

**Collection title:** Mary Lucey and Nancy MacNeil Collection

**Collection ID:** LUMA

**Size:** 6.26 linear feet

**Date:** 1980-2017, [bulk 1990-1996]

**Abstract:**

Mary Lucey and Nancy MacNeil were dedicated activists fighting for the rights and fair treatment of women with HIV and AIDS. They were most active within ACT UP/LA (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power/Los Angeles) and were two of the founders of Women Alive Coalition, an organization offering support and services for women with AIDS. The bulk of the collection consists of papers and photographs related to ACT UP/LA and clippings reporting on HIV/AIDS and ACT UP.

**Accession information:**

Mary Lucey and Nancy MacNeil donated their collection to the Mazer on April 28, 2017.

**Provenance:**

The materials in this collection were accumulated during the lives of Mary Lucey and Nancy MacNeil as activists in Los Angeles after they met in 1990, and until 2017 when the collection was donated.

**Restrictions:**

There are no restrictions on the collection. The collection is open for research.

**Copyright:**

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**Biographical sketch:**

Mary Lucey and Nancy MacNeil were dedicated activists fighting for the rights and fair treatment of women with HIV and AIDS. They were most active within AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, Los Angeles (ACT UP/LA) and were two of the founders of Women Alive Coalition, an organization offering support and services for women with AIDS. The two met in the 1990s through ACT UP and were eventually married.

**Mary Lucey** was born December 15, 1958. In 1989 Mary was diagnosed with HIV, while pregnant and battling an addiction to drugs. After she was diagnosed, she felt alone and

doomed to die. In her own words, “Soon I was introduced to AIDS-phobia. Doctors didn't want to deliver my baby. Nurses didn't want to touch me. One nurse yelled that AIDS was God's punishment and that my baby and I deserved to die. I didn't know anybody else with HIV.”<sup>1</sup> She was prescribed AZT, one of the only AIDS treatment drugs at that time, and given no counseling on the syndrome or mental health support.

She had decided to give her baby up for adoption and was contacted by Morning Glory House in Santa Rosa, California. Morning Glory also ran an organization called Starcross, that would adopt the baby. At Starcross Mary was taken care of until it was time to give birth to her daughter, Holly Marie. They counseled her about HIV and AIDS, and she had access to very good medical care. In 1990 she decided to move to Los Angeles. After encountering continuous difficulty finding access to medical care in LA, being offered support groups rather than medical care, she was finally put in touch with Vanessa Parker who referred her to a doctor who would treat women with HIV in Long Beach. In the same year Mary joined the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP/LA) Women's Caucus to help fight for women who found themselves like her, alone, HIV positive, and without access to medical care. ACT UP/LA became her family and friends when acting up, fighting back, and fighting AIDS.<sup>2</sup>

Mary was tireless in fighting for women with HIV and AIDS, especially women in prison who had no access to medical care, safe sex and HIV/AIDS education, or proper food. Mary herself served 18 months in Frontera Women's prison 1988-89. Her work fighting for women with HIV in prison with ACT/UP LA's Women Caucus led to the compassionate release of Judy Cagle who was given the dignity to die at home. She fought to expand the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) definition of HIV/AIDS to include symptoms and manifestations of AIDS in women and intravenous drug users, which would lead to more accurate recognition of these groups in healthcare surveillance of the syndrome. Mary also fought for women to be represented in clinical trials for HIV and AIDS treatment and preventative drugs.

She devoted her personal and professional work to develop, implement, and fund healthcare services and public policy for people with HIV/AIDS, mental health programs, addiction and substance abuse, and persons with disabilities at city, state, and federal levels. Mary often testified and spoke in front of congressional leaders and state senators, as well as the CDC, the National Commission on AIDS, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and Health and Human Services (HHS).<sup>3</sup> She was a board member of the Women's Caucus of the AIDS Regional Board, on the UCLA Pediatrics Community Advisory Board, part of the Women's Interactive HIV Study Community Advisory Board, a member of the Friends Research Institute's West Coast Institutional Review Board, where she assessed protocol and informed consent for research involving human subjects. Mary worked most closely with PROTOTYPES health center, Women Alive, and ACT UP/LA Women's Caucus.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Lucey autobiographical writing, n.d., box 1, folder 1, Mary Lucey and Nancy MacNeil Collection, June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Lucey autobiographical writing, n.d., box 1, folder 1, Mary Lucey and Nancy MacNeil Collection, June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>3</sup> “ABOUT US/Mary Lucey,” ACT UP LA, accessed October 23, 2023, <https://www.actupla.org/about-us>.

