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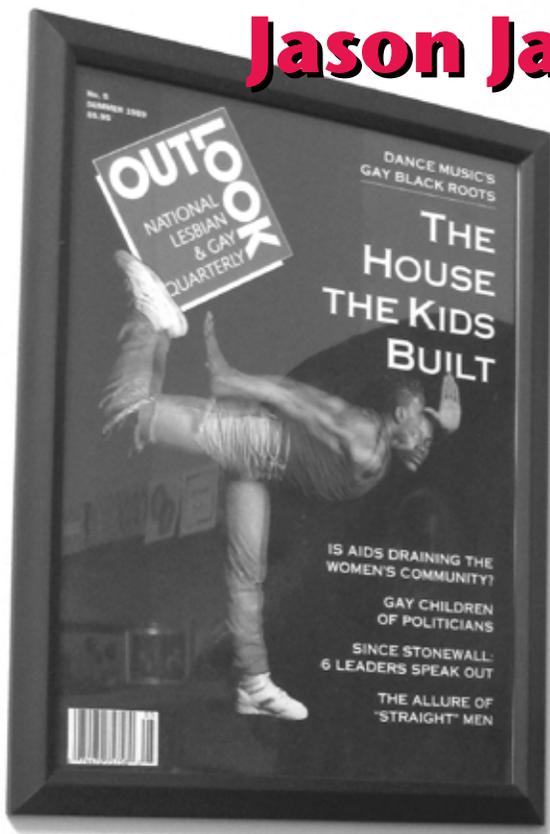
# TRETTER LETTER

NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE TRETTER COLLECTION



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
LIBRARIES  
Archives and Special Collections

## Jason Jackson's "Unheard Voices" Project



### Inside this Issue:

- Jean Tretter Receives Legacy Award
- The Holiday Club History
- Goosebumps in the Archives
- Oral History Project for HIV/AIDS
- Matching Grant Opportunity!
- Two Great Conferences Scheduled

## FROM THE CHAIR

In the Merriam-Webster dictionary, “archive” is defined as a repository of historical documents. The Tretter Collection, of course, already has a large collection of materials dealing with GLBT history, particularly here in Minnesota. In the past half year, it’s continued to add to this collection, as detailed in this newsletter.

Among the recent acquisitions being highlighted in this newsletter, one of the more significant would be the paper of attorney Ron Meshbesh regarding the DSI trial in the 1960’s. The defendants were publishers of gay male periodicals censorship located in Minnesota. However, its ruling regarding the censorship of gay materials had an impact which was nationwide in scope.

Other significant acquisitions that will be mentioned in this issue are the gifts from LGBT Danmark and LGBT Føroyar. We’ve also recently acquired long runs of issues of the New York Native and the Washington Blade. In addition, we’ve continued to collect materials dealing with the recent historic beginning of marriage equality in Minnesota.

However, as a special collection associated with a research library, the Tretter Collection is more than a repository of GLBT related materials. Its mission includes being a resource for the wider GLBT community and for researchers of GLBT history. This year, scholars have visited the collection from as far away as Germany to make use of the

materials collected here. However, it’s also been utilized by students from local schools for class projects. In order to fulfill this mission, the collection has to not only store these materials, it also needs to curate them to make them accessible to researchers. This involves processing boxes of documents, sometimes containing literally thousands of pages altogether, to make it easier for researchers to locate the ones they need. It also involves putting together finding aids and making them available on the collection webpage, so that people will know what can be found here. An article in this newsletter will cover the massive curating project currently in process.

Needless to say, accomplishing a monumental task, such as this, involves spending funds from the collection’s account. **The Tretter Collection has recently been challenged to a matching grant donation by one of the board members, Phil Willkie. The terms of the challenge are that, if the collection succeeds in accumulating \$2000 in donations, he will match that amount.** So, I hope that you will consider donating to the collection this holiday season, bearing in mind that any funds would be used not just for acquiring more items, but for making the collection an even better resource for students of the GLBT community and its history.

