

# Comfort, Elsie Correspondence

Elsie Comfort Correspondence

1943-1952

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## Title Statement

Comfort, Elsie Correspondence Guide to the Elsie Comfort Correspondence MS 00115

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## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

MS 00115

### Unit ID

/repositories/2/resources/8256

### Unit Date

1943-1952

### Mixed Materials

1 (Box)

### Language

English

### source

Gary Alonzo Barranger

### Extent

.25 Linear Feet

### Repository

Special Collections Research Center

## Administrative Information

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# **Biographical / Historical**

Elsie Jean Comfort lived in Elmira, New York, with her mother Alice Mae, her father Merrell, and her sisters Laura Jean and Mary Ellen. Comfort wrote letters to men from Elmira serving overseas with the Army, Navy, and Air Force, but none of her letters are contained here. She was also a musician who performed on the radio.

# **Content Description**

The correspondence includes handwritten postcards, letters, and V-Mail as well as three photographs addressed to Elsie Jean Comfort (referred to as Elsie, Jean and Jeannie) from United States servicemen in the Army, Navy and Air Force during World War II and the Korean War. Several of the letter writers are from Comfort's hometown of Elmira, New York. Comfort receives letters from F.W. (Franklin Woodward or "Barney") Harlan; Charles R. Haner; James Ewing, Jr.; Donald Fickers; Richard T. Butts; Dick Murray; Raymond Haven; Roger Comfort; and Willie van der Linden, Comfort's post-World War II pen pal from Rotterdam, in the Netherlands. Comfort also receives one letter from her older sister, Jeanette Comfort.

Elsie is stateside during both conflicts but receives correspondence from Texas, Georgia, Alaska, Virginia, California, as well as posts in Europe, Africa and Australia. Several letters mention gifts sent to Comfort: Italian and French currency; Australian postage; and a small souvenir from Italy. The letters primarily show how correspondence provided a morale boost for military members. There is also a focus on contemporary entertainment and music, particularly in letters from Harlan, who is in a Navy band, and Fickers, a fan of popular music. Correspondents mention Irving Berlin and Bob Hope performances for the troops. Al Joslon is also discussed at length.

Ewing's 1952 death in a plane crash is also briefly described by Fickers.

Comfort's correspondence with van der Linden includes exchange of daily activities, school, and the weather. The pen pals also exchange small trinkets. There is a description of the American Cemetery at Margraten, and van der Linden describes World War II American soldiers as "liberators."

The three photographs depict the Alps (accompanied May 20, 1945 letter from Charles Haner); a school photograph of Willie van der Linden (accompanied March 27, 1949 letter from van der Linden); and Don Fickers playing poker (accompanied August 12, 1951 letter from Fickers).

# **Keywords**

World War, 1939-1945

Korean War, 1950-1953

Pen pals

Gary Alonzo Barranger

Comfort, Elsie

# **Description of Subordinate Components**

### **Correspondence, Address List**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277324

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 1 (Folder)

**Language** English

#### **Scope and Contents**

Partial inventory from Elsie Comfort, including a list of servicemen with whom she corresponded and lists of current addresses as they were transferred.

### **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277326

**Unit Date** 1943 March 16 - October 15

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 2 (Folder)

**Language** English

#### **Scope and Contents**

Postcard from March and a letter from October from Cpl. Dick Murray, a postcard from Pvt. Charles Haner from May, a letter from Raymond Haven from July, and a letter from Pvt. Francis Manning from October.

### **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277327

**Unit Date** 1943 October 20 - December 4

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 3 (Folder)

**Language** English

#### **Scope and Contents**

Postcard and letter dated October, two letters from November, and one from December, all from F. W. "Barney" Harlan first from Camp Peary, Virginia and later from USN Repair Base in San Diego, California. Barney writes largely about the boredom of camp life, playing piano for an orchestra, and a visit to the San Diego Zoo.

### **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277328

**Unit Date** 1944 January 29 - April 22

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 4 (Folder)

**Language** English

#### **Scope and Contents**

Three letters from Barney Harlan from January, February, and April, and a postcard from Glenwood Clark from February. Glenwood is stationed in New York City and is impressed by its size; Barney writes about how things are going back home, and little frustrations of military life.

### **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277329

**Unit Date** 1944 May 19 - September 9

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 5 (Folder)

**Language** English

#### **Scope and Contents**

Three V-mail letters, two miniaturized and one full from Charles Haner from May, June, and September, a letter from Dick Murray from July, a V-mail miniature from Barney Harlan from August, and a letter from Elsie's brother, Pvt. Roger I. Comfort. Charles Harlan and Dick Murray are overseas in the European theater. Barney writes to Jeanette Comfort.