She married her partner of 30 years, Nancy MacNeil, an LA activist who fought in ACT UP/LA alongside Mary. The two lived in Venice, CA, before moving north of Los Angeles to Oceano, CA. Mary won a position on the Oceano Community Services Board and served for two consecutive terms from 2012 to 2016.<sup>4</sup> Mary stayed in contact with her daughter, Holly Marie, and with Nancy she has another daughter Mellissa.

### **Chronology:**<sup>5</sup>

**1990** Co-founder: The Women's Caucus of ACT UP/LA

**1990** Worked for AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) and Chris Brownlie Hospice

**1991-1992** Participating Member: The Women's Advisory Board of Search Alliance

**1991-1993** Worked with a consortium of local AIDS Service Organizations to create and implement the first annual "Women and HIV Conference" in Los Angeles. (University of California, Los Angeles)

**1992** Created a committee of AIDS activists to address prisoners with HIV/AIDS. Worked with the Department of Corrections to improve conditions for women prisoners with HIV/AIDS in California. Achievements were publicized in the Daily News and the Los Angeles Times.

**1991** AIDS Project Los Angeles, AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power/Los Angeles and Being Alive  
Created and implemented ongoing support group for HIV positive women

**1991-1993** Trainer and program specialist for Prototypes, a treatment center for women with addiction in Los Angeles

**1992** Early HIV Treatment Trainer, PROTOTYPES. Conduct trainings to educate drug rehabilitation counselors about HIV/AIDS

**1993** Co-founded Women Alive Coalition with Nancy MacNeil and others

**1993-1995** Founding director of Prototypes WomensCare Health Center, a care facility for women with HIV, implementing services and helping people secure resources

**1994-2002** Worked as a policy analyst and eventually interim AIDS coordinator at the City AIDS coordinator's office where she funded the first needle exchange project called Clean Needles Now, today known as the LA Community Health project

**1997** Raised funding for the 1997 National Conference on Women and AIDS held at the Convention Hall of the Los Angeles Staples Center<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Lucey autobiographical writing, n.d., box 1, folder 1, Mary Lucey and Nancy MacNeil Collection, June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>5</sup> "ABOUT US/Mary Lucey," ACT UP LA, accessed October 23, 2023, <https://www.actupla.org/about-us>.

<sup>6</sup> "ABOUT US/Mary Lucey," ACT UP LA, accessed October 23, 2023, <https://www.actupla.org/about-us>.

**2021** Mary, Nancy MacNeil, Jordan Peimer, Helene Schpak and Judy Ornelas Sisneros launch the ACT UP Los Angeles Oral History Project<sup>7</sup>

**Nancy MacNeil** was born December 11, 1950. MacNeil was born and raised in the Highland Park neighborhood of Los Angeles, CA. During high school she organized sit-ins and walk-outs protesting the Vietnam War and the draft; she fought against police brutality, allying with the Black Panther Party and helping with their breakfast programs in Downtown LA.<sup>8</sup> She attended the Institute of the Study of Non-violence in Palo Alto, to study the means and ways towards radical social change, while continuing to fight back against the War, racial injustice, and police violence.<sup>9</sup> MacNeil herself would bear scars from police violence, attacks from violent men, and arrests, throughout her life as an activist.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s MacNeil became more involved in the Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement, joining the Lavender Left, and organizing for civil rights, queer liberation, and national healthcare for all.<sup>11</sup> By the 1990s, MacNeil's friends were dying of what medical professionals referred to as Gay-Related Immune Deficiency (GRID) and would later be called Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), causing her to join ACT UP.<sup>12</sup>

It was in ACT UP, after attending the Women's Caucus meeting, that she met Mary Lucey.<sup>13</sup> In ACT UP/LA Women's Caucus she acted as a fact finder and was part of the treatment and data committee, most notably writing HIV, IDU's, and YOU: a report on the Patient Care Committee of the ACTG.<sup>14</sup> She was also a part of the Prisoners with AIDS subcommittee and the ACT UP National Network.<sup>15</sup> With Lucey, MacNeil attended the AIDS Clinical Trials Group in Washington D.C. to advocate for the inclusion of women in AIDS treatment research, and an expansion to the criteria for diagnosing AIDS in women.<sup>16</sup> Direct actions, marches, protests, mailing campaigns, and phone zaps were common ways that ACT UP/LA fought for rights for people with AIDS, and put pressure on the government and medical professionals for public health policy and a cure. Supporting people with AIDS through education, treatment, solidarity, and other social services were also important parts of AIDS activism. MacNeil was specifically focused on supporting and fighting for women who are HIV+ and women with AIDS, who were left out of early definitions of the disease and treatment research.

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<sup>7</sup>Trent Straube, "Memory = History = Knowledge = Power," POZ, February 14, 2022, <https://www.poz.com/article/memory-history-knowledge-power>.