Greg Gronseth, Chair

### You Can Help!

The Tretter Collection relies on the support of organizations and individuals, like you! Please consider making a charitable donation to the Tretter Collection using the enclosed self-addressed envelope as part of your giving plan. Your support will help to preserve GLBT history now and for future generations.

Thank you.

# TRETTER LETTER

NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF  
THE TRETTER COLLECTION

<https://www.lib.umn.edu/scr/bm/tretter>

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*The University’s mission, carried out on multiple campuses and throughout the state, is threefold: research and discovery, teaching and learning, and public service.*

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**Front Cover Photo - Jason Jackson**, Jason is holding a photo of Rosanna and Audre, story on page 7

## Thanks to the generous support of our donors.....

*We gratefully acknowledge the following individuals for their support and give thanks to countless others whose generous spirits have made our work possible.*

- Craig Anderson & Kile Martz - WI
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## Matching Grant!

Tretter Board Member Phil Willkie has offered to match the first \$2,000 in gifts to the Tretter Collection! We deeply appreciate the confidence our donors show in us and are excited by the opportunity to double upcoming financial gifts. Please consider a contribution to the Tretter Collection in your year-end giving.

## From the field....

What's happening in national & international circles.....

Two exciting conferences are scheduled for the coming year. The Tretter Collection will have representatives at both and we look forward to sharing our work with our colleagues and learning more about efforts around the nation.

1. **“Moving Trans\* History Forward”** will be hosted by the University of Victoria Transgender Archives, March 21-23 in Victoria, British Columbia. The goals are to bring together people working with transgender archival materials to exchange information, develop linkages and increase our effectiveness in gathering and disseminating the history of trans\* research and activism.

2. **“Whose Beloved Community? Black Civil and LGBT Rights”** will be held at Emory University from March 27-29. This conference will explore the role of Black LGBT people in both race-based and sexuality-based civil rights movements and seek to make visible the vital points of intersection and contention among the U. S. Civil Rights movement, the LGBT equality movement and Black LGBT

# New Acquisitions

We cannot highlight all that we have added to the collection in the past months, but a few highlights:

- In 1967, Conrad Germain and Lloyd Spinar were charged in Federal Court in Minneapolis with 29 counts of producing and mailing obscene material. The two men owned **DSI (Directory Services, Inc.)**, located in Minneapolis. After a two week trial, the judge dismissed all charges, an outcome which extended the capacity to use the postal system to distribute sexually explicit gay material. The case was of enough significance that it made the front page of Volume 1, Issue 1 of *The Advocate*. The defense attorney in the case was Ron Meshbesher and he has recently given material about the trial to the Tretter Collection, including a full transcript and many of the defense exhibits. A full finding aid is available on our website.

- New additions to the **Michael McConnell Papers** include material about the early activities of **F.R.E.E. (Fight Repression of Erotic Expression)**, formed in 1969 as one of the earliest gay student groups in the United States. A full finding aid is available on our website.

- Outreach by Tretter Collection Board Chair Greg Gronseth has resulted in the addition of foundational material from Scandinavia and Germany. Special collections in Denmark, Norway and the Faroe Islands all kindly sent us material for the Tretter Collection. This includes **children's and young people's books in Faroese from LGBT Føroyar and brochures from LLH in Norway. And LGBT Denmark sent us several boxes of Danish and German LGBT material including almost 100 issues of "Vennen," some dating back to 1949.** We are tremendously grateful to our colleagues for their generosity!



- Our local colleagues have also contributed to our holdings. **Quatrefoil Library** is moving from St. Paul to Minneapolis and in the process, is refocusing their holdings. They donated **80 boxes of periodicals** to the Tretter Collection, including a long run of the **Washington Blade and New York Native**. They also helped us fill in a dozen missing issues of **The Advocate** from 1969. All of these additions help us meet the needs of researchers.

- We also received new additions to our **Allan Spear Collection**. A full finding aid is available on our website.

