



Vincent P. Grimm XYZ Club photographs and memoir, early 1960s-2022 : Ms.Coll.129

Finding aid prepared by John Anderies and Colin McCrossan on June 13, 2023

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Summary Information

Repository:	John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center
Creator:	Grimm, Vincent P. (1937)
Title:	Vincent P. Grimm XYZ Club photographs and memoir
ID:	Ms.Coll.129
Date [inclusive]:	early 1960s-2022
Physical Description:	.2 Linear Feet (1 half document box)
Abstract:	Vincent P. Grimm (b. 1937) and his life partner Will Kratz (1939-2017), along with other club members, planned, operated, and performed in revue shows for two decades as part of the XYZ Club. The XYZ Club hosted performances and picnics at Epler's Grove from 1963 to at least 1981. The collection is comprised of three types of material: photocopies of biographical material about Vincent Grimm; a printed typescript of the memoir written by Grimm on the history of "The XYZ Club"; and five folders of color photographs spanning the early-1960s through the mid- to late-1970s, documenting drag shows performed by the XYZ Club during its two-decade existence.

Preferred Citation

Vincent P. Grimm XYZ Club photographs and memoir, early 1960s-2022, Ms. Coll. 129, John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center, Philadelphia, PA.

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Biographical / Historical

Vincent P. Grimm, III, was born in Pottstown, Pennsylvania in 1937 to Vincent, Jr. and Pearl Grimm. He knew at an early age that he was gay. After graduating from high school he enlisted in the U.S. Army, taking basic training at Ft. Jackson, South Carolina, followed by Ft. Devons, Massachusetts, before being transferred to Japan and on to Korea. After being honorably discharged, Vince studied and taught himself the fundamentals of engineering through the Pottstown Public Library system. He served as vice president of several companies and owner/partner of two.

In 1961 Vince met his life partner Will Kratz (1939-2017) at the Big Apple Bar in Reading, Pennsylvania. Along with other club members they planned, operated, and performed in revue shows for two decades as part of the XYZ Club. Will studied culinary arts in Paris and eventually opened his own cooking school and became an executive chef. The couple were avid travelers and together they retired to Cape May, New Jersey, in 1996. The couple were involved with the South Jersey AIDS Alliance and served as AIDS buddies in the New Hope, Pennsylvania area. Both were long involved with Gables of Cape May County, New Jersey, and Vince served as CEO. They became legal domestic partners in 2004 (after Vince's advocacy helped pass domestic partnership legislation for same sex couples in New Jersey) and married legally in 2013. The couple formed the Nguyen Xuan Quynh VinceWill Foundation, an educational foundation supporting fatherless children in Vietnam, in 2006. Will passed away in 2017.

The XYZ Club started in the mid-1950s, when three of Grimm's friends began performing in drag at private parties. Their act became popular and they began performing at a venue outside of Reading, Pennsylvania, called Gross's Grove. By 1959, the group moved their act to another Reading bar named the Zanzibar. Grimm and Kratz joined the show as performers and crew in 1961. In the summer of 1963, the group moved their show again to a private property in the woods outside of Reading, called Epler's Grove. During this time the group became more organized and called themselves the "XYZ" club to remain discreet.

The XYZ Club hosted performances and picnics at Epler's Grove from 1963 to at least 1981. The performances featured various acts and picnics offered food and alcohol. The XYZ Club advertised their events by word of mouth, flyers, and notices in gay and lesbian publications and developed a system of ticketing for admission by mail. Grimm and Kratz remained intimately involved with the XYZ Club, its structure, and events for many years. Throughout his time as a Club member, Grimm was aware of the risks of being involved with the organization. Club members and event attendees faced potential arrests and event closure by the Pennsylvania State Police and Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board. Grimm and other Club members worried that complaints from locals about their events could lead to negative interactions with state law enforcement. The XYZ Club stopped their events at Epler's Grove in the late 1970s. By 1981, the Club was offering picnics, skating events, bingo, and dance parties at various locations in Reading, PA, including Willow Glen Park and the Red Star Saloon. It is unclear when the XYZ Club officially disbanded and stopped offering events.

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Scope and Contents

The collection is comprised of three types of material: photocopies of biographical material about Vincent Grimm; a printed typescript of the memoir written by Grimm on the history of "The XYZ Club"; and five folders of color photographs spanning the early-1960s through the mid- to late-1970s, documenting drag shows performed by the XYZ Club during its two-decade existence. Photographs primarily depict review numbers performed on stage by drag queens and non-drag male roles, with a smaller number of backstage and dressing room scenes of the club. Some individuals are identified in pen on the backs of the photographs but most go unidentified.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research use.

Conditions Governing Use

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift, Vincent P. Grimm, 2022

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Related Materials

Related Materials

John J. Wilcox, Jr. Archives at William Way LGBT Community Center:

"Reading Picnic" in Ephemera files, Ms. Coll. 35

"XYZ Social Club" in Ephemera files, Ms. Coll. 35

"XYZ Social Club" brochure in: Joan Fleischmann collection on East Coast Homophile Organizations (ECHO), Eastern Regional Conference of Homophile Organizations (ERCHO), and others, Ms. Coll. 26

Oral histories of Ada Bello and Joan Fleischmann in Marc Stein oral histories, Ms. Coll. 74

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Controlled Access Headings

- Allentown (Pa.)
- Drag queens
- Drag shows
- Lancaster (Pa.)
- Picnics
- Photographs
- Pottstown (Pa.)
- Revues
- Reading (Pa.)
- Rural gay men
- Typescripts
- Grimm, Vincent P. (1937)
- Kratz, Willard D. (1939-2017)

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances	
Biographical material, 2022	Box 1	Folder 1
"The XYZ Club" by Vince Grimm, 2020	Box 1	Folder 2
Color photographs, 3.5 x 3.5 in. (77), early 1960s	Box 1	Folder 3
Color photographs, 3.5 x 5 in. (32), late 1960s	Box 1	Folder 4
Color photographs, 3.5 x 3.5 in. (48), 1970s	Box 1	Folder 5
Color photographs 4 x 4 in. (69), 1970s	Box 1	Folder 6
Color photographs 4 x 4 in. (106), 1970s	Box 1	Folder 7