

---

## Finding aid of the AIDS/ARC Vigil Records

### Collection number: 1991-05

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society  
San Francisco, California

Processed by:

Josue Hurtado and Jessica Moll

Date Completed:

July 2006

Encoded by:

Josue Hurtado and Rebekah Kim

© 2007 The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society. All rights reserved.

---

### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** AIDS/ARC Vigil Records

**Dates:** 1985-1993

**Collection number:** 1991-05

**Creator:** AIDS/ARC Vigil

**Collection Size:** 4.25 Linear Feet 5 manuscript boxes, 1 carton, and 1 oversized box

**Repository:** Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society  
San Francisco, California 94105

**Abstract:** The ARC/AIDS Vigil began on October 27, 1985, when Steve Russell and Bert Franks chained themselves to the Federal Building on United Nations Plaza in San Francisco. The group was protesting the government's inactivity in respect to the AIDS crisis. This collection consists of records, notebooks and photographs documenting the first several years of this continual protest vigil.

**Physical location:** Stored at the Archives of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society in San Francisco, California.

**Languages:** Languages represented in the collection: English

### Access

Collection open for research.

### Publication Rights

Copyright to unpublished manuscript materials has been transferred to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

### Preferred Citation

AIDS/ARC Vigil Records, 1991-05, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

### Acquisition Information

Donated by Larry Paradis, Gary Harmon and Randy Lane in 1991, with an accretion added by William Davis in 1994.

### Organizational History

The ARC/AIDS Vigil began on October 27, 1985, when Steve Russell and Bert Franks chained themselves to the Federal Building on United Nations Plaza in San Francisco. A group of supporters gathered to protest the government's inactivity in respect to the AIDS crisis. Thereafter a dedicated group of vigil "family members" maintained the vigil site for twenty-four hours a day every day for the next several years. These men and women slept in tents or on the floor (or on an outdoor bed that blocked the doors of the federal building) and staffed a table that provided educational information and support to the community. They cooked in a well-equipped kitchen under a tarp, and celebrated holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas with outdoor banquets.

---

The Vigil set out six "Moral Appeals" which were listed on a large sign by their table: 1) an appeal for a "Manhattan Project," the goal of which would be to find a cure for HIV and to prevent the spread of HIV; 2) an appeal to the government to recognize AIDS-Related conditions (ARC) and HIV infection as critical dimensions of the AIDS crisis; 3) an appeal to the FDA to allow American physicians to prescribe treatments for ARC, AIDS, and symptomatic HIV infection available to their colleagues in other countries; 4) an appeal to government officials to publicly condemn AIDS-related discrimination; 5) an appeal to Congress to abide by the recommendations of the National Commission on AIDS; and 6) an appeal to the CDC, the NIH, and to doctors to establish proper and equal treatment protocols for the special medical needs of people living with AIDS/HIV.

Among the core Vigil members were: Harvey Mauer, Secretary; William Davis, Treasurer; Richard "Smokey" Lorenzo; Gary Harmon; John Belskus; Frank Richter; Gene Harris; Evan Durant; Jay Young; Randy Lane; Bert Franks; and Steve Russell. On April 3, 1990, Vigil members signed a revocable use agreement with the city of San Francisco for the use of their space in the UN Plaza.

### **Scope and Content of Collection**

The ARC/AIDS Vigil Records consists of journals, logs, correspondence, internal memoranda, ephemera, photographs and audiocassettes produced by the participants and organizers of the ARC/AIDS Vigil in San Francisco. The materials document the organization's attempt to bring attention to the plight of people living with AIDS and to convince the government to spend more money on finding a cure for the disease. Of particular note are the many letters that Vigil members sent to various local and national political leaders, including former California Governor Deukmajian, (then) Mayor of San Francisco Diane Feinstein, Presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush. There are also many photographs of the Vigil events and members.

