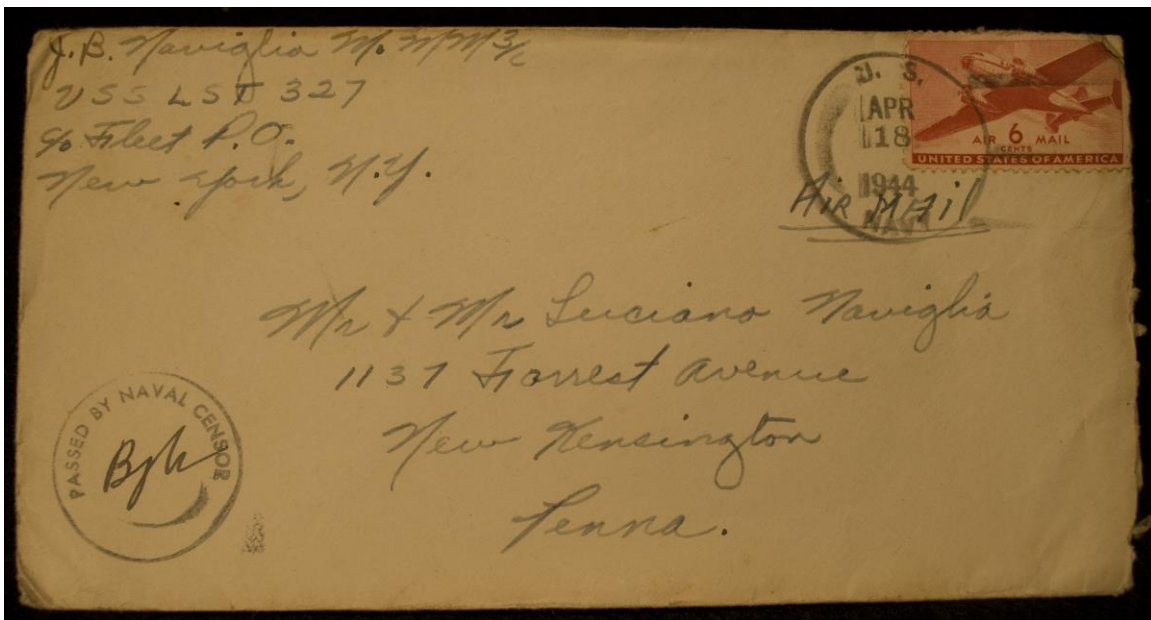


**Guide to the
Naviglia-Woncheck World War II Letters Home:
A Family Separated by War**



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

**G. Ronald Couchman
Spring 2011**

MS – 120: Naviglia-Woncheck World War II Letters Home: A Family Separated by War

(1 box, .18 cubic feet)

Inclusive Dates: June 22, 1943 – October 16, 1945

*Processed by: G. Ronald Couchman
Spring 2011*

Provenance

Gift from William Vitelli
(Accession 2010-0904 & 2011-0970)

Family Biography

The Naviglia and Woncheck families from New Kensington, Pennsylvania, a city 18 miles northeast of Pittsburgh, became connected through the marriage of Anne Naviglia to William T. Woncheck. During the early 1940s, this extended family experienced the separation and sacrifices that a nation at war demands, as five members served during World War II in different units from several branches of the armed forces. Like many service men at the time, they kept in contact with the folks at home through letters and postcards. Nearly all of the letters in this collection are from Anne's four brothers: Louis "GeGe" age 35, John "Johnny" or "Johnnie" age 30, James "Jimmy" age 28, Joseph "Josie" age 22, and from her husband's brother Michael "Check" Woncheck age unknown. According to the 76th Infantry Division Archives website, Louis, one of the Naviglia brothers, was awarded the Bronze Star for heroic or meritorious achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy. His letters do not reveal the circumstances behind that award. All of the Naviglia brothers and Michael Woncheck survived the war. The letters portray a loving family separated by war. The families remained close to their Western Pennsylvania home with Luciano, the father, Louis, Anne, John and James all buried in Greenwood Memorial Park, Lower Burrell, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania.

