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LG MS 22 Larry Bliss Collection Finding Aid

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**LARRY BLISS COLLECTION
LG MS 22**

**Total Boxes: 9
Mapcase Drawers: 1
Linear Feet: 8.5**

**By
Maeve Wachowicz
Elizabeth Sistare**

**Portland, Maine
May 2014**

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Administrative Information

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Restrictions on Access: none

Biographical Sketch

Lawrence (Larry) Bliss is a former Democratic Maine state Representative and Senator, and LGBT rights activist. Bliss was born December 29, 1946 in California. He earned his Bachelor's Degrees in History and Political Science as well as a Master's Degree in Urban Public Administration, all from the University of California. Bliss worked as a middle school and high school teacher and coach before becoming Director of Career Services and Professional Life Development at the University of Southern Maine.

From 2000-2008 Bliss served South Portland's 24th district in the Maine House of Representatives and in 2008 Bliss was elected to the Maine Senate, representing the 7th district, which includes South Portland, Cape Elizabeth, and part of Scarborough.

Bliss has also been a member of the Board of Directors of The AIDS Project, the Equity Institute of Maine, the South Portland Citizens for Justice, and the Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance, where he served as Treasurer from 1992-94. He was an advisor to the Equity Fund of the Maine Community Foundation and is a longtime member of the Surfrider Foundation, the Friends of Casco Bay, and the Portland Harbor Museum.

After 20 years in Maine, Bliss returned to California in 2011 to take a job as an administrator at California State University-East Bay outside of San Francisco, where Bliss and his partner, Nolan McCoy, now live with their three children.

Historical Note

Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium

The first Maine Gay Symposium was held in 1974. Every year on one of the UMaine system campuses, organizers brought together representatives from every queer

organization in Maine, giving them an extended opportunity to meet, network, exchange ideas, and socialize during workshops and lectures. The name of the Symposia varied over the years: starting out as “Maine Lesbian and Gay Men’s Symposium,” by 1999 it was called the “Maine Gay-Lesbian-Bi-Trans Symposium.” Celebrating 25 years in 1999, it was the last year the symposium was held.

Maine Won’t Discriminate

Maine Won't Discriminate (MWD) was an organization created to work toward passing LGBT civil rights legislation in Maine and to advocate against/for citizen referenda that would have overturned/sustained such legislation. Major efforts took place in 1995, 1997-98, and 2005 around particular ballot questions. MWD organized (with partner organizations) the No on 1 effort, in opposition to Concerned Maine Families, the Christian Civic League, and the Coalition to End Special Rights, and MWD met with success, as Mainers voted down Question 1 (53.32% to 46.68%) in November 1995. If passed, it would have limited the classes protected by the Maine Human Rights Bill to those already included, thus excluding the possibility of adding sexual orientation – or other new categories – to the list.

Equal Protection/Portland

Equal Protection/Portland (EP/P) was a grassroots volunteer organization formed in Portland, Maine, in 1992 that campaigned to uphold a Human Rights Ordinance passed by Portland’s City Council. The Human Rights Ordinance was drafted and introduced by Portland City Councilor Peter O’Donnell in April of 1992 after 10 hate crimes were perpetrated against homosexuals in Portland in the space of a year. The City Council passed the Human Rights Ordinance on May 12, 1992 by a 7-1 vote, however conservative groups in Portland petitioned to bring the ordinance to a referendum vote in the November 1992 election. Led by James Duran, a member of the Christian Civic League of Maine, the petition drive began hours after the ordinance passed. A group calling itself Concerned Citizens of Portland took up the “Vote Yes” to overturn the ordinance campaign, while EP/P championed the “Vote No” campaign. The two groups held three heated public debates over the issue. Ultimately the ordinance was upheld with a 19,643 to 14,770 vote on November 3, 1992.

