

## **Finding Aid to Janet MacHarg papers**

**(2003-41)**

**Repository:** Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

**Collection Title:** Janet MacHarg papers

**Collection Number:** 2003-41

**Physical Description:** 2.5 linear feet (1 carton, 1 oversize box)

**Creator:** Janet MacHarg

**Date (inclusive):** circa 1950-2004

**Language of Material:** English

### **Abstract:**

Janet “Janny” MacHarg was a political songwriter, cabaret performer, writer, and feminist activist, known as the “Tallulah Bankhead of San Francisco.” Contents include photographs, sheet music, writings, publications, correspondence, drawings, notes, audio cassette tapes, costumes, and other ephemera.

### **Preferred Citation:**

[Identification of item], Janet MacHarg papers (2003-41), The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

### **Conditions Governing Access:**

Collection is open for research. Mailing lists and other records holding the names, addresses, and/or phone numbers of individuals will be restricted for 20 years from the latest date on the material.

### **Publication Rights:**

Copyright to all unpublished material has been transferred to the GLBT Historical Society. All requests for reproductions and/or permission to publish or quote from material must be submitted in writing to the GLBT Historical Society Archivist. Credit must be given to Janny MacHarg on any published material.

### **Acquisition Information:**

The collection was donated to the GLBT Historical Society by Evie Turner and Hadie Sletner-Dwelley in November 2003 and Ruth E. Schein in March 2004.

**Processing Information:**

Finding Aid created by Megan Needels in 2021 with funding provided by the National Historical Publications & Records Commission.

This finding aid uses terminology for LGBTQ people that was in current use at the time of its creation. Descriptive language for queer identities evolves quickly and some of these terms may now be dated or even offensive. Finding aids are themselves historical documents; they reflect the moment in which they were written and often reflect the terms that subjects used for themselves. Please contact the GLBT Historical Society Archivist with questions or comments.

**Biographical/Organizational History Note:**

Janet “Janny” MacHarg was born on April 7, 1923, in New York. Her interest in songwriting and performance developed as a child when she wrote music and played piano for her mother. After losing her father and sister at a young age, she moved to San Francisco and began working as a bookseller at the City of Paris department store. While there, she was drawn to left-wing literature and began writing political satire songs with the San Francisco Labor Theatre. MacHarg met her lifelong partner, Evie Turner at the Labor Theatre in the beginning years of the second Red Scare. She was offered a job as secretary of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee where she raised money for the organization by putting on talent shows. Eventually, MacHarg was forced to leave the communist party due to her relationship with Turner, which caused her to develop a drinking habit.

After many years in hiatus from writing and performing, MacHarg began visiting the Women’s Building and Women’s Bookstore in San Francisco. Through a connection she made there, she received support for her alcoholism and became sober. Eventually, she joined the organization, Options for Women Over 40 where she began writing songs relating to the old lesbian movement. Her songwriting flourished during this time, covering topics around the women’s movement, peace movement, gay rights, alcoholism, and aging. MacHarg wrote songs and performed with theatre groups such as Theatre Rhinoceros and Mothertongue Feminist Theatre Collective. She also performed in solo cabaret shows where she sang and played the piano at venues such as Artemis, Mama Bears, the Metropolitan Church, and Valencia Rose. In addition to her songwriting, MacHarg was a prolific writer and wrote short stories, often autobiographical, about her experience as an aging lesbian. She was involved with organizations such as Old Lesbians Organizing for Change and Gay and Lesbian Outreach to Elders (GLOE). Despite MacHarg’s battle with cancer, she continued to write and perform late into her life. She died on November 4, 2003.

**Scope and Content:**

The collection documents the life and work of Janet “Janny” MacHarg, a political songwriter, cabaret performer, writer, and feminist activist, known as the “Tallulah Bankhead of San Francisco.” This collection includes records from 1950-2004, with a primary focus on 1985-2003. Materials include photographs of MacHarg performing cabaret and during her early years as a political songwriter; ephemera such as MacHarg’s Options for Women Over 40 membership card and flyers for local theatre and musical performances; correspondence between MacHarg and her friends; drawings and doodles made by MacHarg; papers related to her activism on aging; song boards used during performances; sheet music; flyers for her performances; writing about MacHarg; papers and photographs relating to MacHarg’s memorial; publications containing her writing such as *Sinister Wisdom*, *Durable Dauntless Dykes*, *Broomstick*, and *Entre Nous*; MacHarg’s lyrics, poetry, and short stories, loose notes and notebooks; and audio cassette tapes of her songs and performances. The collection also contains a black dress and green satin coat that MacHarg wore during her cabaret performances.

### **Indexing Terms:**

Theater  
 Music  
 Lesbians  
 Aging

### **Container Listing**

Carton 1, Folder 1	Indexes, undated
Carton 1, Folder 2	Photographs, circa 1950-2004
Carton 1, Folder 3	Correspondence, 1984-1996
Carton 1, Folder 4	Drawings, circa 1990-2001
Carton 1, Folder 5	Ephemera, circa 1990-2001
Carton 1, Folder 6	Activism on aging, 1987-1996
Carton 1, Folder 7	Song boards, undated
Carton 1, Folder 8	Sheet music, circa 1989-2003
Carton 1, Folder 9	Without a Net (performance at Theatre Rhinoceros), 1992
Carton 1, Folder 10	Performance flyers and programs, 1987-1997
Carton 1, Folder 11	Writing about Janet MacHarg, 1982-1992
Carton 1, Folder 12	Interview with Janet MacHarg, undated
Carton 1, Folder 13	Memorial and death notices, 2003-2004
Carton 1, Folder 14	Publications, 1986-1994
Carton 1, Folder 15	Short stories and prose A-C, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 16	Short stories and prose D-J, circa 1985-2003

Carton 1, Folder 17	Short stories and prose K-P, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 18	Short stories and prose Q-Z, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 19	Lyrics and poetry A, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 20	Lyrics and poetry B, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 21	Lyrics and poetry C, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 22	Lyrics and poetry D, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 23	Lyrics and poetry E, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 24	Lyrics and poetry F, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 25	Lyrics and poetry G, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 26	Lyrics and poetry H, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 27	Lyrics and poetry I, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 28	Lyrics and poetry J, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 29	Lyrics and poetry K-L, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 30	Lyrics and poetry M, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 31	Lyrics and poetry N, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 32	Lyrics and poetry O, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 33	Lyrics and poetry P-Q, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 34	Lyrics and poetry R, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 35	Lyrics and poetry S, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 36	Lyrics and poetry T, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 37	Lyrics and poetry U-V, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 38	Lyrics and poetry W-Z, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Folder 39	Notes [1], undated
Carton 1, Folder 40	Notes [2], undated
Carton 1, Folder 41	Notebook [1], undated
Carton 1, Folder 42	Notebook [2], undated
Carton 1, Folder 43	Notebook [3], undated
Carton 1, Folder 44	Notebook [4], undated
Carton 1, Folder 45	Writings collected by Janet MacHarg, circa 1985-2003
Carton 1, Item 1	Aging Is Not For Sissies, 1985 [Audio cassette tape]
Carton 1, Item 2	Janny Sings at Artemis, 06/1990 [Audio cassette tape]
Carton 1, Item 3	Janny Sings for Love and Freedom, 1990 [Audio cassette tape]
Carton 1, Item 4	Holocaust tape [Audio cassette tape], undated
Carton 1, Item 5	MCC tape [Audio cassette tape], undated
Oversize Box 1, Item 1	Black dress, undated
Oversize Box 1, Item 2	Green satin coat, undated