This collection provides an example of one of the many "street level" direct-action oriented groups that emerged in the early days of the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco. The urgency and dedication of these protestors reflects the period in the AIDS crisis when the number of persons with AIDS was rising exponentially each year while most government agencies were slow to respond. These records illuminate both the personal and political challenges faced by these protestors.

The collection is divided into 9 series:

- 1. Founding Documents
- 2. Meetings
- 3. Finances
- 4. Journals/Logs
- 5. Media Coverage
- 6. Lobbying
- 7. Correspondence
- 8. Ephemera
- 9. Photographs/Audio.
- 10. Subject Files

#### Series 1. Founding Documents, 1986-1990

This series contains drafts of the ARC/AIDS Vigil's by-laws, as well as documents providing an overview of the Vigil and the cause for which they were protesting. Also included is the Revocable Use Agreement the Vigil signed with the City of San Francisco.

#### Series 2. Meetings, 1985-1989

The Meetings series contain minutes, reports and notes from meetings of the organizing committee behind the Vigil. These materials provide a picture of the organizing that went into maintaining the Vigil over the several years of its existence. This series is organized chronologically.

#### Series 3. Finances, 1986-1989

This series consists of materials relating to the financial and fundraising operations behind the vigil including receipts, lists of deposits, petty fund ledgers, IOUs, and summaries of weekly expenditures.

#### Series 4. Journals/Logs, 1985-1987

The Journals/Logs series contains bound and unbound logs and journals that were kept at the Vigil site. The entries in these logs consist of messages for Vigil members, notes, suggestions, reflections, news clippings, and incident reports. These logs cover the years 1986 and 1987 and shed light on what it was like to be a part of the Vigil.

#### Series 5. Media Coverage, 1985-1989

The Media Coverage series consists of press releases, articles and clippings about the Vigil, as well as a "Reference Manual" providing background on the Vigil and its members.

#### Series 6. Lobbying, 1986-1990

---

The Lobbying series consists of materials relating to lobbying, protests, and other activities carried out by Vigil members. Among the materials is a petition with hundreds of signatures calling for a "Manhattan Project" to find an AIDS cure, documents from the March 1986 march on Washington DC, and various materials relating to other AIDS-related causes such as needle exchanges, housing discrimination, and treatment.

Series 7. Correspondence, 1985-1992

The Correspondence series is organized first topically, then chronologically. The first folder contains letters of support received from various individual and organizations from around the country. The next two folders contain correspondence from Project Director, William Davis, and Secretary, Lance Hunt. The Davis materials consist mostly of correspondence with city and state representatives, letters of support, and letters to the editor of various newspapers. Lance Hunt's materials also contain memorial lists of persons related to the Vigil who passed away, a note book with notes from meetings, and various items of ephemera, including a program from the 1992 inauguration of San Francisco Mayor Frank Jordan. The remaining folders are arranged chronologically and contain a broad range of correspondence to and from the Vigil and its members, including letters from California Governor Deukmajian, Mayor of San Francisco Diane Feinstein, United States Senators Alan Cranston and Pete Wilson, California State Senator Roberti, and California State Assemblywomen K. Jacqueline Speier. There are also several letters addressed to Presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush

Series 8. Ephemera, 1985-1991

The Ephemera series contains flyers, posters, handbills, leaflets, and miscellaneous ephemera all produced by or related to ARC/AIDS Vigil. Many of these items were passed out at the Vigil site.

Series 9. Photographs/Audio 1986-1990

The Photographs/Audio series consists of color and black and white photographs taken between October 1985 and April 1990. Most of these photographs are from 1985 and 1986. The original order in which the albums were donated has been maintained.