South Portland Citizens for Justice

In 1998, a statewide bill in Maine was passed by the legislature and signed by the governor that prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, voters overturned the measure in February of 1998, prompting the city of South Portland, Maine to introduce its own ordinance at the local level. The ordinance was put to a referendum vote and South Portland Citizens for Justice formed to advocate for passage of the measure.

LD 246 – Act to End Discrimination

LD 246 was the anti-discrimination bill proposed in the Maine state legislature in 1993, called “An Act to Prevent Discrimination.” The bill passed and amended the state

human rights law to prohibit discrimination in employment, housing, credit, and public accommodation, based on sexual orientation.

The Matlovich Society

The Matlovich Society was founded in Maine in 1991 by Ron McClinton, a nurse, Vietnam War naval veteran, and hospital administrator. The society met twice a month and routinely had 200 attendees, remaining active throughout the 1990s. McClinton later died of AIDS-related complications at the age of 47.

The society was named for Leonard Matlovich, a gay Vietnam War Veteran and gay rights activist. Matlovich came to prominence in the 1970s when he was discharged from the Air Force for being gay, and sued for reinstatement. In 1975 Matlovich appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine, the first openly gay American to do so. He continued his activism throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and when he was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, Matlovich also began to champion AIDS research. Matlovich died in 1988 at the age of 44 from complications related to HIV/AIDS. His tombstone in the Congressional Cemetery reads: "A Gay Vietnam Veteran. When I was in the military, they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one."

LD 1046 – Amendment to the Maine Human Rights Act

Dubbed the "bathroom bill" when proposed in 2011, this amendment to the Human Rights Act sought to make it legal to limit people to using public single-sex bathroom facilities in accordance with their biological sex instead of their gender. The bill was in response to lawsuits in Maine in previous years that had ruled in favor of transgendered individuals. In 2007, a transgendered woman, Brianna Freeman, used the Ladies' facilities at a Denny's in Auburn, Maine and a fellow patron complained. Management threatened to call the police and insisted that the transgendered woman use the Men's room. Freeman filed a complaint with the Maine Human Rights Commission, who found that she had been discriminated against. In 2010 at an Orono, Maine middle school, the Maine Human Rights Commission again found discrimination had occurred when a male-to-female transgendered student was forbidden from using the girls' bathroom. The bill aimed at restricting bathroom use was ultimately rejected.

Description of the Collection

The Collection contains materials related to Bliss's work in support of the LGBT community in Maine. In particular, there are materials related to events and organizations with which he was involved, including the Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium (materials for the years 1976-77, 1979-81, 1983-88, and 1991); Equal Protection Portland; South Portland Citizens for Justice; the Matlovich Society; Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance; Citizens for a United Portland; and the Spring for Life Art Auction. Materials include press clippings, correspondence, financial records, internal memos and meeting minutes, brochures, posters, event programs, stickers, buttons, VHS cassette tapes, t-shirts, a mug, and other papers. There are also some materials

related to efforts to secure same sex partner benefits for University of Maine employees and LD 246 and LD 1046.

Series 1: Events (1976-1991, undated)

This series is divided into three subseries: 1.1: Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposia;

1.2: AIDS Project events: Spring for Life; and 1.3: Other. Materials for the Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposia include background information, correspondence, and financial records spanning the years 1976-1991. The AIDS Project events includes mostly material on Spring for Life Art Auction, correspondence, artist contracts, and advertisements. Other events include the Stonewall 20 and Stonewall 25 anniversary t-shirts as well as a poster and pamphlet for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Pride Day.

Series 2: Advocacy (1977-2000, undated)

This series is divided into four subseries: 2.1: Equal Protection/Portland; 2.2: South Portland Citizens for Justice; 2.3: Matlovich Society; and 2.4: Other. Materials for Equal Protection Portland include tax and other financial records, t-shirts, videos, campaign plans, news clippings, and posters. Material for South Portland Citizens for Justice includes correspondence, financial records, stationary, news clippings, a t-shirt, and a poster. Materials from the Matlovich Society include by-laws, members lists, news clippings, mailing lists, financial records, and a video. Materials for other advocacy includes t-shirts, videos, Maine Won't Discriminate organization information, newspaper clippings, and a mug.