- **Books from Dr. Karla Jay** – we were contacted this summer by pioneering lesbian activist and scholar Karla Jay. She wrote:

“In the mid-1970’s, Ms Magazine accepted my proposal to write an article about Jeannette H. Foster, who had been Alfred Kinsey’s librarian. In the 1950’s, she had self-published a pioneering work called **Sex-Variant Women in Literature**, an annotated bibliography of lesbian literature. I drove to Pocahontas, Arkansas, where Jeannette was in

*New Acquisition Photos courtesy of the Tretter Collection*

New Acquisitions, Continued on Page 12

# Tretter Collection's Online Treasure Map

By Lisa Vecoli

The mission of an archive is twofold. First, we collect and preserve material. And second, we make it available to researchers, scholars and community members. Having the greatest collection in the world does little good if no one knows what you have or how to find it.

Since coming to the University of Minnesota in 2000, the Tretter Collection has grown exponentially. Even during my 18 months we have added hundreds of boxes of material. We have expanded every component of the holdings: organizational records; personal papers; informational files; published material; textiles; and ephemera. There is too much to keep in one person's head. And today, more research is being done online, increasing the need to have our holdings findable through our website.

When I started working at the Tretter Collection, I knew filling Jean's shoes would be impossible – his knowledge, passion and history with the collection are unique. But my need to discover the contents of the archive required organizational strategies that are making the collection more findable and searchable for others as well. Task number one was an inventory. I needed a list of the boxes on the shelves. More than once I had to phone Jean and ask "Where is the box about.....?" or "Where can I find information on ....?" Items of different sizes and shapes are kept in different locations. And some

have unexpected names.

My favorite example was when I called Jean to ask him if we had information on "F.R.E.E.," the first GLBT group on the University



of Minnesota campus, formed in 1969. He assured me that we did. Then he explained that it was filed at the start of "Q.S.C.C.,"

the current campus group. The student groups have changed names many times over the decades and the best way to link the history was to put them all in chronological order under the current name.

Once we had the list (almost 800 titles long) and I could find things, I needed to provide a way for scholars and others to find material as well. The 22 online finding aids we had have now grown to over 100. Some only identify the existence and size of a collection – for example, the "American Uniform Association Records" tells what the organization is and that we have one box. Other collections are fully processed have more information. The finding aid for the "Amazon Bookstore Cooperative Corporate Records" tells you not only the size, but also identifies the contents of each of the 21 boxes in the collection. My goal is to process more of the collections so that researchers have a better sense of what we have and how to ask for it.

One of the new finding aids is for our "Informational Files." These are small collections of articles, flyers, newsletter or other materials. The list of over 500 names includes people, locations, organizations and publications. Adding this to our website, along with dozens of other finding aids, makes a much larger percentage of the Tretter Collection findable online.

# Jean Tretter Receives

By Shamey Cramer

communities.

Although he is becoming best known as one of the premier LGBT archivists in history, our own Jean Tretter was acknowledged by the Federation of Gay Games with their Pioneer Legacy Award at this year's Annual General Assembly in Cleveland Ohio for his monumental contributions to the Gay Games movement in its infancy.

Among the many accomplishments of Mr. Tretter's illustrious career are the contributions he made to help launch the Gay Games movement. Beginning in late 1981, Jean spoke with Gay Games founder

Dr. Thomas F Waddell of San Francisco many times before the inaugural Gay Games took place in August 1982. Of all the people outside of the Bay Area, Jean was one of the most influential people in regards to content and structure of how those first Gay Games were produced.

Besides serving as a Co-founder of Team Minnesota with Female Co-chair Robin Karas, Tretter

created the Sports Governing Book, which is still used by the FGG today to regulate all sports competitions, and is referred to as their Red Book. He also produced the pre-Games Torch Relay section through middle America that included more than a dozen stops from

Olympic Games bid, which was approved by San Francisco Arts & Athletics, the producing non-profit for Gay Games I and II; and competed in Cycling at Gay Games I.