The first photo album includes pictures of a demonstration at Los Gatos Christian Church during the peninsula march for Tom Nolan during his run for supervisor; the Vigil table and bed chained to the Federal Building; Gary Harmon at a special meal; the Vigil's participation in the 1986 Pride Parade; a Bikeathon's visit to the Vigil. The Second photo album contains pictures of the ARC/AIDS Vigil Rally for Life on December 7, 1985; a road trip to Los Angeles where Vigil members spoke in front of the Senate Health Committee; Holiday Pictures of the Vigil in 1985; the 1985 Hunger Strike outside the San Francisco Federal Building. The Third and fourth photo album contain black and white pictures of the memorial wall of names, as well as color photographs of the Vigils six month anniversary.

Among the rest of the photographs in this series are color and black and white images of the following: the Vigil site; protests; World AIDS Day; various Vigil members. Susan Liebhaber and Sheila Tully took many of the photographs.

Also included in the collection is an oversized (14" by 17") scrapbook created by Sheila Tully containing black and white 8" by 10", 11" by 14", and 11" by 17" photographs, as well as miscellaneous documents including the "Six Moral Appeals" of the Vigil. The photographs are mostly portraits of Vigil members, as well as pictures from the third anniversary of the Vigil. There are also photographs from the memorial service of John Belskus, the "Die In" on World AIDS Awareness Day on December 1, 1989, and the signing of the Use Agreement with the City of San Francisco on April 3, 1990.

In addition to these photographs there are three audiocassettes in which Gary Harmon describes the four photo albums. In interviews conducted by Bill Walker of the GLBTHS Harmon recounts detailed stories about his and other Vigil members' lives during the ARC/AIDS Vigil.

Series 10. Subject Files, 1986-1990

This series is arranged chronologically. This series consists of materials collected by Vigil members on AIDS, including memoirs, proposals, reports and studies. Subjects covered include funding, healthcare, legislation, the Presidential Commission on the HIV Epidemic, prisons and public policy. Researchers should note that this series may include some materials produced by Vigil members.

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

AIDS

San Francisco (Calif.)

Persons With AIDS

Demonstrations

**Related Material**

AIDS Healing Alliance Records, 1991-06

Randy Alfred Papers, 1991-24

---

Asian/Pacific AIDS Coalition Records, 1996-24  
Campaign for Responsible AIDS Action Records, 1995-26  
Tomas Fabregas Papers, 1996-44  
Forget-Me-Nots Records, 1989-10  
Sheldon Ramsdell Papers, 1996-28  
Dan Turner Papers, 1990-10

**Separated Material**

Items removed from the collection came from two main sources: newspaper clippings and ephemera. The items removed total approximately five boxes and included the following materials:

Clippings: From the San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco Examiner, and other national newspapers, as well as mainstream magazines.

Ephemera: Flyers, handbills and other ephemera collected by members of the ARC/AIDS Vigil. Most of the ephemera is related to AIDS activism and awareness or other GLBT-related issues, but was not produced by or about the ARC/AIDS Vigil. Where appropriate these items have been re-filed in the GLBTHS Ephemera Collection.

Many routine financial documents such as receipts, and IOUs were also removed, but representative sample of these materials were kept in the Finances series.

**Series 1. Founding Documents 1986-1990**

**Physical Description:** 1 folder

**Series Description**

This series contains drafts of the ARC/AIDS Vigil's by-laws, as well as documents providing an overview of the Vigil and the cause for which they were protesting. Also included is the Revocable Use Agreement the Vigil signed with the City of San Francisco.

Box: Folder 1: 1      **1986**

**Series 2. Meetings 1985-1989**

**Physical Description:** 4 folders

**Series Description**

This series contain minutes, reports and notes from meetings of the organizing committee behind the Vigil. These materials provide a picture of the organizing that went into maintaining the Vigil over the several years of its existence. This series is organized chronologically.

Box: Folder 1: 2

Box: Folder 1: 3

Box: Folder 1: 4

Box: Folder 1: 5

**Series 3. Finances 1986-1989**

**Physical Description:** 3 folders

**Series Description**

This series consists of materials relating to the financial and fundraising operations behind the vigil including receipts, lists of deposits, petty fund ledgers, IOUs, and summaries of weekly expenditures.

