

## Guide to the Letters of Gerald Koster, World War II



**Gettysburg College, Musselman Library  
Special Collections & College Archives**

**Processed by Krystal Thomas  
February 2007**

## **MS-084: The Letters of Gerald Koster, World War II**

(1 box, .27 cubic feet)

Inclusive Dates: 1943-1946

*Processed by Krystal Thomas  
February 2007*

*Additions by Jenna Fleming  
September 2013*

**Provenance** Purchased from Charles Apfelbaum Rare Manuscripts & Archives, 2000; Additional materials gift of Gary Keck, 2011

### **Biography**

Gerald Koster was a Seaman, first class, aboard the *U.S.S. New Jersey* from her commission on May 23, 1943 to his discharge from the Navy sometime in 1945. He attended the United States Naval Training Station at Great Lakes, Illinois until he was assigned to the first crew of the *New Jersey*. The *New Jersey* was in service in the Pacific Theater of World War II and helped support the occupation of Japan in 1945.

### **Series Description**

The collection is divided into four series. **Series I:** Letters Home 1943-1946; **Series II:** The FM Gazette; **Series III:** Negatives; **Series IV:** Artifacts & Ephemera.

### **Scope and Content**

The collection is comprised mainly of letters written by Koster home to his family in West Toledo, Ohio. The letters follow Koster through training in Great Lakes, Illinois and into combat as well as giving a fairly complete portrait of life on board ship. While Koster's letters to his parents focus on naval operations and descriptions of military life, those addressed to his younger sister, Phyllis, include more information and queries regarding friends, family, and neighbors on the home front. Koster is very careful about censoring; few of his letters have been edited. As the war continues, he becomes more critical of the Navy and the handling of the war in general. His last letters from Japan are particularly critical and illustrate the frustration Gerald felt after being in the Navy for three years.

The collection also includes copies of "The FM Gazette," the ship newsletter for the FM division of the *New Jersey*. These newsletters are "scandal" sheets, however they provide a glimpse at life on board ship and how Koster and his shipmates entertained themselves as well as chronicling new commanders and supply officers as they came and went.

There are also negatives of Koster family photos depicting Gerald and his family, the family home and the grocery store that Gerald's father bought during the war, Hopewell Grocery.

Included also are miscellaneous memorabilia from life onboard the *New Jersey* as well as postcards sent to Mr. Erlin Koster, Gerald's father.

SERIES I: Letters Home 1943-1945 [99 letters/6 postcards/2 envelopes/1 V-Mail letter]

SERIES II: The FM Gazette [14 newsletters (some duplicate copies)]

SERIES III: Negatives [36 negatives with original envelope]

SERIES IV: Artifacts & Ephemera [see series inventory]

*Processor's note: Unless otherwise specified, all letters are written on board the New Jersey*

(Box/Folder)

### **Box 1**

#### **Series I:**

1 – 1 January 17, 1943 to February 20, 1943: Written at Great Lakes, Illinois

- January ?, 1943 to parents postcard
- January 17, 1943 to parents
- January 22, 1943 to parents
- January 26, 1943 to sister
- January 28, 1943 to parents
- January 28, 1943 to parents postcard
- February 2, 1943 to parents
- February 7, 1943 to sister
- February 9, 1943 to parents postcard
- February 11, 1943 to parents
- February 20, 1943 to parents two pages

1 – 2 March 3, 1943 to April 7, 1943: Written at Great Lakes, Illinois

- March 3, 1943 to parents two pages
- March 15, 1943 to parents two pages; incorrectly dated 1942
- March 23, 1943 to parents written at home, West Toledo, Ohio
- April 5, 1943 to parents
- April 7, 1943 to parents

1 – 3 April 10, 1943 to April 19, 1943: Written at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

- April 10, 1943 to parents
- April 14, 1943 to parents two pages
- April 16, 1943 to parents
- April 19, 1943 to parents

1 – 4 May 7, 1943 to June 26, 1943

- May 7, 1943 to sister written at Philadelphia, PA
- May 13, 1943 to parents written at Philadelphia, PA

- May 20, 1943 to sister written at Philadelphia, PA
- May 21, 1943 to parents two pages
- June 1, 1943 to parents
- June 8, 1943 to parents
- June 26, 1943 to parents
- 1 – 5 July 7, 1943 to July 30, 1943
- July 7, 1943 to parents two pages
- July 11, 1943 to parents
- July 16, 1943 to parents two pages
- July 18, 1943 to sister
- July ? , 1943 to parents two pages
- July 30, 1943
- 1 – 6 August 5, 1943 to October 11, 1943
- August 5, 1943 to parents
- August 15, 1943 to parents
- August 17, 1943 to sister
- August 21, 1943 to parents two pages
- August 29, 1943 to parents two pages
- September 24, 1943 to parents written at Philadelphia, PA
- September 26, 1943 to parents written at Philadelphia, PA
- September 26, 1943 to sister written at Philadelphia, PA
- October 2, 1943 to sister written at Philadelphia, PA
- October 11, 1943 to parents written at Philadelphia, PA
- 1 – 7 October 15, 1943 to December 13, 1943
- October 15, 1943 to parents
- October 21, 1943 to parents
- October 24, 1943 to sister
- November 1, 1943 to parents two pages, censored
- November 4, 1943 to sister
- November 9, 1943 to parents censored
- November 12, 1943 to sister
- November 15, 1943 to parents
- November 28, 1943 to parents
- December 5, 1943 to parents
- December 11, 1943 to sister
- December 13, 1943 to parents
- 1 – 8 January 9, 1944 to April 7, 1944
- January 9, 1944 to parents V-mail letter
- February 8, 1944 to parents two pages
- February 20, 1944 to parents
- March 5, 1944 to parents
- March 15, 1944 to sister
- March 16, 1944 to parents
- March 21, 1944 to parents two pages
- April 7, 1944 to parents two pages
- April 7, 1944 to sister