Mr. Tretter was presented his award by 2010 Waddell Cup recipient Brent Nicholson Earle



Tretter and Gay Games Pioneers: Gene Dermody (wrestling), Charlie Carson (swimming), Susan McGreivy, Shamey Cramer, Jean-Nickolaus Tretter, and Toby Pineau (bowling)

Cleveland to Denver; brought the largest team from out-of-state (87 athletes of the total 1350 that participated at GGI); launched the International Gay Olympic Association, which was the predecessor to the FGG; published the quarterly newsletter for the IGOA; had Team Minnesota host the first-ever Co-chairs conference (AKA the Annual General Assembly); presented the 1986 Winter Gay

of New York City, a former FGG Board member. During his acceptance speech, Tretter regaled the Opening Night reception audience of more than 400 with his story of getting confused on the cycling course, and actually crossed the finish line going the opposite direction of all the other cyclists.

Hosting the awards presentation was fellow Gay Games pioneer and former

# Gay Games Legacy Award

Tretter Collection Advisory Board member Shamey Cramer, now Officer of Ceremonies on the FGG Board. Cramer had the opportunity to conduct a 15-minute on-camera interview with Jean which will be available for viewing at the Tretter Collection in the near future. Accompanying Mr. Tretter was fellow Tretter Advisory Board member James Garlough.

Tretter and Cramer were also joined onstage for a photo of the six individuals who were in attendance that were part of the 1350 participants to Gay Games I, which included ACLU attorney Susan McGreivy, a member of the 1956 US Olympic Swim Team who lit the torch at Kezar Stadium to officially open the inaugural Gay Games in 1982. Ms. McGreivy was awarded the Social Justice Legacy Award for her legal contributions, which included assisting with the Supreme Court case when the U.S. Olympic Committee sued the Gay Games for originally naming their event the Gay Olympic Games.

In 2002, Tretter

participated in Gay Games VI: Sydney 2002 as part of the

human rights conference, and was a nominee for the Waddell



Award Presenter, Brent Nicholson Earle (former Federation of Gay Games Board Member, and Legacy Award recipient, Jean-Nickolaus Tretter



2013 Legacy Honorees: Susan McGreivy, Jerry Windle and son, Jordan, and partner, Andres Rodriguez, and Jean-Nickolaus Tretter

*(All photos property of Matt Cordish, and are used by permission.)*

# Unheard Voices: Black LGBT History in the Twin Cities

by Anne Hodson and Lisa Vecoli

Telling our stories, our history, is one of the most important things we can do in life. Often, our stories get lost or hidden, sometimes forever. Jason Jackson, University of Minnesota GLBTA Programs Office Assistant Director, wanted to know more about the queer black history in the Twin Cities and came to the Tretter collection to begin researching for a presentation. He also conducted audio interviews with people who could tell the history of Queer Blacks in the Twin Cities. After giving a presentation during pride week, several people encouraged him to transform the presentation into a format that would give more people access.

Photographer/filmmaker, and Tretter board member, Anne Hodson approached Jason about conducting video interviews and making a documentary. Despite having a full time job and starting graduate school, Jason could not resist the stories he was uncovering. And the “Unheard Voices” project was launched.

The goals of the project are to illuminate the lived experience of LGBT Black citizens, showcase social services formed by LGBT Black individuals and give a chronological story to LGBT Black history in the Twin Cities and surrounding areas. The time focus will be the 1970’s to today and will examine the influences of the ball scene, T’ranga, Soul Essence, Twin Cities Black Pride, and music of the time. It will also look at race and racism, and multi-racial relationships.

The Tretter Collection is proud that the raw materials for the documentary will be archived here when the project is done. Uncovering the voices of hidden communities is challenging. While there are limited materials available about the broader GLBT community before the 1980’s, what exists is heavily oriented to the white gay male community. Expanding our inclusion of people of color, Trans voices, Bisexuals and even increasing the lesbian presence in the archive will require creative strategies and partnerships.

This project is a model partnership between researchers and archives to document and preserve diverse community voices into the future. The existing material in the archive served as a starting place for research. And our holdings will be richer and benefit from the research Jason does when his materials are archived here.