Box: Folder 1: 6     **1986**  
Box: Folder 1: 7     **1987**  
Box: Folder 1: 8     **1989**

**Series 4. Journals/Logs 1985-1987**

**Physical Description:** 11 folders

**Series Description**

This series contains bound and unbound logs and journals that were kept at the Vigil site. The entries in these logs consist of messages for Vigil members, notes, suggestions, reflections, news clippings, and incident reports. These logs cover the years 1986 and 1987 and shed light on what it was like to be a part of the Vigil.

Box: Folder 1: 9	<b>1985</b>
Box: Folder 1: 10	<b>1986</b>
Box: Folder 1: 11	<b>1986</b>
Box: Folder 2: 1	<b>October 1986</b>
Box: Folder 2: 2	<b>1987</b>
Box: Folder 2: 3	<b>1987</b>
Box: Folder 2: 4	<b>1987</b>
Box: Folder 2: 5	<b>1986-1987</b>
Box: Folder 2: 6	<b>1987</b>
Box: Folder 2: 7	<b>1987</b>
Box: Folder 2: 8	<b>n.d.</b>

**Series 5. Media Coverage 1985-1989**

**Physical Description:** 3 folders

**Series Description**

This series consists of press releases, articles and clippings about the Vigil, as well as a "Reference Manual" providing background on the Vigil and its members.

Box: Folder 2: 9     **1985-1987**

Box: Folder 2: 10    **1985-1989**

Box: Folder 2: 11    **1985-1986**

**Series 6. Lobbying 1986-1990**

**Physical Description:** 5 folders

**Series Description**

This series consists of materials relating to lobbying, protests, and other activities carried out by Vigil members. Among the materials is a petition with hundreds of signatures calling for a "Manhattan Project" to find an AIDS cure, documents from the March 1986 march on Washington DC, and various materials relating to other AIDS-related causes such as needle exchanges, housing discrimination, and treatment.

Box: Folder 2: 12    **1990**  
Box: Folder 3: 1    **1986**  
Box: Folder 3: 2    **1989**  
Box: Folder 3: 3    **1987-1989**  
Box: Folder 3: 4    **1989**

**Series 7. Correspondence 1985-1992**

**Physical Description:** 8 folders

**Series Description**

This series is organized first topically, then chronologically. The first folder contains letters of support received from various individual and organizations from around the country. The next two folders contain correspondence from Project Director , William Davis, and Secretary, Lance Hunt. The Davis materials consist mostly of correspondence with city and state representatives, letters of support, and letters to the editor of various newspapers. Lance Hunt's materials also contain memorial lists of persons related to the Vigil who passed away, a note book with notes from meetings, and various items of ephemera, including a program from the 1992 inauguration of San Francisco Mayor Frank Jordan. The remaining folders are arranged chronologically and contain a broad range of correspondence to and from the Vigil and its members, including letters from California Governor Deukmajian, Mayor of San Francisco Diane Feinstein, United States Senators Alan Cranston and Pete Wilson, California State Senator Roberti, and California State Assemblywomen K. Jacqueline Speier. There are also several letters addressed to Presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush

Box: Folder 3: 5     **1985-1986**  
Box: Folder 3: 6     **1991-1992**  
Box: Folder 3: 7     **1990-1993**  
Box: Folder 3: 8  
Box: Folder 3: 9  
Box: Folder 3: 10  
Box: Folder 3: 11  
Box: Folder 3: 12

**Series 8. Ephemera 1985-1991**

**Physical Description:** 1 folder

**Series Description**

This series contains flyers, posters, handbills, leaflets, and miscellaneous ephemera all produced by or related to ARC/AIDS Vigil. Many of these items were passed out at the Vigil site.