<sup>8</sup> "ABOUT US/Nancy MacNeil," ACT UP LA, accessed October 23, 2023, <https://www.actupla.org/about-us>.

<sup>9</sup> "ABOUT US/Nancy MacNeil."

<sup>10</sup> "ABOUT US/Nancy MacNeil.," Nancy MacNeil personal papers, box 1, Folder 4, June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>11</sup> "ABOUT US/Nancy MacNeil."

<sup>12</sup> "ABOUT US/Nancy MacNeil."

<sup>13</sup> "ABOUT US/Nancy MacNeil"

<sup>14</sup> Nancy, MacNeil, "HIV, IDU's, and YOU: a report on the Patient Care Committee of the ACTG", n.d., box 2, folder 12, June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>15</sup> "ABOUT US/Nancy MacNeil."

<sup>16</sup> "ABOUT US/Nancy MacNeil."

In 1993, MacNeil co-founded and was the executive director of Women Alive Coalition, a national non-profit organization directly supporting and empowering HIV+ women and women with AIDS through health services and programming, the establishment of a 24-hour national hotline, and a newsletter written in both Spanish and English. Women Alive grew out of another organization, Being Alive, which was run by friend and AIDS activist Ferd Eggan. He supported Lucey and MacNeil in the foundation of Women Alive after serving as executive director of Being Alive in the 1990s.<sup>17</sup>

Both Mary and Nancy died within hours of each other on Saturday, February 11th, 2023. The two are survived by their two daughters, Holly and Mellissa.

### **Scope and content:**

The materials in this collection are mostly papers related to ACT UP/LA like Women's Caucus meeting minutes, flyers for actions, publications and reports, and photographs from actions. There is also a large amount of clippings reporting on HIV/AIDS and ACT UP. The small series of personal papers includes autobiographical writings, ID cards, resumes, certificates and plaques.

The series of publications is made up of reports, health studies, AIDS and women's health related newsletters, magazines, newspapers, and zines.

The photographs in this collection are of ACT UP actions and protests, with some personal photos of Mary and Nancy. Materials were not in any original order except for photos in albums and grouped by which protests they document. Materials were arranged by type, and when possible, by year.

Some materials were digitized due to mold damage. These materials mostly consist of letters related to ACT UP/LA, as well as ACT UP/LA documents about the new County 5p21 AIDS Clinic.

### **Processing notes:**

This collection was processed by Laura Dintzis in September 2023 under a California State Grant. The photos are in albums except for a few folders with loose photos.

There are notes and annotations within the albums.

### **Arrangement:**

Series I: Mary Lucey Personal Papers

Series II: Nancy MacNeil Personal Papers

Series III: AIDS Activism

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<sup>17</sup> "Ferd Eggan, 60; Ally for Those with HIV, AIDS - Los Angeles Times," accessed October 23, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-jul-12-me-eggan12-story.html>.; "Women Alive," accessed October 23, 2023, <https://www.thebody.com/content/art56.html>.

Series IV: Publications

Series V: Photographs

**Box level contents list:**

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**Box 1**

Series I: Mary Lucey Personal Papers

Series II: Nancy MacNeil Personal Papers

Series III: AIDS Activism

Scope and content: Lucey and MacNeil's personal papers include a biography of Mary's life, a contract for her life story, record of a hospital visit, ID cards, informational documents from Mary's consulting business, and an oral history from Nancy's grandmother. The AIDS activism materials include papers from ACT UP and ACT UP LA women's caucus, papers from Women Alive newsletter such as an article draft written by Mary, and letter confirming non-profit status for being alive coalition. Subject folders: 1993 March on Washington, people with AIDS in prison.

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| Box 1, Folder 1  | Mary Lucey personal papers (1 of 3 folders)    |
| Box 1, Folder 2  | Mary Lucey personal papers (2 of 3 folders)    |
| Box 1, Folder 3  | Mary Lucey personal papers (3 of 3 folders)    |
| Box 1, Folder 4  | Nancy MacNeil Personal Papers (1 of 2 folders) |
| Box 1, Folder 5  | Nancy MacNeil Personal Papers (2 of 2 folders) |
| Box 1, Folder 6  | Letters (1 of 2 folders)                       |
| Box 1, Folder 7  | Letters (2 of 2 folders)                       |
| Box 1, Folder 8  | ACT UP LA Women's Caucus (1 of 2 folders)      |
| Box 1, Folder 9  | ACT UP LA Women's Caucus (2 of 2 folders)      |
| Box 1, Folder 10 | ACT UP Papers                                  |
| Box 1, Folder 11 | EZTV Fundraiser for ACT UP LA                  |
| Box 1, Folder 12 | Lesbian Aids Action Friday                     |

