

Guide to MS-286: Elizabeth and Elmer McKee, Class of 1944



Gettysburg College, Musselman Library
Special Collections and College Archives

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MS-286: Elizabeth and Elmer McKee, Class of 1944

Processed by Jesse Cromer, Diane Werley Smith Intern

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Size

1 Box, 0.5 Cubic Feet

Location

Special Collections and remote storage

Dates

Inclusive: 1941-1946

Bulk: 1945

Provenance

Donated by Elmer and Elizabeth McKee's son, Robert McKee, August 2018 (Accession #2019-0030)

Biographical Note

Elmer Slaybaugh McKee (1921-2017) began attending Gettysburg College in 1940, where he majored in Chemistry and was a member of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity. In 1942, Elmer enlisted in the U.S. Army and was trained at Fort McClellan, Alabama and Fort Benning, Georgia. He eventually served in France and Germany (1943-1946) as part of the 254th Infantry, 63rd Division of the U.S. Army. While he was stationed overseas, he was awarded his Bachelor's degree from Gettysburg College (Sept. 1944) and earned the ranks of Captain, Platoon Leader, Company Commander, and Battalion S-3 Operations Officer within the U.S. Army.

After meeting in the spring of 1941, Elmer McKee and Elizabeth Richards (1925-2001) maintained correspondence while Elmer attended college and served overseas. Throughout their letters, they navigated their evolving relationship and shared their differing experiences of the war years. When Elmer returned in 1946, he and Elizabeth were married in July. They would go on to have four children: James, Robert, Richard, and Peter McKee.

Historical Note

The United States officially entered World War II on December 8, 1941, following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. By the fall of 1942, the draft age was expanded to include all able men 18-37 years old. In this context, Elmer McKee enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of 20 in 1942.

World War II ended in Europe on May 8, 1945, and September 2, 1945 in Japan. As Elmer served in France and Germany until 1946, he would have witnessed the closing of the war and its immediate aftermath in Europe.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains over 500 letters, 17 V-Mail, and 25 additional items, including Elmer's college transcript, military documents, and personal narrative. The bulk of the letters are written by Elmer (Chuck) to Elizabeth (Diz), but there are over 100 letters written by Elizabeth in the closing years of this collection (1945-46). These letters provide insight into the Gettysburg College experience during the early 1940's and the daily life of men stationed in Europe during World War II. Many of the letters depict Elmer and Elizabeth navigating their personal relationship, whilst simultaneously navigating the complex time period in which they lived. Researchers interested in the experiences of Gettysburg College students or soldiers serving in Europe during World War II may find this collection to be a helpful resource.

Elmer and Elizabeth's correspondence is considerably regular with very few gaps, especially in 1945. However, there are two files of miscellaneous correspondence written by/for Elmer and Elizabeth that are missing dates or contain unknown creators. Within the Special Collections digital files for the McKee collection, there are also photos from Elizabeth and Elmer's wedding, Elmer's time in the U.S. Army, along with scanned copies of Elmer's military documents and personal narrative.

Subjects

Gettysburg College, World War II, Letters

Series Description

This collection is divided into 8 Series. **Series 1:** Family Documents, **Series 2:** Elmer's Personal Narrative, **Series 3:** College Documents, **Series 4:** Letters (arranged by month, year, and author), **Series 5:** Military Documents, **Series 6:** Miscellaneous, **Series 7:** Photos, **Series 8:** Digital Files

Box list

1-0 Accession Sheets, Finding Aid, and Research Materials

Series I: Family Documents

1-1 Elizabeth and Elmer's Love Story (Written by Robert McKee)
Elizabeth and Elmer's Marriage Certificate

Series II: Elmer's Personal WWII Narrative

1-2 "My Combat Experience" by Elmer McKee

Series III: Elmer's College Documents

1-3 Elmer's Gettysburg College Transcript

Series IV: Elmer & Elizabeth's Correspondence

1-4 April – June 1941 (Elmer to Diz)

- 1-5 September – October (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-6 November – December (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-7 January – February 1942 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-8 April – May 1942 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-9 September – December 1942 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-10 January 1943 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-11 March - April 1943 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-12 June - September 1943 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-13 October - December 1943 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-14 January 1944 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-15 May – June 1944 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-16 July – August 1944 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-17 September – October 1944 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-18 November – December 1944 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-19 November – December 1944 (Diz to Elmer)

Letters in mylar sleeves were carried through combat.

- 1-20 January – February 1945 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-21 March – April 1945 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-22 May – June 1945 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-23 July 1945 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-24 August 1945 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-25 September 1945 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-26 October 1945 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-27 November 1945 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-28 December 1945 (Elmer to Diz)

- 1-29 February 1945 (Diz to Elmer)
- 1-30 June 1945 (Diz to Elmer)
- 1-31 July 1945 (Diz to Elmer)
- 1-32 August 1945 (Diz to Elmer)
- 1-33 September 1945 (Diz to Elmer)
- 1-34 October 1945 (Diz to Elmer)
- 1-35 November 1945 (Diz to Elmer)
- 1-36 December 1945 (Diz to Elmer)
- 1-37 January 1946 (Diz to Elmer)
- 1-38 February 1946 (Diz to Elmer)
- 1-39 March – June 1946 (Diz to Elmer)
- 1-40 January 1946 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-41 February – March 1946 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-42 April 1946 (Elmer to Diz)
- 1-43 May – June 1946 (Elmer to Diz)

Series V: Elmer's Military Documents

- 1-44 Elmer's Enlistment + Discharge Documents
- 1-45 Elmer's Military Awards + Promotions
- 1-46 1st Armored Division vs. 100th Infantry Division Program (1945)
- 1-47 Elmer's Military Payroll Documents

Series VI: Miscellaneous

- 1-48 Misc. Collected Writings
 - Father's Day Poem
 - "A Boy and His Toys" by J. Harold Little (Gettysburg College – Class of 1921)
- 1-49 Misc. Mail to/from Elmer
- 1-50 Misc. Mail to/from Elizabeth

Series VII: Photos

Diz (2)

Family Portrait

Series VIII: Digital Files

Elizabeth & Elmer's Wedding Photos

Photos of Elmer in the U.S. Army

Photos of Elmer's Military Medals

Copies of Elmer's Military Documents

Gettysburg College Commencement Program (1945)

Narratives

Elmer's Memories: 1941 – 1945

Elmer's Combat Experience

Summary of Elmer and Elizabeth's Love Story

Related Collections

MS-030: Letters of Richard Schade (World War II)

MS-211: Earman Family Letters from WWII

MS-260: World War II Papers of Donald Gallion '48

Contact Information

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