Box: Folder 3: 13    **1985-1991**

**Series 9. Photographs/Audio 1986-1990****Physical Description:** 2 boxes, 1 oversized box**Series Description**

This series consists of color and black and white photographs taken between October 1985 and April 1990. Most of these photographs are from 1985 and 1986. The original order in which the albums were donated has been maintained. The first photo album includes pictures of a demonstration at Los Gatos Christian Church during the peninsula march for Tom Nolan during his run for supervisor; the Vigil table and bed chained to the Federal Building; Gary Harmon at a special meal; the Vigil's participation in the 1986 Pride Parade; a Bikeathon's visit to the Vigil. The Second photo album contains pictures of the ARC/AIDS Vigil Rally for Life on December 7, 1985; a road trip to Los Angeles where Vigil members spoke in front of the Senate Health Committee; Holiday Pictures of the Vigil in 1985; the 1985 Hunger Strike outside the San Francisco Federal Building. The Third and fourth photo album contain black and white pictures of the memorial wall of names, as well as color photographs of the Vigils six month anniversary.

Among the rest of the photographs in this series are color and black and white images of the following: the Vigil site; protests; World AIDS Day; various Vigil members. Susan Liebhaber and Sheila Tully took many of the photographs. Also included in the collection is an oversized (14" by 17") scrapbook created by Sheila Tully containing black and white 8" by 10", 11" by 14", and 11" by 17" photographs, as well as miscellaneous documents including the "Six Moral Appeals" of the Vigil. The photographs are mostly portraits of Vigil members, as well as pictures from the third anniversary of the Vigil. There are also photographs from the memorial service of John Belskus, the "Die In" on World AIDS Awareness Day on December 1, 1989, and the signing of the Use Agreement with the City of San Francisco on April 3, 1990.

In addition to these photographs there are three audiocassettes in which Gary Harmon describes the four photo albums. In interviews conducted by Bill Walker of the GLBTHS Harmon recounts detailed stories about his and other Vigil members' lives during the ARC/AIDS Vigil.

Box: Folder 4: 1	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 4: 2	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 4: 3	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 4: 4	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 4: 5	<b>1985</b>
Box: Folder 4: 6	<b>1985</b>
Box: Folder 4: 7	<b>30-Nov-85</b>
Box: Folder 4: 8	<b>1985</b>
Box: Folder 4: 9	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 4: 10	<b>1990</b>
Box: Folder 5: 1	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 5: 2	<b>1985</b>
Box: Folder 5: 3	<b>1986</b>
Box: Folder 5: 4	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 5: 5	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 5: 6 - 5:	<b>n.d.</b>
8	
Box: Folder 5: 9	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 6: 1	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 6: 2	<b>1990</b>
Box: Folder 6: 2	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 6: 2	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 6: 2	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 6: 3	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 6: 3	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 6: 3	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 6: 3	<b>n.d.</b>
Box: Folder 6: 3	<b>n.d.</b>
shelf AV Shelf	<b>n.d.</b>

Series 10 **Subject Files 1986-1990**

**Physical Description:** 14 folders

**Series Description**

This series is arranged chronologically. This series consists of materials collected by Vigil members on AIDS, including memoirs, proposals, reports and studies. Subjects covered include funding, healthcare, legislation, the Presidential Commission on the HIV Epidemic, prisons and public policy. Researchers should note that this series may include some materials produced by Vigil members.

- Box: Folder 7: 1     **1986-1986**
- Box: Folder 7: 2     **1987 February 26**
- Box: Folder 7: 3     **1987**
- Box: Folder 7: 4     **1987**
- Box: Folder 7: 5     **1987-1988**
- Box: Folder 7: 6     **1987-1988**
- Box: Folder 7: 7     **1987-1988**
- Box: Folder 7: 8     **1987-1990**
- Box: Folder 7: 9     **1988 March**
- Box: Folder 7: 10    **1988 June 1**
- Box: Folder 7: 11    **1988 April 22**
- Box: Folder 7: 12    **1988**
- Box: Folder 7: 13    **1988**
- Box: Folder 7: 14    **1988**