For example, Jason interviewed Rosanna Hudgins for the documentary. In the course of their conversation, they talked about “Stirfry,” a group for African American Lesbians in the Twin Cities. In 1988, Stirfry had events with both Audre Lourde and Barbara Smith. The photos of this event ([Jason is holding a photo of Rosanna and Audre on the front cover](#)) are among the items he will use in the documentary. And we hope to add them to the Tretter Collection in the future.

Jason is interested in making contact with members of the Black LGBT community about participating in the documentary. His email is: [jacks973@umn.edu](mailto:jacks973@umn.edu). Both Jackson and curator Lisa Vecoli ([lvecolli@umn.edu](mailto:lvecolli@umn.edu)) are also interested in talking with people who have photos, letters, journals or organizational newsletters or papers. All of these items help broaden the story and would be welcome additions to the documentary and the Tretter Collection.

No single project or collection covers the full spectrum of stories in the LGBT community. Instead, each brings a new piece of the puzzle to the archive and deepens our understanding of where we have been, where we are and where we are going.

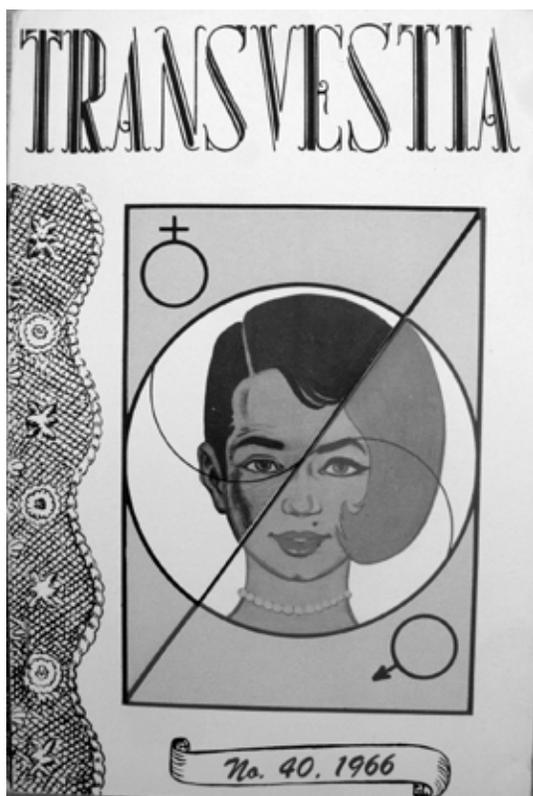
# Goosebumps in the Archives

By Emily Atchison

My romance with the Tretter began towards the end of last spring when Lisa Vecoli was invited by a professor of mine to give a brief presentation on the history and content of the archive. After her talk, Lisa rolled out a representative cart, full of handpicked material for us to thumb through from the collection. By the end of the class I had read through a mere quarter of the treasure in a folder labeled “trans issues” and I wanted more. I introduced myself to Lisa and asked her how long she thought it would take to read through all of the trans-related material in the Tretter Collection. A few months later, I met with her to talk about volunteering and she asked me what it was in the collection that I was personally most interested in. I started the next day armed with a sweater (for trips underground to the caverns for more boxes!), my coffee mug with an archive-safe lid, a notebook, and an insatiable nerd-appetite for trans history.

I am a fairly non-traditional student at the University of Minnesota in the midst of pursuing a degree of my own design through the Individually Designed Interdepartmental Major (IDIM) Program. My program is titled, Comparative Queer Studies in Chinese and American Cultures, and it will be my second undergraduate degree (my first being in Fine Art). I also come from a family of archivists including several folk musicians that collect fiddle tunes by recording and memory, a librarian that has an impressive arsenal of stories to

be told out loud, a blacksmith re-enactor that I have never seen return from a hike without a piece of an old tool or earthenware in hand and an avid genealogist or two that have traveled as far as Germany to see the hometown of a chemist from several generations back in the family. As a big fan of Walter Benjamin, who was



himself an avid collector of rare books and quotations, a large part my understanding of what a queer genealogical methodology should look like is what Benjamin describes as brushing history against the grain. Also a huge fan of Sandy Stone, my idea of ‘the good work’ of the archivist of trans material is Benjamin combined with Sandy’s invocation in 1991 to her “[trans] brothers, and sisters, and others” to “read oneself aloud-and by this troubling and productive reading, to begin to

write oneself into the discourses by which one has been written”, to consciously and bravely place ourselves in history with a future and a past. That is the kind of historical work that I believe the Tretter Collection stands for. The labor of queering the archive, reading between publications, who it was made by and for, looking for what is missing, what wasn’t written, and what we currently have and why.

