

Oehlman, Walter F. Letters

Walter F. Oehlman Letters

1942-1945

Title Statement

Oehlman, Walter F. LettersGuide to the Walter F. Oehlman Letters MS 00257

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Publication Statement

Publisher: Special Collections Research Center

William & Mary Special Collections Research Center
Earl Gregg Swem Library
400 Landrum Dr
Williamsburg, Virginia
Business Number: 757-221-3090
spcoll@wm.edu
URL: <https://libraries.wm.edu/libraries-spaces/special-collections>

2018-10-02

Notes

Description enhancement by Robert Browne in July 2019.

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2025-05-15 13:01:24 -0400.

Language Usage: English

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MS 00257

Unit ID

/repositories/2/resources/8178

Unit Date

1942-1945

Language

English

source

Prestia, Brett

Creator

Oehlman, Walter F.

Extent

0.5 Linear Feet

Extent

The letters were written on paper available to Oehlman, ranging from plain sheets to imprinted ones. Some sheets bore the "U.S.O." logo; others had a "Camp Croft" or a "Red Cross" imprint. Still others bore the imprint of "A-A-A-0," which represented the slogan of the 39th Infantry Regiment, "Anything, Anywhere, Anytime - Bar Nothing." Some letters were sent via "V-Mail," the government's way to expedite mail service for American military personnel overseas. In general, all of his wartime letters had to pass military censorship. During the Spring 1945, some of them show he was "somewhere in Belgium" or "somewhere in Germany." After Germany's surrender, the letters are more location specific.

Repository

Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Brett Prestia, '14, in memory of his grandfather, Robert A Nebel.

Processing Information

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Preferred Citation:

Walter F. Oehlman Letters, Special Collections Research Center, William & Mary Libraries.

Biographical / Historical

Walter F. Oehlman received two Purple Hearts among other service recognitions.

Content Description

The collection consists of 173 letters written by Walter F. Oehlman, Pvt., U.S. Army, to his wartime sweetheart, Grace Brunjes, of Glendale, Long Island, New York. The first letter is dated April 10, 1943; the last one is dated September 21, 1945. These letters span the period from his enlistment in November 1943 to his discharge in October 1945, when he was 32-34 years old.

Other noteworthy letters are two from his mother, which he subsequently enclosed in letters to Grace. In the letters, Oehlman relates his experiences at Boot Camp at Fort Dix and subsequent training at Camp Croft. He also writes while stationed overseas while he was embedded with Company K in the 39th Infantry Regiment in Belgium and Germany. Generally, the topics are (1) his training experiences (first at Ft. Dix, New Jersey and then at Camp Croft, South Carolina), (2) his illness and hospitalization at Camp Croft, (3) his longing to see Grace and ongoing frustration about not being able to obtain furloughs; (4) his wartime experiences in Europe (including the fighting at Remagen and the Battle of Hürtgen Forest), (5) his eagerness to return home once Germany had surrendered, and possible options (specifically, his ranking under the army's point system or obtaining a dependency discharge based on his mother's situation); and always (6) his abiding love for Grace.

In places, he confides his wartime state of mind: apprehension ("not knowing about what is going to happen is what is driving me nuts"); worry ("please try to keep it [his going overseas] from her [his mother] for a little while longer" or "please try to keep my mom in the best spirits possible"); resignation ("I think the best thing is to take things as they come, there is not much else we can do, and hope and pray for an early victory"); mental stress ("I do need a rest as my nerves are a little shaky and have been in the hospital twice. Once for frozen feet and once for being hit in the arm with shrapnel . . . Please don't tell my mom about this."); antipathy ("We have now seen the handiwork on some of these slave laborers here. Anything you

have read about their treatment you can believe if you ever had any doubts in your mind about it. These people deserve no mercy from us at all."); post-VE angst (" . . . there seems to be only one big black cloud now, and that is going to the [C.B.I.] theatre" or "I wonder how it would feel to be home, and trying to act like a human being again."); and hope, fears and optimism ("please wait for me"; then "you will marry me won't you Gracie? Even if I am a broken down wreck"; and later "it makes me feel pretty good to know that you are waiting for me.")

Keywords

World War, 1939-1945

World War, 1939-1945--Germany

Love letters

Prestia, Brett

Description of Subordinate Components

Letters

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/273699

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Language English

Certificate

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/274115

Mixed Materials Manuscripts Oversize Box 4 (Box)

Container 1 (Folder)

Language English