Scope and Content Notes

The collection consists of 31 letters or postcards by service men to loved ones at home. Nearly all of the letters are from members of the Naviglia-Woncheck extended family including the four Naviglia brothers: Louis (14 letters), John (one letter), James (one letter), Joseph (7 letters), and Michael Woncheck (5 letters) the brother-in-law of their sister Anne. The collection also includes one letter from PFC James Faulkner to his sister and one letter from Pvt. David R. Curry to his cousin, Frances Faulkner, a card address to Ford Peters, a war ration book, a Draft Classification Notice for William Thomas Woncheck, Anne's husband, and an uniform name badge for Sgt Woncheck.

The letters, which originate from a number of U.S. military bases as well as from different locations in Europe and the Pacific, reveal a little about military life but are more significant for what they portray about the war's effect on the service men and on

the folks at home. Many of the letters make reference to and ask about other members of the family serving in different units and theaters of war. Ten of the letters are addressed to their parents. Interestingly, two of the sons, the oldest and the youngest, use the Italian spelling, Luciano, and two uses the English spelling, Louis. Fourteen of the letters are addressed to Anne or William Woncheck.

The letters are organized chronological by sender. All of the letters have the accompanying envelope with many showing the censor seal and free postage.

Box 1

1-1 Copy of the Finding Aid

A description of the circumstances associated with the awarding of the Bronze Star to Louis J. Naviglia, submitted by Brian Navaglia, grandson of Louis J. Naviglia 4/3/2012

Eight digitized photographs of Louis J. Naviglia taken at Camp McCoy, WI and in Europe and digitized photos of his military certificate of identity submitted by Holly Williams and Brian Naviglia, grandchildren of Louis Naviglia 9/4/2012

1-2 Letters from Pfc. Louis J. "GeGe" Naviglia, 76 Division, 304 Infantry Regiment, 3rd Battalion, Medical Detachment from Camp McCoy, WI 1943-1944

October 10, 1943

To: His sister Addressed: Mrs. Anna Woncheck, 613 4th Ave., New Kensington, Penna.
From Camp McCoy, WI Signed: Your brother, GeGe 1p
Money matters, legal issues - Hazel filing for an allotment, comment about new camp

October 15, 1943

To: His sister
From: Camp McCoy, WI Signed: Your brother, GeGe 1p
Help from the Red Cross to obtain a leave to attend a hearing back home, asked about health of Mom and Dad, sister's husband Bill and the kids, and includes a Western Union confirmation of money received

February 15, 1944

To: His sister
From: Camp McCoy, WI Signed: Love, Brother GeGe 2pp
Sends money order to be deposited for him, announces that he will be going on winter maneuvers so may be a little out of touch, describes the snow and skiing, tells of receiving a letter from brother Joe, sends love to mom and dad and the rest of the family

March 26, 1944

To: His mother Addressed: Mrs. Luciano Naviglia, 1137 Forrest Ave, New Kensington, Penna.

From: Camp McCoy, WI Signed: Your son, GeGe 1p

Describes 31 days of winter maneuvers in upper Michigan, expresses uncertainty about future assignments and location, asks about the welfare and location of his three brothers who are also in the armed services

April 6, 1944

To: His sister and her husband, Bill Addressed: Mrs. Anna Woncheck, 613, 4th Ave., New Kensington, Penna.

From: Camp McCoy, WI Signed: Brother, GeGe 2pp

Expresses pleasure at finally receiving a letter, mentions nice weather and snow nearly all melted, acknowledges his one year anniversary in the Army this month, asks about family and kids, sends wishes and love for a Happy Easter to family and parents, expresses uncertainty about future as he could be shipped overseas as has happened to many or may remain to help with basic training for the men soon to arrive, recommends to Bill that he should start to buy bonds as he himself is doing

July 30, 1944

To: His sister

From: Camp McCoy, WI Signed: Love, GeGe 2pp

Glad to learn that brother Joe is back in the States on leave, would very much like to get home to see him but uncertain if he would be able to arrange it, sends regard to family and love to mom and dad, shares that his unit is busy preparing to move out in October.

