

LGBT-089 Walter J. Lear Collection

LGBT Center of Central PA History Project
Archives and Special Collections
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COLLECTION REGISTER

Name:	Lear, Walter J.	LGBT-089
Material:	Papers and Photographs (1976 – 2008, 2010, 2018)	
Volume:	.25 linear feet (1 document box)	
Donation:	Donated by John Barns, 2018	
Usage:	These materials have been donated without restrictions on usage.	
Processor:	Sarah Wakefield, May 2022	
Support:	Funding to process this collection was provided by donors to the LGBT Center of Central PA History Project.	

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Born on May 4, 1923, in Brooklyn, NY, Walter J. Lear was a physician and activist for healthcare reform and LGBTQ+ rights. He received his B.S. from Harvard in 1943, his M.D. from Long Island College of Medicine in 1946, and his M.S. in Hospital Administration from Columbia University School of Public Health in 1948. Lear came out in January of 1976 in the first issues of the *Philadelphia Gay News*.

Lear held many public health positions in Pennsylvania including, but not limited to, Deputy City Health Commissioner for Philadelphia (1964), State Regional Health Commissioner (1971), and acting executive director of Philadelphia General Hospital. He also founded the Institute of Social Medicine and Community Health (circa 1975) and was one of the four founders of the Maternity Care Coalition in Philadelphia (1980).

As an activist, Lear's dedication to healthcare and LGBTQ+ rights intersected. His activism included, but is not limited to: Chairperson to the Gay Public Health Workers Caucus of the American Public Health Association (1975-1978); Board of Directors member for the Gay Community Center of Philadelphia, now the William Way Center, (1975-1991); PA State Health Department delegate to the Governor's Council for Sexual Minorities (1976-1979); co-founder of the Mazzoni Center in Philadelphia

(1979); co-founder the Philadelphia AIDS Task Force (1982); and the first openly gay member of the Philadelphia Human Relations Commission (1984-1988).

Lear passed away in 2010.

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The contents of this collection are organized into six series: Context of Collection, Correspondence, Photographs, Scholarship, Recognition Events, and Miscellaneous.

The Context of Collection series contains a document explaining materials in this collection and Walter Lear's life in general. The Correspondence Series, which is the largest, is comprised of letters from Walter Lear to John Barns, a local LGBTQ+ activist in Central PA and Lear's lover and friend. The Photographs series contain photos from seminars that Lear attended, as well as two miscellaneous photos. The Scholarship series contains papers and presentations written and presented by Lear. The Recognition Events series contains invitations and newspaper articles for Lear's birthday celebrations, and an obituary and memorial program. The Miscellaneous series contains a newsletter from the U.S. Health Left History Center, and a flyer announcement for the Lear Fellowship, created by Lear and given to students studying Medical History.

For more materials related to Walter J. Lear, please see:

Walter J. Lear papers, 1975-1996, John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.

Walter Lear Collection, 1944 – 1963, Joan E. Lynaugh Archives and Special Collections, Barbara Bates Center for the Study of The History of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania.

COLLECTION INVENTORY

Series 1 Context of Collection

- 1.01 "Collection of Documents Relating to my Life Knowing Dr. Walter Lear" –
Feb. 2018

Series 2 Correspondence

2.01 Walter Lear to John Barns

- 2.01.01 Jul. 31, 1978
Aug. 21, 1980
Aug. 25, 1981
2.01.02 Aug. 16, 1982
Jul. 11, 1988
Feb. 8, 1989

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2.01 Walter Lear to John Barns (cont.)

- 2.01.03 Jul. 21, 1989
Apr. 13, 1991
Feb. 28, 1992
- 2.01.04 Mar. 15, 1992
May 7, 1992
[Dec.] 1992
- 2.01.05 Jun. 1, 1993
Jul. 10, 1994
May 23, 1995
- 2.01.06 Dec. 1996
Sep. 8, 2000
Mar. 30, 2001
- 2.01.07 Sept. 8, 2001
Dec. 2001
Mar. 12, 2002
- 2.01.08 Jan. 31, 2003
Mar. 10, 2004
Aug. 25, 2004
- 2.01.09 Dec. 2005
Aug. 8, 2006
Jul. 30, 2008
- 2.01.10 Jun. 2008
- 2.01.11 Sep. 19, year unknown
Jun. 13, year unknown
Sunday, date/year unknown

2.02 Miscellaneous

- 2.02.01 John Mosteller to John Barns - Jun. 2, 2010

LGBT-089 Walter J. Lear Collection (cont.)

Series 3 Photographs

3.01 American Public Health Association Seminar, Miami, FL – [1976]

- 3.01.01 “Heterosexuality Can it be Cured?” poster sign, far away
“Heterosexuality Can it be Cured?” poster sign, close up
“Etiology, Medical Hazards, and Mental Illness” section, close up
“Treatments/Cures” section, close up
Full Poster set up
Unidentified Man in front of the “Etiology” section
[Walter Lear] in front of poster
[Walter Lear] and unidentified person in front of poster
Six Unidentified people at poster
Two Unidentified people in at desk in front of poster
Two Unidentified people sitting at table
Three Unidentified people in front of poster
Two Unidentified people in front of a “We Are Your Children” poster

3.02 Seminar on Sexually Transmitted Diseases – circa 1976

- 3.02.01 [Walter Lear]
Unidentified person with guitar
[Walter Lear] and Unidentified people at window
Two unidentified people hugging
Unidentified person with guitar
[Walter Lear] at window

3.03 Miscellaneous

- 3.03.01 “Fr. Sawdy with Pope during his Home Pilgrimage” – 1992
“Two Photographs [of] Walter Green [receiving] an award at the Friends Meeting House, Philadelphia” – unknown

Series 4 Scholarship

- 4.01 “National Health Care Plan Advocacy Centennial: The Chronology” by Walter J. Lear, handwritten notes on back – circa 2005
4.02 “Social Justice—The Original Foundation of Pediatrics and its Continuing Inspiration” by Walter J. Lear, paper and poster – Apr. 18, 2007
4.03 “The Walter J. Lear U.S. Health Activism History Collection of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania” pamphlets – undated
4.04 “War is Not Healthy for Children and Other Living Things” by Walter J. Lear – undated

LGBT-089 Walter J. Lear Collection (cont.)

Series 5 In Remembrance

- 5.01 Invitation to a Dinner and Toast for Walter J. Lear's 80th Birthday –
May 22, 2003
- 5.02 "Celebrate with Walter Lear" Pamphlet – Apr. 28 - May 4, 2008
- 5.03 "Activist Walter Lear Turns 85," *Philadelphia Gay News* – May 2 - 8, 2008
- 5.04 "Walter J. Lear, 1923-2010: Gay Official Who Opened a Door in Phila. In 1976"
Newspaper Article – after May 29, 2010
- 5.05 Four "Celebrating the Life of Walter J. Lear: May 4, 1923, May 29, 2010"
Memorial Programs – Jun. 19, 2010

Series 6 Miscellaneous

- 6.01 "News and Views from the U.S. Health Left History Center, the Institute of Social
Medicine and Community Health" Newsletter – Oct. 2008
- 6.02 "Announcing the Lear Fellowships for Medical History Students," flyer –
unknown