
Guide to the Robert G. DeSantis Papers, 1971-1974

Accession number: 94-4

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

San Francisco, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Robert G. DeSantis Papers,

Date (inclusive): 1971-1974

Accession number: 94-4

Creator: DeSantis, Robert G.

Extent: .85 linear feet in 2 boxes

Repository: The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

San Francisco, California.

Shelf location: Housed at the [James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center](#) of the main branch of the San Francisco Public Library. See [GLHS and SFPL agreement](#).

Language: English

Acquisition

The papers of Robert G. DeSantis (#94-4) were donated by DeSantis in 1994.

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

Copyright to unpublished manuscript materials has been transferred to the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California.

Audio-Visual Materials

There is one picture of DeSantis.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Robert G. DeSantis Papers, 94-4, The Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California.

Biography

Robert G. DeSantis was a member of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) of Los Angeles in its beginning years. The MCC was the first lesbian and gay church, founded in 1970 by the Reverend Troy Perry.

In 1971 DeSantis began classes at the Samaritan Bible Seminary of the MCC (he was officially accepted into the program in 1972). After graduating from the seminary, he became an exhorter for the MCC. In 1974 he was appointed the Acting Chaplain of the San Quentin Prison Ministry by the US Board of Prison Ministry. The term "Acting Chaplain" was used by the MCC to describe his role as an unlicensed minister. The extent of time he served as the prison ministry as well as his future involvement with the MCC is unknown.

During the early 1970's DeSantis kept limited correspondence with several national evangelistic organizations such as the ministry of the Reverend Billy Graham. He also kept correspondence with California Assemblyman Willie Brown regarding the 'consenting adults' bills AB 437 and AB 470.

Scope and Content

The Robert G. DeSantis papers (.85 linear feet) document the religious career development of an individual who aspired to become a member of the MCC hierarchy from 1971 to 1974. The papers also document his involvement with the prison ministry and his personal correspondence with gay prisoners throughout California. The papers are divided into three series; the prison ministry and prisoner correspondence, correspondence and Seminary notes.

The prison ministry notes include administrative papers concerning the appointment of DeSantis and his correspondence with the US Board of Prisons Ministry, pamphlets of religious support organizations established at San Quentin, newsletters, papers collected from the 1974 Stonewalls Prison Conference, and personal correspondence between DeSantis and prisoners from various prison facilities throughout California. The prison papers are organized chronologically.

The personal correspondence between DeSantis and inmates from various prisons provides some of the most useful information in this collection. Letters written by Clem Bassett, Herbert Hay, Harry Lieble, and Bill Thiel give personal accounts of the experiences of gay inmates. The most interesting and disturbing papers are to be found in the letters written by Gary Keller and Ron Rose who maintained a love affair in the psychiatric facility of Atascadero. Their letters to DeSantis portray the violent discrimination that patients may have suffered at the hands of hospital employees after they openly acknowledged their homosexuality. The letters describe an incident, for instance, where Keller had been forced unconscious by a seizure and was awakened by a night guard who was kicking him relentlessly and accusing him of having sex with Rose. Keller said he was prevented later from taking his seizure medicine as punishment for the disturbance.

The professional portfolio of DeSantis, as well as his notes on the Samaritan Bible Seminary are useful for portraying the structure, ideology and hierarchy of the MCC. The seminary notes which are the last papers of the collection give an extensive description of the classroom content which was being taught at the MCC. Psychological theory is used in conjunction with Biblical principles to construct a Christian ideology that is both traditional and pro-gay. The notes are arranged by class subject in chronological order.

Materials Removed from the Collection

Six inches of pamphlets, propaganda and newsletters for the national and Los Angeles MCC.

Related Collections

Subject files: MCC

Prison Files

Box Box 1 **San Quentin Ministry Notes and Papers 1971-1974**
National Ministry Notes and Papers 1971-1975
Correspondence with California Prisoners:
 Baldwin, Ronald E. 1975
 Bassett, Clem 1975
 Burkart, Nickey J. 1974-1975
 Collier, Charles E. 1974
 Combs, Dan 1975
 Dudley, Timothy E. 1974-1975
 Fairchild, Henry T. 1974-1975
 Hay, Herbert D. 1974-1975
 Keller, Gary 1973
 Lawrence, Everett C. 1975
 Lawrence, Scott C. 1973-1974
 Lieble, Harry 1974
 McCarroll, Ellis 1975
 Rose, Ronald 1973-1975
 Thiel, Bill 1974-1975
Prison Ministry Monthly Progress Notes 1974
Stonewalls Prison Conference, 1974
San Quentin Local Newsletters:
 Moto 1974-1975
 The Cellmate 1974-1975
 The Vacavalley Star 1974-1975

Correspondence

Box Box 1

Willie Brown: AB437 and AB470 (consenting adults bills, 1971-72)
Billy Graham, Leroy Jenkins, Church of the Resurrection
Personal & MCC Professional Correspondence & Related Materials

MCC Samaritan Seminary Notes

Box Box 1 **Rites, Sacraments**
 Sermons

Box Box 2 **Hose, Rev. John. Church Administration, 1971**
 Phloen, Rev. Rich. The Message of the Prophets, 1971
 Harrison, Rev. Roger. John's Gospel, 1971
 Callaway, Rev. Ted. History of Christian Thought, 1971
 Practical Theology, 1972
 Hetz, Rev. Dick. Sermon Preparation, 1972
 Pederson, Rev. Don. The Epistles, 1972
 Perry, Rev. Troy. Exhorters Class, 1972
 Hauser, Rev. Dwaine E. PHD. Life and Teachings of Christ, 1972
 Phloen, Rev. Richard. Survey of the Old Testament, 1972
 Pederson, Rev. Don. History of the Christian Church, 1972
 Rev. Hood? Pastoral Counseling, 1972-1973
 Harrison, Rev. Roger. Survey of the New Testament, 1972-1973
 Hetz, Rev. Dick. Pastoral Care and Field Work, 1973
 Perry, Rev. Troy. Current Christian Problems, 1973
 Fisher, Rev. Bob. Homiletics, 1973
 Communicant's Class
 Sandmire, Rev. James. The Gospels, 1973

Photos of DeSantis located in Photo Room.