- Box 1, Folder 13      Women Alive Coalition
- Box 1, Folder 14      1993 March on Washington
- Box 1, Folder 15      People with AIDS in prison
- Box 1, Folder 16      Letters from HIV positive women in prison

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**Box 2**

Series III: AIDS Activism

Series IV: Publications

Scope and content: The materials on AIDS activism are subject folders on women with HIV in prison, and the topic PWA's and public policy. Then there are folders organized by type of material, flyers for protests and actions, resources and fact sheets, stickers, memorials, and Ferd Eggen passports. There is also a piece of fabric with PISD in red, this stands for people with immune system disorders, and a button. The publications in this box are reports written by ACT UP, health studies from LA County, AIDS and women's health related newsletters such as *Being Alive* and *Women Alive*, magazines like POZ, newspapers, and zines.

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- Box 2, Folder 1      PWA's and public policy
- Box 2, Folder 2      Flyers for actions and protests
- Box 2, Folder 3      Resources and fact sheets
- Box 2, Folder 4      Stickers
- Box 2, Folder 5      Memorials
- Box 2, Folder 6      Ferd Eggen passports
- Box 2, Folder 7      PISD fabric and button
- Box 2, Folder 8      Clippings mentioning Mary or Nancy (1 of 2 folders)
- Box 2, Folder 9      Clippings mentioning Mary or Nancy (2 of 2 folders)
- Box 2, Folder 10      Publications (1 of 4 folders)
- Box 2, Folder 11      Publications (2 of 4 folders)
- Box 2, Folder 12      Publications (3 of 4 folders)

Box 2, Folder 13      Publications (4 of 4 folders)

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### **Box 3**

Series IV: Publications

Series V: Photographs

Scope and content: The publications in this box are runs of Women Alive and Being Alive newsletters, as well as a book on women and AIDS by ACT UP/NY. The photographs are both personal and activist related.

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Box 3, Folder 1	Publications - Women Alive newsletter (1 of 2 folders)
Box 3, Folder 2	Publications Women Alive newsletter (2 of 2 folders)
Box 3, Folder 3	Publications Being Alive newsletter
Box 3, Folder 4	Publications - Women, AIDS, and Activism by ACT UP NY
Box 3, Folder 5	Photos - Atlanta CDC Definition Action for Women
Box 3, Folder 6	Photos - ACT UP LA
Box 3, Folder 7	Photos - Donuts with Donna
Box 3, Folder 8	Photos - Spirit of Hope, Being Alive
Box 3, Folder 9	Photos - Universal healthcare action, D.C.
Box 3, Folder 10	Photos - Candlelight AIDS Cure project
Box 3, Folder 11	Photos - Women Alive
Box 3, Folder 12	Photos (1 of 4 folders)
Box 3, Folder 13	Photos (2 of 4 folders)
Box 3, Folder 14	Photos (3 of 4 folders)
Box 3, Folder 15	Photos (4 of 4 folders)

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## **Box 4**

Series I: Mary Lucey Personal Papers

Series III: AIDS Activism

Series IV: Photographs

Scope and content: Two plaques for Mary Lucey, one from Being Alive and one from Women Alive. One small photo album, and two cassette tapes.

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Box 4, Folder 1	Plaque - Being Alive Plaque commending Mary Lucey
Box 4, Folder 2	Plaque - Women Alive Plaque commending Mary Lucey
Box 4, Folder 3	Photo album
Box 4, Folder 4	Cassette tapes (2) - History of the HIV epidemic in women, Flemming, Wolfe, Lucy, Anastos

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## **Box 5**

Series V: Photographs

Scope and content: A photo album of protests and Mary and Nancy's personal life.

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Box 5, Folder 1	Photo album - 1993 March on Washington, Dyke March, and AB-101 March on Sacramento
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## **Box 6**

Series V: Photographs

Scope and content: Three photo albums of protests and Mary and Nancy's personal life.

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Box 6, Folder 1	Photo Album
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Box 6, Folder 2      Photo Album

Box 6, Folder 3      Photo Album

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## **Box 7**

Series III: AIDS Activism

Scope and content: Newspaper clippings saved by Mary and Nancy. Some have handwriting annotations.

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Box 7, Folder 1      Clippings

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## **Box 8**

Series I: Mary Lucey Personal Papers

Series II: Nancy MacNeil Personal Papers

Scope and Content: Awards and award plaques from ACT UP, Being Alive, and Women Alive organizations.

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Box 8, Folder 1      Women Alive award to Nancy MacNeil

Box 8, Folder 2      Reality Ball dedication to Mary Lucey

Box 8, Folder 3      LACE award to Mary Lucey

Box 8, Folder 4      Being Alive Spirit of Hope award