



## **Guide to the Joseph Wicks/Ceasar's Showbar Collection (ID: MSS-317)**

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English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

First Edition

Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections
<b>Title:</b>	Joseph Wicks/Ceasar's Showbar Collection
<b>ID:</b>	MSS-317
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1980-2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Linear Feet
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .
<b>Mixed Materials</b> [32887922555794] <b>[box]:</b>	1
<b>Mixed Materials</b> [32887922555836] <b>[box]:</b>	2
<b>Graphic Materials</b> [32887922556420] <b>[frame]:</b>	3
<b>Graphic Materials</b> [32887922556156] <b>[frame]:</b>	4
<b>Mixed Materials</b> [32887922474327] <b>[box]:</b>	5

### Preferred Citation

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## Biographical / Historical

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Joseph C. Wicks was born in 1941 in Warren, Ohio. After four years of service on the original crew of the USS Enterprise in the United States Navy, he returned to Ohio to open several bars and restaurants. Wicks and his partner, a man who performed on stage as Denise Michaels, helped to develop an LGBTQ entertainment scene in downtown Toledo.

Wicks was not just a businessman, he was a man with vision and imagination, bringing the first disco and lighted dance floor to Toledo. Among his many accomplished ventures in the bar trade were: Camel Lot, Camel Lot Complex, Freudian Slip-Up, The Warehouse, Hooterville Station, and Caesar's Showbar. Each establishment catered to the varied interests and demands of patrons, both gay and straight. His restaurant undertakings included the main street restaurant and deli, Auntie Em's, Brenda's, Joe's, and The Arlington.

Caesar's Showbar, to date Toledo's longest-running gay bar, opened at its original location on 133 Erie Street and eventually moved to its more famous location on Jefferson Avenue and Ontario Street. While Wicks did not normally wear drag, he promoted Caesar's by dressing in costume as Cleopatra and holding a sign that stated, "Cleopatra Prefers Caesar." Shortly after opening, Caesar's Showbar became a prominent nightspot for the LGBTQ community, offering three drag shows a night, six days a week, in addition to hosting the "Miss Glass Citi" pageant. Charity performances were also a key part of the bar's identity; Caesar's was a key participant in the annual "Sex, Drag, and Rock and Roll" fundraiser for HIV/AIDS awareness programs for Planned Parenthood and David's House Compassion in the 1990s and 2000s.

Wicks continued to run Caesar's successfully until 2005, when a TARTA bus crashed into the front of the building. Unfortunately, Wicks was unable to collect enough money to fully repair the building. After being diagnosed with multiple cancers, he agreed to partner with another business to eventually take full ownership, resulting in Caesar's closing in early 2010.

Wicks was a compassionate and charitable man. In an interview for the Toledo Blade, a friend stated Wicks would help anyone in need, taking in people who had nowhere else to stay, or helping those in need out of trouble. Wicks's sister, Peg Lizardy explained, "If they were hungry, he'd feed them. If they didn't have a place to stay, he'd open up his house and let them stay there as long as they needed to. He was a very, very generous person."

Joseph Wicks died on Monday April 19, 2010 at age 68. After his death, members of the Toledo LGBTQ community campaigned to rededicate a street in Toledo renamed in Wicks's honor, but the project was ultimately defeated.

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection gives researchers a glimpse into the lively history of Caesar's Showbar and showcases its role in the Toledo community.

This collection is divided into series as follows:

Series One, Artifacts, consists primarily of promotional items with the Caesar's logo such as pens, balloons, and menus. Also included are a disco ball from the bar and a large framed portrait of Denise Michaels.

Series Two, Photographs, contains photos of several drag performers and Joseph Wicks. Many of the photos of female impersonators are signed by the performers.

Series Three, Publications, contains various pamphlets, brochures and advertisements for Caesar's and the bar's charity performances. Also included are newspaper articles about Joseph Wicks and the campaign to rename a Toledo street in his honor. Of particular interest is an original sketch by Peg Lizardy of the Caesar's logo.

Series Four, Awards, holds plaques awarded by Caesar's and awards the bar received, most notably an award from David's House Compassion in recognition of Caesar's support of HIV/AIDS activism.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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## Conditions Governing Access

Collection is open for research. Materials may be accessed by request at the Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections on the fifth floor of the William S. Carlson Library on the main campus of the University of Toledo. Materials do not circulate.

## Conditions Governing Use

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- LGBTQ
- Manuscripts
- Toledo History
- Civic Interests
- Music, Art, Drama, and Theatre
- Social Welfare

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## Collection Inventory

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### Artifacts, n.d.

Physical Description: 2.5 Linear Feet

Title/Description	Instances
Disco Ball, Caesar's Showbar, n.d. <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 5
Menus, n.d. <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 1      folder 1
Portrait - Denise Michaels, n.d.	frame 4

Physical Description: 1 Files

Promotional Items, n.d.	box 1	folder 2
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Physical Description: 1 Files

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## Photographs, 1959-1987, n.d.

Physical Description: 0.125 Linear Feet

Title/Description	Instances	
Photographs: Denise Michaels, Joseph Wicks, 1959-1987 <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 1	folder 3
Photographs: Performer Headshots, n.d. <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 1	folder 4

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## Publications, 1974-2012, n.d.

Physical Description: 1 Linear Feet

Title/Description	Instances	
Brochures and Publications, 1974-2010 <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 1	folder 5
Caesar's Showbar Banner, n.d. <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 2	folder 1
Flyers and Advertisements, 1975-2009 <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 1	folder 6
Illustration for Caesar's Showbar by Peg Lizardy, n.d. <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 1	folder 7
Joseph Wicks Obituary, 2010 <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 2	folder 1
"Pride and Protest," Toledo City Paper, June 6, 2012 <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 2	folder 2
Street Renaming, 2012 <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 2	folder 3
Toledo City Paper: Local Drag Queens, 2002	box 2	folder 4

Physical Description: 1 Files

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## Awards, 1990-1993, 2001, n.d.

Physical Description: 0.75 Linear Feet

Title/Description	Instances	
Bar of the Year (presented by Toledo Travel Club), 1993 <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 2	folder 5
Best Door Person - Joseph Wicks, n.d. <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 2	folder 6
David's House Compassion Award for HIV/AIDS Support, n.d. <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 2	folder 7
Grand Rapids Rivermen to Joseph Wicks on 6th Anniversary, June 1990 <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 2	folder 8
Miss Caesar Winner - Talent, 2001 <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 2	folder 9
Miss Caesar - First Runner Up, 2001 <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 2	folder 10
Thank You - Caesar's Showbar, from OH City Oasis, August 7, 1992 <u>Physical Description</u> : 1 Files	box 2	folder 11

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