- 1 – 9 April 9, 1944 to May 30, 1944
- April 9, 1944 to parents two pages
  - April 9, 1944 to sister
  - April 11, 1944 to sister
  - April 29, 1944 to parents two pages
  - May 5, 1944 to parents two pages
  - May 11, 1944 to parents two pages
  - May 14, 1944 to parents
  - May 16, 1944 to sister
  - May 18, 1944 to sister
  - May 22, 1944 to parents two pages
  - May 22, 1944 to sister
  - May 27, 1944 to parents two pages
  - May 30, 1944 to parents
- 1 – 10 June 2, 1944 to July 29, 1944
- June 2, 1944 to parents
  - June 5, 1944 to parents
  - July 5, 1944 to parents two pages
  - July 22, 1944 to parents two pages
  - July 22, 1944 to sister
  - July 29, 1944 to parents two pages
- 1 – 11 August 7, 1944 to August 24, 1944
- August 7, 1944 to parents two pages
  - August 10, 1944 to parents two pages
  - August 10, 1944 to sister
  - August 17, 1944 to parents two pages
  - August 17, 1944 to sister
  - August 20, 1944 to sister
  - August 23, 1944 to parents two pages
  - August 23, 1944 to sister
  - August 24, 1944 to parents
- 1 – 12 September 3, 1944 to September 30, 1944
- September 3, 1944 to parents
  - September 5, 1944 to parents two pages
  - September 10, 1944 to sister
  - September 14, 1944 to parents two pages
  - September 17, 1944 to sister
  - September 21, 1944 to parents two pages, censored
  - September 23, 1944 to parents
  - September 25, 1944 to sister
  - September 29, 1944 to parents
  - September 30, 1944 to sister
- 1 – 13 October 10, 1944 to November 30, 1944
- October 10, 1944 to parents two pages
  - October 18, 1944 to parents two pages
  - October 24, 1944 to parents two pages

- October 24, 1944 to sister
- November 9, 1944 to parents two pages
- November 10, 1944 to parents two pages
- November 19, 1944 to parents two pages
- November 30, 1944 to parents two pages
- 1 – 14 December 1, 1944 to December 25, 1944
  - December 1, 1944 to sister
  - December 7, 1944 to parents two pages
  - December 7, 1944 to sister
  - December 10, 1944 to parents two pages
  - December 10, 1944 to sister
  - December 19, 1944 to parents two pages
  - December 19, 1944 to sister
  - December 23, 1944 to parents two pages
  - December 25, 1944 to parents two pages
- 1 – 15 January 2, 1945 to March 5, 1945
  - January 2, 1945 to parents two pages
  - January 25, 1945 to parents two pages
  - January 26, 1945 to sister
  - January 27, 1945 to parents two pages
  - February 7, 1945 to parents two pages
  - February 7, 1945 to sister
  - March 5, 1945 to parents three pages
- 1 – 16 March 8, 1945 to June 24, 1945
  - March 8, 1945 to parents two pages
  - March 10, 1945 to sister
  - March 21, 1945 to parents two pages
  - April 17, 1945 to parents
  - April 18, 1945 to sister
  - May 27, 1945 to parents postcard, from Washington State
  - June 24, 1945 to parents postcard, from Washington State
- 1 – 17 July 2, 1945 to August 27, 1945
  - July 2, 1945 to parents three pages
  - July 20, 1945 to parents three pages
  - July 20, 1945 to sister
  - July 26, 1945 to parents three pages
  - August 2, 1945 to parents two pages
  - August 18, 1945 to parents three pages
  - August 27, 1945 to sister
- 1 – 18 September 7, 1945 to January 28, 1946
  - September 7, 1945 to sister
  - September 10, 1945 to parents three pages, written Okinawa, Japan
  - September 30, 1945 to sister
  - October 3, 1945 to parents five pages, written from Japan
  - October “15”, 1945 to parents four pages, written from Tokyo Bay
  - October 20, 1945 to sister

- November 10, 1945      to parents      written from Yokosuku, Japan
- December 1, 1945      to sister
- January 28, 1946      to sister

**Series II:**

- 2 – 1 The FM Gazette, the FM division's newsletter onboard the *New Jersey*
- June 10, 1944
  - July 9, 1944
  - October 2, 1944
  - October 16, 1944
  - October 30, 1944
  - November 14, 1944(?) (no year printed) (two copies)
  - November 30, 1944
  - December 15, 1944 (two copies)
  - Christmas "card", 1944
  - January 1, 1945
  - January 15, 1945
  - February 1, 1945

**Series III:**

- 3 – 1 Negatives of the Koster family, includes images of Gerald, his family, the family home and the family grocery store

**Series IV:**

- 4 – 1 Artifacts & Ephemera
- July 4<sup>th</sup> Dinner menu for the *New Jersey*, 1944
  - Mother's Day Greeting from Gerald, no date
  - Church Service Bulletin, 11 March 1945
  - Apology postcard sent to Mr. Erlin Koster (Gerald's father) from a book company
  - Postcard from Hawaii to Mr. Erlin Koster from Bob Jenssen
- 4 – 2 Gerald J. Koster US Navy Dog Tags