October 20, 1944

To: His sister

From: Camp McCoy, WI Signed: Brother, GeGe 2pp

Shares receipt of a letter from brother Jim who is overseas and missing the U.S.A., informs the family that his unit is ready to be shipped overseas just waiting for orders but hoping that it is to Europe, informs the family that he just completed new address cards which will be sent to the family once the unit moves and that he will be sending some clothes and other things home which he cannot take with him, sends regards to family and love to mom and dad

October 27, 1944

To: His sister

From: Camp McCoy, WI Signed: Brother, GeGe 1p

Reports two week delay in shipping-out orders, reports nursing a real bad cold but feeling lots better, asks about his brothers has not heard from Joe for awhile, sends love to all

November 14, 1944

To: Sis

From: On maneuvers in Michigan Signed: Love, brother GeGe 3pp
Describes hardships of another 30 days of winter maneuvers, living like animals, with 3 feet of snow, getting around with snowshoes, sleeping in little temporary shelters made from pine trees and eating K and C rations, acknowledges with great thanks receipt of a package of pepperoni, sends love to all

1-3 Letters from Louis J. "GeGe" Naviglia from Europe 1945

May 8, 1945 V-E day

To: Sister and Brother-in-law, Bill

From: Germany Signed: Brother GG 2pp

Reports sitting around taking it easy now that the war is over in Europe, expresses concern about being sent to the Pacific, unit took over a hotel so have a bed and regular baths, shares that his unit has established a \$65 fine for mingling with German girls, takes out the Russian and Polish girls instead, plans to tell more later about the joy he felt in liberating an area, sends love to mom and dad

May 11, 1945

To: Sister

From: Reims, Germany, Postcard of Reims Cathedral Signed: GG, and a copy of a two-page newspaper identified as a Souvenir Edition "Victory Special" highlighting the success of the 76th Division

August 15, 1945 V-J Day

To: His sister Anna and family

From: Velsick, Germany Signed: GeGe 3pp

Reports one happy group of boys, Japanese surrender means that the unit will not be going to the Pacific, maneuvers called off, expects brother John to be heading home since the writer's unit replaced John's unit, wishes they had appropriate drinks to celebrate, imagines how happy people are back home, misses receiving more letters from family especially from brothers Jim and John, acknowledges letter from brother Josie and from Shirley (perhaps a new sister-in-law that he has not met), and a picture that has been added to the unit pin-up board, asks about Bill and his cigars, sends love to family

September 10, 1945

To: His sister and brother-in-law.

From: Zwiesel, Germany Signed: GG 2pp

Expresses frustration about not getting home, hopes it will be by Christmas, outfit being broken up with discharge occurring on a point system, when that occurs he jokes that he will bring about 30 girls that he has promised to take with him, expresses uncertainty about his ability to bring a pair of field glasses to Bill since

his duffle bag with his clothes and other loot had been captured and not returned, sends best regards and love to all

October 16, 1945

To: his parents

From: Camp Boston, France Signed: GG 2pp

Informs family that he is still in France waiting to be shipped home, regrets expressing his frustration by spending all of his money in Paris on drinks and women, expects that brother John is now a civilian and asks about brothers Jim and Joe, complains that he hasn't received mail in over a month

1-4 Letter from Pfc. John "Johnny" H. Naviglia, Cannon Co. 179th Infantry Regiment

March 25, 1944

To: His mother and dad Addresses: Mr. & Mrs. Louis Naviglia, 1137 Forest Ave, New Kensington, Penna.