## **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277330

**Unit Date** 1944 October 10 - December 30

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 6 (folder)

**Language** English

### **Scope and Contents**

Four letters from Barney Harlan, one from October and November and two from December, and one V-mail Christmas card from Charles Haner in November. Barney is stationed in the Admiralty Islands in the South Pacific, and writes about Christmas and Elsie's plans for college.

## **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277331

**Unit Date** 1945 January 16 - May 20

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 7 (Folder)

**Language** English

### **Scope and Contents**

Five letters: three from Charles Haner including two V-mail miniatures in December, January, and May, and one letter from Barney Harlan in January. The May 20 letter from Charles Haner mentions the end of the war in Europe. Roger Comfort appears to have been injured, but is recovering.

## **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277332

**Unit Date** 1945 June 13 - October 28

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 8 (folder)

**Language** English

### **Scope and Contents**

Five items: a postcard from Clarkie (probably Glenwood Clark) from June, a letter each from Barney Harlan, Jeannie Comfort, and Charles Haner in July, and a letter from Charles Haner in August. Jeanette is at a military camp, and Charles is outside of Berlin.

## **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277333

**Unit Date** 1948 January 21 - October 4

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 9 (folder)

**Language** English

### **Scope and Contents**

One letter from Barney Harlan from October 1945, three from Willie van der Linden in January, July, and September 1948, and one from Kenneth Kelly from October 1948. Willie is a high-school-aged pen pal in Rotterdam, Netherlands.

## **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277334

**Unit Date** 1948 November 3 - 1951 March 1

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 10 (Folder)

**Language** English

### **Scope and Contents**

Three letters from Willie van der Linden in November 1948 and March and April 1949, and one from James Ewing, Jr in March 1951. Willie writes about Dutch culture and gifts Elsie has sent, and James encourages

Elsie to be confident despite not being pretty.

### **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277335

**Unit Date** 1951 March 13 - March 29

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 11 (Folder)

**Language** English

### **Scope and Contents**

One letter from James "Jimmy" Ewing, Jr. in March and three from Donald "Don" Fickers, two to Elsie in March and one to Jeanette Comfort in April. Don is a friend of James's, whom James encouraged to write to Elsie. He expects to be sent to Korea soon.

### **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277336

**Unit Date** 1951 May 22 - September 17

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 12 (folder)

**Language** English

### **Scope and Contents**

Four letters from Don Fickers, including one each to Elsie and Jeanette in May and one to Jeanette in August, and one from Richard T. Butts in September. Don grows increasingly depressed. Richard introduces himself as connected to a mutual friend named Eleanor. He is also stationed in Korea.

### **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277337

**Unit Date** 1951 September - November 20

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 13 (Folder)

**Language** English

### **Scope and Contents**

Five letters, one from Don Fickers to Jeanette in September, one each from Willie van den Linden and Richard Butts in October, and one from Ken Kelly in November. Richard writes about things he has seen in the war, and passing a test for a high school equivalent degree.

### **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277338

**Unit Date** 1951 December 11 - 1952 January 19

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 14 (folder)

**Language** English

### **Scope and Contents**

Five letters, one probably from Ken Kelly (signature is unclear, no return address) in December 1951, one from Willie van der Linden in December 1951, and three from Richard Butts in January 1952. Ken is stationed in Trinidad. Dick has been injured but insists on returning to the front line; he also talks about his experiences with religion.

### **Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277339

**Unit Date** 1952 February 14 - September 29

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 15 (folder)

**Language** English

**Scope and Contents**

Five letters, one from Richard Butts in February, three from Don Fickers to Jeannette Comfort, one in February and two in September, and one from Willie van der Linden in September. Don was reunited with Jimmy but Jimmy, but Jimmy appears to have been killed when a plane crashed into his ship.

**Correspondence**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/277340

**Unit Date** Undated

**Mixed Materials** 1 (Box)

**Container** 16 (folder)

**Language** English

**Scope and Contents**

Miscellaneous and undated items. Includes loose small items, a letter from Willie van der Linden, a Christmas card from James R. Greatsinger, a greeting card with an illegible signature, and three loose letters from Barney Harlan. Also includes newspaper clippings, two empty envelopes, and a "Pointer" newsletter from US Naval Drydocks, Hunters Point, April 11, 1944.