bell Tells") for the *Village Voice*. In his reporting on the gay movement Bell was known for his lively, highly personalized, almost novelistic style which he proposed as an alternative to what he regarded as a lackluster journalism then in use.

Scope and content note

The bulk of the papers (1970-78) which are contained in 4 boxes consists of a topical file of research notes, background papers, scripts and clippings of his articles and correspondence reflecting his work as a free-lance journalist reporting on the gay liberation movement. The remainder of the collection consists of papers relating to his work with the Gay Activists Alliance. Included in the topical file is a script of an interview with the English born novelist Christopher Isherwood which Bell conducted in 1972.

Correspondents include Fitzroy Davis, Herbert French, Christopher Isherwood, and Morty Manford.

The papers relating to the Gay Activists Alliance include a file of minutes (May-Dec.1970) of meetings (including some minutes in Bell's own hand); correspondence by Bell as chairman of GAA's publicity committee, internal memoranda and other papers relative to the activities of GAA mainly during the period (1970-71) of Bell's active participation. In order to protect the privacy of individual persons some papers have been restricted.

Key terms

Subjects

Gay liberation movement

Gay men -- New York (State) -- New York

Names

Bell, Arthur, 1933-1984

Gay Activists Alliance

Occupations

Journalists -- New York (N.Y.)

Titles

Village Voice

Container list

I. Topical file

b.90 A-G

b.91 G-I

b.92 L-P

II. Gay Activists Alliance

b.92 Unsorted

b.93 Unsorted