Since September, I have been coming in nearly every Friday morning and slowly but surely working my way through every single piece of trans-related material in the Tretter Collection, every hand-written letter, magazine, newsletter, photograph, Xeroxed zine, conference handout, program, and mail-out. By the end of taking inventory in this way-at the very least I am recording the title, publisher, and year of all of the material in spread sheet format-I will have not only touched, but also read a great deal of, everything categorized as ‘trans’ in the Tretter. When it is finally completed, this inventory record will both assist the archive in determining how, and in which directions to expand the collection (for example, searching for early F2M publications), and make this specific area of the collection much more accessible to researchers, students, and community members.

It would be impossible for me to name a favorite piece in the collection. I get goose bumps every time I walk through the door and every week I can’t wait until Friday just to get my hands on the next box.

# Holiday Club Remembered..... a Great Part of Minneapolis History

GLBT publications, both locally and elsewhere, as buried treasures within their pages. One example of this was published in "Equal Time" in February of 1983.

Written by Tretter Advisory Board Member Phil Willkie, the article is titled "1940s, '50s were gay time for Holiday Club members." An excerpt:

Imagine one hundred drag queens in evening gowns escorted to the Halloween Ball by their boyfriends dressed in suits. The tables have satin tablecloths, fresh-cut flowers and candelabras. An orchestra plays for dancing.

That's the way it was for the night the Holiday Club held the first drag ball in Minneapolis in 1949.

Two Holiday Club members, "George" and "Ed" (they asked

that their real names not be published) reminisced about those times in a recent interview.

The drag ball – the cities' longest running gay celebration- began after George went to Chicago in the late 40's. George said, "I came back wishing we could do something like that in Minneapolis. We gave it the very night of Halloween – we found out it was the only night we could legally do this."

The Holiday Club rented a private hall and told the managers that there would be a lot of costumes

and "artist types." They handed out handbills to their friends at the gay bars of the era – Herb's and the Dugout. George said, "We could not go to a hotel or any facility where we had to share bathrooms. Our drag queens would have caused a scene in the men's room." The Holiday Club held a couple of private parties a

George and Ed, who are black, talked about racial discrimination. George said that he had white and black friends who made a reservation at Charlie's Café in Minneapolis in 1950. When the party of four arrived, they were ushered to a private dining room. George said, "discrimination in Minneapolis was undercover and



year through the 1950s.

In 1956, four of the club members left the ball. George, who told the story with a laugh, said the men, all of whom were in full drag, "were walking around downtown pretty boldly. They were arrested for female impersonation. They posed for a photograph and had their names and addresses published on the front page of the Minneapolis Star."

The Holiday Club disbanded in 1962. It became more difficult for members to remain anonymous because of the club's ever-increasing size....

deceitful."

Ed said "I appreciate the southern states, because they are prejudiced and they let you know it. The northern states criticized the southern states and said blacks were treated better up here. But prejudice is in the hearts of people everywhere."

To see the full text of the article, check out the Tretter Collection's Facebook page. Or visit the archive to see this issue of Equal Time or other local and national GLBT papers.

# Oral History Project Will Document Treatment of HIV/AIDS

By Jada Hansen

As the Executive Director of the Hennepin History Museum I have the opportunity to come across many new and unique projects that are taking place in the community. This past summer the Hennepin History Museum was approached by a group of individuals looking to document the history of HIV/AIDS service providers in the Twin Cities by contributing to what we know about how treatments evolved from a grassroots attempt to care for individuals with a strange and deadly disease to one with a coordinated and effective treatment plan.