From: Angio Beachhead, Italy signed: Son Johnny 2pp

Acknowledges receipt of birthday card and one from sister Ann and husband Bill, describes two short visits with brother Joe on shore leave from a naval ship in the area who brought cigarettes (his favorite brand), two bottles of beer, writing paper, fresh eggs, apples, candy and a loaf of bread, all welcomed gifts, reported that brother Joe was surprised to see how they were living up at the front of the fighting, longs to be home now that the weather is improving, sends love to all, asks for more letters from home

1-5 Letter from Corporal James "Jimmy" H. Naviglia, 306 F.A. Brigade Headquarters

March 20, 1944

To: His parents, Addressed: Mrs. Louis Naviglia, 1137 Forrest Ave, New Kensington, PA

From: Somewhere on the West Coast, A.P.O. 77, San Francisco, CA Signed: Your son, Jimmy 2pp

Reports that he cannot tell them exactly where he is at present but assures them that he is fine and in a nice place, thanks sister Ann for the box of candy, hopes that they have heard from brothers Joe and Johnny (stationed in Italy) and that brother "GeGe" can remain in the states, assure mother that he will be alright no matter where he is, Asks mother to write soon, sends love to all

1-6 Letters from Joseph "Josie" B. Naviglia, U.S.S. LST Fleet

March 15, 1944

To: His parents Addressed: Mr. & Mrs. Luciano Naviglia, 1137 Forrest Ave., New Kensington, Penna.

From: Italy Signed: Your son, Josie 2pp

Acknowledges receipt of birthday card and pen, tells that he shares a birthday with one of the cooks so they got a small cake and private party, explains attempts to locate brother Johnny's unit whenever he gets on shore but never close enough to connect with him, informs parents that he is in the next group to be relieved so may be home by June, not enjoying his trips ashore in Italy, tells of attending mass and communion on ship conducted by English Catholic Chaplain, renews hope to see brother Johnny the next time he is on shore, sends love to parents and all and thanks to sister Anne and Bill for card

March 29, 1944

To: His parents

From: Ship at Port in Italy Signed: Love, Your son, Josie 2pp

Reports seeing brother Johnnie again and describes his health and living conditions, expresses a positive attitude about the future of the war, longs for the fresh vegetables from the family garden especially the lettuce sounding much like a rabbit, reports receiving a raise in rating and pay, hopes that his allotment is reaching them correctly

April 3, 1944

To: His parents

From: Italy signed: Love, your devoted son, Josie 3pp

Reports seeing brother Johnny again but will not be able to make further contact since his ship has left the area, shares that his brother is doing well, in a good unit and with a job that is safer than most, acknowledges receipt of an address change for brother Jimmy which confirms that he also has joined the war effort, assures his mother that he and his brothers will all be home soon, expresses the hope that no more of the family will be drafted with four from one family being enough, reminisces about the pets, waiting patiently for a leave that he hopes will occur in a few months even though those that went before him only got 10 days after being in Europe for so long, reports raise in rank to a second class petty officer, longs for a glass of cold milk and one of his mom's meals, The 13th of this month marks the one year anniversary of his leaving the states, sends God's blessings to all at home

1-7 Letters from Joseph "Josie" B. Naviglia U. S. Coast Guard Stations

September 24, 1944

To: his mother, Addressed: Mrs. Luciano Naviglia, 1137 Forrest Ave., New Kensington, PA.

From: Coast Guard Station, Cleveland, Ohio Signed: Love, Your son Josie 3pp

Reports just getting situated in Cleveland, a nice place but best of all it is close to home, asks for twenty dollars having run a little short this pay, bought an electric razor

May 6, 1945

To: His sister, Addressed: Mrs. William Woncheck, 613 Fourth Ave., New Kensington, Penna.

From: U.S. Coast Guard Station, Fairport Harbor, Ohio Signed: Love, Josie 1p
Sends money for a Mother's Day gift, reports receipt of a letter from brother "GeGe", expresses hope that he will be home to see everyone the next weekend

June 26, 1945

To: His parents

From: U.S. Coast Guard Station, Larain, Ohio Signed: Love, Your son, Josie 1p
Reports returning safely from his leave at home having hitchhiked all the way, describes new post at Lorrain, Ohio, sends love and kisses

