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MS – 198: Letters of Leonard G. Roberts

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MS – 198: Letters of Leonard G. Roberts

Description

The letters from Leonard (Mike) Roberts to Geraldine Smith Roberts are very much the correspondence of a young, homesick husband in love. The first series of the collection includes five letters from Mike dated 1937 and two notes presumed to be circa the same time, marking the progress of their teenage courtship. The collection resumes in 1944 when Roberts begins his military service. Drafted late in the war, Roberts was not posted overseas until January, 1945. The letters detail his deployment and military life with a hiatus between February 3rd April 6th as Roberts is taken prisoner by the Germans.

His letters continue after his release, detailing his mental, physical, and spiritual condition. With a keen awareness of the censors, Mike reports as much as he is able to on the conditions in camp, traveling through France, his desire for the Germans to surrender and the war to end, his treatment and daily life in a military hospital, and events back home in Coffeyville, Kansas. One letter in the collection, dated February 19th, 1945 was sent from Geraldine to Mike. It is as heartsick as Mike's letters are to her, full of news from home and fantasies about their life after the war. Series 5 contains 3 newspaper clippings that offer information on Mike's liberation from prison camp and post-war career. The Roberts' letters offer an intimate look at one of many long distance relationships between deployed men and their wives during the Second World War. This collection has research potential for anyone interested in correspondence, the daily duties and lives of soldiers in WWII France, German prison camps, or recovery in a military hospital.

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Keywords

Second World War, letters, military, homesickness

Disciplines

European History | Military History | Political History | United States History

MS – 198: Letters of Leonard G. Roberts

(1 box, .25 cubic feet)

Inclusive Dates: 1939-1945

Bulk Dates: 1944-1945

*Processed by: Olivia Simmet '18, Diane Werley Smith Intern)
June 2018*

Provenance Purchased from Jerry Jordan in 2016.

Biographical Note

Leonard G. Roberts was born July 1, 1921 in Missouri. He began courting his future wife, Geraldine "Gerry/Jerry" M. Smith in the late 1930s when they both lived in Coffeyville, Kansas. They were married in 1941. Roberts enlisted in the U.S. Army (serial number 39598450) on August 22, 1944 and deployed to Europe in February 1945. From February 6 to April 6, 1945, Roberts was detained as a Prisoner of War by Germans in Stalag 12A to 9B in Hessen. Prior to his capture he was assigned to the 87th Division, 346th Regiment, having previously served in an auxiliary capacity to various units. After his service ended September 3, 1945, Mike completed six weeks of training at the Fry Aviation School in Kansas City. After gaining employment at the Consolidated Airways Corporation, Mike and Gerry moved to sunny San Diego, California as he had so often suggested they do in their correspondence.

Series Description

This collection consists primarily of correspondence sent from Leonard to Geraldine Roberts and is broken into four chronological series: **Series 1:** Pre-War Correspondence, **Series 2:** January 1944-1945, **Series 3:** February 1945, **Series 4:** April 1945, and **Series 5:** Newspaper Clippings.

Scope and Content Notes

The letters from Leonard (Mike) Roberts to Geraldine Smith Roberts are very much the correspondence of a young, homesick husband in love. The first series of the collection includes five letters from Mike dated 1937 and two notes presumed to be circa the same time, marking the progress of their teenage courtship. The collection resumes in 1944 when Roberts begins his military service. Drafted late in the war, Roberts was not posted overseas until January, 1945. The letters detail his deployment and military life with a hiatus between February 3rd April 6th as Roberts is taken prisoner by the Germans. . His letters continue after his release, detailing his mental, physical, and spiritual condition. With a keen awareness of the censors, Mike reports as much as he is able to on the conditions in camp, traveling through France, his desire for the Germans to surrender and the war to end, his treatment and daily life in a military hospital, and

events back home in Coffeyville, Kansas. One letter in the collection, dated February 19th, 1945 was sent from Geraldine to Mike. It is as heartsick as Mike's letters are to her, full of news from home and fantasies about their life after the war. Series 5 contains 3 newspaper clippings that offer information on Mike's liberation from prison camp and post-war career. The Roberts' letters offer an intimate look at one of many long distance relationships between deployed men and their wives during the Second World War. This collection has research potential for anyone interested in correspondence, the daily duties and lives of soldiers in WWII France, German prison camps, or recovery in a military hospital.

Subjects

Subjects from LCSH: V-mail; Airmail service; Army—Military life; Army spouses; World War, 1939-1945—Equipment and supplies; World War, 1939-1945—Prisoners and prisons, German; World War, 1939-1945—Medical care

Box List

Box 1

1-0 Finding Aid and Biographical Information

Series 1 Pre- War Correspondence

- GWW2_MS1980101_1937a
- GWW2_MS1980101_1937b
- GWW2_MS1980101_1937c
- GWW2_MS1980101_19370805
- GWW2_MS1980101_19370812

Series 2 January 1944-1945

- GWW2_MS1980102_1944
- GWW2_MS1980102_194501
- GWW2_MS1980102_19441231
- GWW2_MS1980102_19450101
- GWW2_MS1980102_19450106a
- GWW2_MS1980102_19450106b
- GWW2_MS1980102_19450124
- GWW2_MS1980102_19450126
- GWW2_MS1980102_19450128
- GWW2_MS1980102_19450129

Series 3 February 1945

- GWW2_MS1980103_1945a

- GWW2_MS1980103_1945b
- GWW2_MS1980103_19450201
- GWW2_MS1980103_19450203
- GWW2_MS1980103_19450219

Series 4 April 1945

- GWW2_MS1980104_19450406
- GWW2_MS1980104_19450411a
- GWW2_MS1980104_19450411b
- GWW2_MS1980104_19450413
- GWW2_MS1980104_19454014
- GWW2_MS1980104_19450416
- GWW2_MS1980104_19450418
- GWW2_MS1980104_19450420
- GWW2_MS1980104_19450421
- GWW2_MS1980104_19450424
- GWW2_MS1980104_19450427
- GWW2_MS1980104_19454030

Series 5 Newspaper Clippings

- Clipping 1: "PVT. ROBERTS SAFE"
- Clipping 2: "Pvt. Roberts Cables"
- Clipping 3