As I chatted with researchers about project details I heard words like “first of its kind oral history,” and “fill in knowledge gaps”.... music to a historian’s ear. The project was then made more interesting when I learned that the Tretter Collection was already in on the conversation and wanted to be a part of this project as well. As a Tretter board member I could see the ways in which this project would serve to fill in existing gaps in the collection and document

an important part of the GLBT narrative in Minnesota. The good news is that the Hennepin History Museum applied for, and received, a grant from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Legacy Fund in order to undertake the first phase in a project that could have a multitude of post project outcomes. In other words, this oral history project could evolve into workshops, exhibits, publications, and perhaps even more oral history collecting for both organizations.

The HIV/AIDS Healthcare Providers Oral History Project will document treatment of HIV/AIDS in MN from its first identification in the early 1980s through 2010. Through this oral history project, 10 individuals from the Twin Cities representing healthcare organizations that provided HIV/AIDS treatment from the 1980s to 2008 will be interviewed. The goals will be to document the response to HIV/AIDS, and changes in HIV/AIDS prevention and care systems. Work on the project will include identifying existing collections of records that could further an understanding of this topic.

We are at the threshold of change for HIV/AIDS treatment and care providers. Major changes include: people are now living with HIV/AIDS and are living longer; national strategies will shift the treatment focus; the Affordable Health Care Act will lead to a very different process for

providing service; and the roles of community based organizations will have to change to meet these new needs. HIV/AIDS treatment regimens have become increasingly effective while sources of support have transitioned to large and often cumbersome government programs. As we move into a new era of health care, it is time to document the first 30 years of treatment of this former orphan disease and it is very exciting news to learn that the Tretter Collection will be the final repository for this important collection.

I am excited to be participating in this project as a member of the advisory council along with individuals from the Minnesota Department of Health, Hennepin County Ryan White Program, Positive Care Center, Hennepin County Medical Center, Allina Medical Clinic, University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Human Services HIV Program and project oral historian Barb Sommers.

I look forward to sharing more news about this project, and all that we have learned when it is completed in late 2014.





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New Acquisitions, Continued from Page 4

a nursing home. By then, she was paralyzed from spinal arthritis.

We immediately hit it off and began a lengthy correspondence, in which she told me the story of her life. Those letters are in my archives at the New York Public Library, and they were used extensively by Joanne Passet in her biography, *Variant Woman: The Life of Jeannette Howard Foster* (2008).

Though I think she gave the majority of her vast collection of books to her friend Barbara Grier, she sent me a box of books in French because she knew that I had majored in French as an undergraduate at Barnard, was fluent in French, and was a graduate student in Comparative Literature at New York University, working on a dissertation on Renee Vivien and Natalie Clifford Barney. She hoped that one day I would work on the other books, many of which are about androgynes or lesbianism. She loved erotic books, especially those with some illustrations! Hers are the books that are bound in

leather. I think that Jeannette, as Kinsey's librarian, probably had special access to binderies that could perform such beautiful work.

These books were among the only objects I saved from the water (in the wake of a fire) that destroyed



my apartment in Manhattan in the late 1970's. I had hoped to write about them one day, thought I did use many of the books about Barney and Vivien for my book about them and my translation of Vivien. Later on, as my research interest shifted away from the Paris expatriates, I hoped to come across a graduate student who would be

interested in them, someone to whom I could pass on Jeannette's gift. But thought I have helped many people with various kinds of research, mostly about movement history, no one was working on this kind of literature. It is my hope that someone at your university will find these amazing books the germ of a thesis or dissertation. Because I am legally blind and can no longer read with my eyes, it would destroy the books to flatten them and read them via my scanner!

The other books were purchased by me in Paris between 1979 and 1984 when I lived off and on in Paris. I often searched the stalls along the Seine as well as rare book stores for relevant volumes. As a graduate student – I was finally hired at Pace full-time in 1983 – I had to shop wisely for books.

It is a small but lovely collection. I have always enjoyed having them, and I hope you will, too." *(quote from Karla Jay)*