September 21, 1945

To: His parents

From: U.S. Coast Guard Station, Larain, Ohio Signed: Your son, Josie 2pp
Reports receiving a v-mail from brother "GeGe" who indicates that he is doing fine, asks about his brother-in-law's shaver, the home furnace and his Dad's teeth, Asks Mom to send him a telegram when she knows when brother Johnny will be home so that he can arrange a leave to see him, sends love to all

1-8 Letters from M. "Check" Woncheck PhM 3/c

December 6, 1943

To: "Jaggers" his brother, Addressed: William T. Woncheck Esq., 613 Fourth Ave., New Kensington, Penna. (Personal)

From: U.S.C.G. New York (On West Side Branch YMCA stationary) Signed: As ever.
Check 3pp
Expresses great joy at receiving a letter from him, reports that exams are over and that he did well, hopes to get home for Christmas but asks him not to tell anyone in order to make it a surprise, warns him to stay out of the service because he is needed at home, shares that he has experienced and seen much in New York that he will share with him when they next meet

January 12, 1944

To: Jackson (suspect another nickname for his brother Bill)

From: New York on West Side Branch YMCA stationary Signed: As Ever, Check
Mentions a possible deal to get some Gasoline Coupons for a small cost and asks for a quick return letter if interested, expects to be home for a visit early next month

April 30, 1944

To: Bill, his brother

From: U.S.C.G. Sick Bay, Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn, NY signed: As Ever, Check 2pp

Expects to be shipped out within the week but asks for this to be kept quiet until the time comes, plans to attend the Giants-Brooklyn double header at the Polo Grounds, shares experiences at Jamaican Race Track, teases brother about his "soft" job back home, needs to get back to work handing out medications to his patients

May 8, 1944

To: Bill his brother

From: U.S.C.G. Sick Bay, Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn, N.Y. Signed: Check 1p
Send thanks for the cigarettes, shares that he is still in New York even though he has requested overseas duty, comments further about horse racing, sends God's blessings

March 3, 1945

To: "Jaggers" his brother

From: Somewhere in the Pacific U.S.S. LST, F.B.O. San Francisco, Calif. Signed: Your Brother, Check 3pp

Shares that he is as well as can be expected, longs for the Pennsylvania spring weather, complains that the girls back home don't seem to understand what he is experiencing and states that war is no picnic, laments that he hasn't seen Jimmy Naviglia for quite some time but will keep eyes open (it is likely that they were both stationed in the Pacific at the same time), regrets that he cannot share more because of the censorship, sends regards to Bill's wife Anne and her folks (Mr. & Mrs. Luciano Naviglia), is missing enjoyable female relationships

1-9 Correspondence from others who served

June 22, 1943

From: Ruby, Beaver, PA. 1C (Card from Series B –Home Folks to Service Men – 10 Subjects)

To: Ford Peters, Route 2, Kittanning, Penna

Comments on the girls' names on the front of the card, shares that he is fine

July 17, 1944

From: P.F.C. James Faulkner, A.T.T.G. Hq Company, Camp Gordon Johnston, Fla.
Signed: Your Brother Jim 1C

To: His sister, Frances Faulkner, R.D. #2, Kittanning, Penna.

Wishes her Happy Birthday, expresses support for her in troubles she is having with a boyfriend, announces that he will be home for 10 days in August, encourages her to get guitar tuned-up and ready

September 18, 1944

From: Pvt. David R. Curry, Buckingham Army Air Field, Flexible Gunnery School, Ft. Myers, Fla. Signed: Your cousin, Dave 2pp

To: His cousin, Frances Faulkner, Troy Hill R.D. #2, Kittanning, Penna.

Acknowledges receipt of her letter, informs her that he is in his last of six weeks of schooling, beginning flying missions tomorrow, reacts to things from her letter about people and events back home, expresses hope that Jim (Frances' brother) has gotten his furlough, describes gunnery practice, {September 20} describes his first gunnery mission exercise, sends regards to her family and asks her to write again

1-10 World War II Artifacts

War Ration Book in the name of John Blair Hawk, Worthington, Penna

Classification notice for William Thomas Woncheck, April 27, 1943

World War II uniform name badge – Sgt. Woncheck