

Woods, Richard Letters to Sally Samson Woods

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1964-1967



WILLIAM
& MARY

CHARTERED 1693

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MS 00223

Unit ID

/repositories/2/resources/7732

Unit Date

1964-1967

Mixed Materials

1 (Box)

Language

English

source

Gary Alonzo Barranger

Creator

Woods, Richard

Extent

0.5 Linear Feet

Repository

Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

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Biographical / Historical

Richard Dale Woods served as a Boiler Technician Petty Officer Second Class (BT 2/C) in the United States Navy on board the USS Holder (DD-819), a Gearing Class Destroyer, and the USS Magoffin (APA-199). While on board the Magoffin, he facilitated transport of U.S. Marines to the region. He was born in Gastonia, North Carolina, on June 9, 1940 to Elvert and Sue Woods; he had a sister named Leonora and a brother named David.

Content Description

Collection contains 57 handwritten letters from Richard Dale Woods to his girlfriend and later wife Sally Rose Collins Samson Woods from 1964-1967. During this time, Woods served as a Boiler Technician Petty Officer Second Class in the United States Navy on board the USS Holder (DD-819), a Gearing Class Destroyer, and the USS Magoffin (APA-199). Woods used his middle name, Dale, as his signature. The letters primarily concern Dale's desire to reunite with Sally and her young son, Rod (from her first marriage) while the two first live in Zanesville, Ohio, and then Gastonia, North Carolina.

The letters are arranged chronologically. There is one letter from Dale's mother, Sue, to Sally, dated April 1965. Some stationery includes printed images of the USS Holder and the USS Magoffin respectively. Other stationery has comical quotes and colorful cartoons across the header. Folder 16 contains a hand painted greeting card, "From Okinawa," from Dale to Sally, dated November 1965.

From October to December 1964, Dale travelled to Key West, Florida; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and Miami,

Florida. He proposed marriage to Sally and expressed concern about Rodney's biological father, Karl (sometimes spelled Carl) interfering with a possible relocation. Dale also addressed rumors he had a child with a Canadian woman; discussed his work in the ship's boiler room; and threatened racially motivated violence against his African-American supervisor on the USS Holder.

In 1965, Dale shared his grandmother's death and how he did not learn about it until after her burial. He also mentioned his near-constant illness, and an arrest for a traffic violation after a March 1965 visit with Sally. In April 1965, Sally travelled to Gastonia, North Carolina, where she married Dale and set up residence. In May 1965, Dale was again in Guantanamo, "where all this damn trouble is." Dale also learned that the USS Magoffin will transport Marines to Vietnam; he does not write favorably about the ship, referring to it as "screwed up from the word 'Go,'" "pig iron" and a "rust bucket." In July 1965, Dale was in a car accident near San Diego, California, that scarred his face; several letters from this point forward mention issues with the insurance company, court fees, official charges and car repair. Dale left for Vietnam on August 23, 1965, with stops in Yokoshura, Japan; Inchon, Korea, Puchon, Korea; Subic Bay, Philippines; and finally Da Nang, Vietnam. He described inoculations received, physical grooming, and ship conditions: crowded, dark and smelly, with frequent pump and boiler break downs.

In 1966, Dale sent Sally and Rod gifts: a cultured pearl, child's jacket, and Japanese radio. The couple also discussed relocation to San Francisco and/or San Diego, California. Dale tells Sally about a fellow soldier who jumped overboard but the body was never recovered. He also discussed combat pay, tax filing, and his potential adoption of Rod. In January 1966, Dale briefly mentioned the Viet Cong fighting on land. During this period, Sally lived with Dale's sister, Leonora, and her family. However, something serious happened in mid-1966 that disrupts the flow of letters. In June 1966, Dale was "chewed out" by his captain; before this, he also sent Sally a letter that he regrets (the letter does not survive). The correspondence then moved to August 1966, when Dale wrote Sally from the Naval brig (or prison) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He needed to collect his clothes from her when he is released post trial. No mention is made of his offense, but the letter's tone suggests he and Sally are no longer involved. Dale mentioned how Sally destroyed his letters after reading them, and she has moved back to Zanesville. However, by March 1967, Dale (no longer using his naval rank in the return address) and his father Elvert help move Sally back to Gastonia. Dale promises to be a better husband and prove himself to her.

Keywords

Destroyers (Warships)

Gearing Class (Destroyers)

Vietnam War, 1961-1975

Gary Alonzo Barranger

United States Navy

Description of Subordinate Components

Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/268189

Unit Date 1964 October 1 - October 31

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 1 (folder)

Language English

Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/284218

Unit Date 1964 November 2 - November 9

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 2 (folder)

Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/284219

Unit Date 1964 November 12 - December 18

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 3 (folder)

Correspondence**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/284220**Unit Date** 1965 January 5 - February 17**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)**Container** 4 (folder)**Correspondence****Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/284221**Unit Date** 1965 March 20 - March 24**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)**Container** 5 (folder)**Correspondence****Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/284222**Unit Date** 1965 April 13 - April 29**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)**Container** 6 (folder)**Correspondence****Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/284223**Unit Date** 1965 May 5 - May 8**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)**Container** 7 (folder)**Correspondence****Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/284224**Unit Date** 1965 July 21 - August 2**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)**Container** 8 (folder)**Correspondence****Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/284225**Unit Date** 1965 August 9 - August 11**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)**Container** 9 (folder)**Correspondence****Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/284226**Unit Date** 1965 August 16 - September 27**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)**Container** 10 (folder)**Correspondence****Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/284227**Unit Date** 1965 November 2 - November 20**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)**Container** 11 (folder)

Correspondence**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/284228**Unit Date** 1965 December 14 - December 28**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)**Container** 12 (folder)**Correspondence****Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/284229**Unit Date** 1966 January 10 - January 26**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)**Container** 13 (folder)**Correspondence****Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/284230**Unit Date** 1966 February 5 - March 10**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)**Container** 14 (folder)**Correspondence****Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/284231**Unit Date** 1966 June 17 - 1967 March 10**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)**Container** 15 (folder)**Correspondence****Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/284232**Unit Date** Greeting Card**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)**Container** 16 (folder)