Series 3: Legislation and Politics (1980-2011, undated)

This series includes a banner, information on LD 1046 – the “Bathroom Bill”, and LD 246 – the “Act to End Discrimination”. The series also contains videos, Scott Cowger re-election material, and information about the efforts to gain benefits for same sex couples for USM employees.

Series 4: Oversize

This series contains materials too large or bulky to fit into regular boxes. Listed within their regular series, they are included here to give their physical location. Materials include a banner, several posters, issues of the Casco Bay Weekly, buttons, and a box of checks.

Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
Series 1.1. Events. Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposia (1976-1991)			
1	1	Symposium # 3: Materials related to Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium III held on April 23-25, 1976 in Portland, including event program, press, "The Gay Cinema" description, history of symposium, correspondence, and financial materials. Folder also includes information about Symposium IV	1976-77
1	2	Symposium # 6: Materials related to Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium VI held on April 7, 1979 in Portland, including event program	1979
1	3	Symposium # 7: Materials related to Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium VII held on April 11-13, 1980 in Orono, including financial information, registration list, correspondence, and other logistical information	1980
1	4	Symposium #8: Materials related to Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium VIII held on May 8-10, 1981 in Portland, including event programs, "Star Gays" program, planning meeting minutes, posters, financial information, and other logistical information	1981-82
1	5	Symposium # 10: Materials related to Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium X held on May 13-15, 1983 in Portland, including event program and announcement	1983
1	6	Symposium # 11: Materials including note on politics in Maine leading up to 1984-85 and "Gay Side Story" script	1983-84
1	7	Symposium #12: Materials related to Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium XII held on May 17-19, 1985 in Portland, including event program, workshop proposals, registration forms, correspondence, and other logistical information	1985
1	8	Symposium #13: Materials related to Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium XIII held on May 23-26, 1986 in Presque Isle, including post-event comments and attendance information	1986

Series 1.1. Events. Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposia (1976-1991) (cont)

Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
1	9	Symposium # 15: Materials related to Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium XV held on May 27-30, 1988 at USM, including correspondence, schedules, press photos, presenter bios, and workshop proposals	1988
1	10	Symposium #15: Evals and Ads, materials related to Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium XV held on May 27-30, 1988 at USM, including correspondence, workshop proposals, marketing materials, an event program, evaluation responses and financial information	1988
1	11	Symposium #15: USM Policies and Procedures: Policies for student organizations at USM; Administrative materials	1976-77, 1979-80, 1988
1	12	Symposium #16: Materials related to Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium XVI held on May 26-29, 1989 at UMPI, including event, program, correspondence, and a handout.	1989
1	13	Symposium #18: Materials related to Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium XVIII held on May 24-27, 1991 at USM, including brochures, programs, flyer, information on workshops, roster of registered attendees, and correspondence	1991
1	14	Symposium #18: Materials related to Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium XVIII held on May 24-27, 1991 at USM, including information about purchasing/purchase orders for ad space in the event programs, evaluations of the event, and bill/receipts	1991
1	15	Symposium #19: Materials related to Maine Lesbian and Gay Men's Symposium XIV, including early correspondence	1991
Series 1.2. Events. The AIDS Project (1990-1997)			
1	16	Spring for Life Art Auction, including, meeting information, press, programs, correspondence, and contracts (The AIDS Project)	1995-1997
2	17	Spring for Life, Artist Contracts	1995
Series 1.2. Events. The AIDS Project (1990-1997) (cont)			

Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
Oversized		Poster: "Spring for Life Art Auction"	1992
Oversized		Poster: "Scrawls of paint deface AIDS exhibit at USM"	undated
2	18	T-shirt: Common Threads (The Names Project)	1990 Sep 21-23
Series 1.3. Other Events (1989-1994)			
2	19	T-shirt: "Stonewall 20: A Generation of Pride, June 25, 1989"	1989
2	20	T-shirt: "Stonewall 20: A Generation of Pride, Lesbian and Gay Pride Boston 1989"	1989
2	21	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Pride Day: poster and pamphlet	1990 Jun 2
2	22	T-shirt: "Stonewall 25 International March. NYC June 26, 1994"	1994
Series 2.1. Equal Protection/Portland (1989-1993)			
3	23	Citizens for a United Portland (Equal Protection/Portland), includes financial records	1992
3	24	Citizens for a United Portland (EPP), includes tax information and other financial records	1993
3	25	Equal Protection Portland, advertisements for events, "Vote No" Stickers, correspondence, newsletters, compilation of photocopied news clippings, background information	1992
3	26	T-shirt: "Vote No! To End Discrimination in Portland"	undated
Oversized		Poster: "Vote No! To End Discrimination in Portland"	undated
8		Video: "Equal Protection Portland Celebration Video"	[1992]
8		Video: "Equal Protection 4 Spots"	1992
Series 2.1. Equal Protection/Portland (1989-1993) (cont)			

Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
3	27	Equal Protection/Portland, Human Rights Campaign, including correspondence, meeting agendas, campaign plan, polling and focus group analysis, a booklet for the "Get Those Hands Into Your Pockets" auction to end discrimination and other information about EPP	1989-1993
3	28	Equal Protection/Portland's Study of other state's human rights campaigns	1989-1993
4	29	EPP News Clippings: Materials related to Equal Rights Portland and their campaign to end discrimination	1992
4	30	Plaque: Roger Baldwin Award presented to Equal Protection Portland from Maine Civil Liberties Union (MCLU)	1993
Oversized		Poster: "Equal Protection Portland Fundraising Events"	1992
Oversized		Poster: "'Get Those Hands Into Your Pockets,' An auction to help end discrimination," EPP event November 1, 1992	1992
Oversized		Framed Award: MLGPA award to Equal Protection/Portland	1993 Feb 27

Series 2.2. South Portland Citizens for Justice (1988-1989)

4	31	South Portland Citizens for Justice information such as correspondence, meeting notes, and financial information and other materials about South Portland Human Rights Ordinance, including material from South Portland City Council, letter head sheets, flyers, and donation envelopes	1998-99
4	32	South Portland for Justice News Clippings	1988
4	33	T-Shirt: South Portland for Justice "Vote Yes"	1988
		Poster: "Vote for human rights, South Portland Citizens for Justice" (3 c.)	1988

Series 2.3. Matlovich Society (1977-1999)

Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
4	34	K. Ronald McClinton (Founder of the Matlovich Society)	1992
5	35	Bylaws, members lists, news clippings, and flyers [unopened box of checks, See Oversize]	1992-1995
5	36	Operational papers [4 "Never Forget" Buttons, See Oversize]	1991-1998
5	37	Mailing lists	1992-93
5	38	Financial records, expenses (speakers, printing, postage, etc.), rental income, Fleet Bank paperwork	1991-1999
5	39	Room rental expenses	1991-1996
8		Video: "SGT Matlovich vs. the U.S. Air Force"	1977
Series 2.4. Other Advocacy (1980-2000)			
5	40	Maine Won't Discriminate, information about donors and pledge forms, "Vote No" 1995 campaign, information sheet, referendum, "Vote No" bumper stickers [3 buttons in Oversize]	1995
Oversize		Casco Bay Weekly: Pride Issue, June 10, 1999 and MWD article in Nov 26, 1998 issue (2 c. of each)	1998-99
6	41	Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance (MLGPA) information packet, letter	1994, 2000
8		Mug: Northern Lambda Nord	undated
6	42	Press on gay rights issues: Photocopied news reports on Portland gay rights	1992
6	43	T-shirt: "EPL Equal Protection Lewiston" (white)	undated
6	44	T-shirt: "EPL Equal Protection Lewiston" (purple)	undated
6	45	T-shirt: "March on Washington April 25, 1993" (white)	1993
6	46	T-shirt: "March on Washington April 25, 1993" (black)	1993
6	47	T-shirt: "Maine 1993 M.O.W"	1993
Series 2.4. Other Advocacy (1980-2000) (cont)			
8		Video: "March On!" c1993 John Schuster	1993

Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
7	48	T-shirt: "Coming out to a Theater Near You"	undated
8		Video: "Channel 13 Debate"	undated
8		Video: "Come Out Voting PSA 30 seconds 9/92"	1992
8		Video: "Queer Studies (60 Minutes)"	undated
8		Video: "Assault on Gay America Reel No. 1811 PBS Airdate: 2/15/00";	2000
8		Video: Frontline. "Gay rights, Special rights; Gay Agenda\Schlafly: Child Abuse in the Class" with fact sheet	undated
7	49	Gay Rights/Special Rights Fact Sheet to accompany the Video "Gay Rights, Special Rights; Gay Agenda\Schlafly: Child Abuse in the Class" (2 c., one with handwritten notes)	undated
Series 3. Legislation and Politics (1980-2011, undated)			
Oversize		Banner: "Legislators for Equal Rights"	undated
7	50	LD 1046 "Bathroom Bill": Human Rights Act sought to make it legal to limit people to using public single-sex bathroom facilities in accordance with their biological sex instead of their gender	2011
7	51	LD 246 "Act to End Discrimination" [3 pocket folders]: including information about efforts to pass the bill, opposition material, background information, press releases/press kit for the media	1993
8		Video: "Voices from the Hearing, LD 246"	1993
8		Video: "An Act to Prevent Discrimination 3-18-91 Judiciary Committee Hearing"	1991 Mar 18
7	52	Scott Cowger re-election campaign materials, including flyers and buttons	1998
7	53	Correspondence, legal documents and press about efforts to secure same sex partner benefits for University of Maine employees	1990-92
Series 3. Legislation and Politics (1980-2011, undated) (cont)			
8		Video. "Discrimination Referendum 3 Testimonial Spots :30 Sec Each 10/20/92"	1992

Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
Oversize		Campaign Sign: Larry Bliss	undated
Series 4. Oversize			
9		Poster: "Spring for Life Art Auction" (Ser. 1.2)	1992
9		Poster: "Scrawls of paint deface AIDS exhibit at USM" (Ser. 1.2)	undated
9		Poster: "Equal Protection/Portland Fundraising Events" (Ser. 2.1)	1992
9		Poster: "'Get Those Hands Into Your Pockets,' An auction to help end discrimination," EPP event November 1, 1992 (Ser. 2.1)	1992
Mpcs4	Dr29	Framed Award: MLGPA award to Equal Protection/Portland (Ser. 2.1)	1993 Feb 27
Mpcs4	Dr29	Poster: "Vote No! To End Discrimination in Portland" (Ser. 2.1)	undated
9		Poster: "Vote for human rights South Portland Citizens for Justice" (3 c.) (Ser. 2.2)	1988
9		Box of checks (unopened), Matlovich Society (Ser. 2.3)	undated
9		7 buttons: two black and yellow "Vote No! To End Discrimination In Portland", one pink and black "Act to End Discrimination"; four "Never Forget the Matlovich Society" (Ser. 2.3; 2.4)	undated
9		Casco Bay Weekly: Pride Issue, Jun 10 1999, and MWD article in Nov 26, 1998 issue (2 c. of each) (Ser. 2.4)	1998, 1999
9		Banner: "Legislators for Equal Rights" (Ser. 3)	undated
Mpcs4	Dr29	Campaign Sign: Larry Bliss (Ser. 3)	undated