

Collection #
M 0857

NELSON HEDRICK WORLD WAR II LETTERS, 1942–1946

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 manuscript box
COLLECTION DATES:	1942–1946
PROVENANCE:	Claude Cook, Indianapolis, IN August 2005
RESTRICTIONS:	None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: SC 2796 Claude E. Cook World War II Account

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2005.0335

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nelson Paul Hedrick was born about 1922 and lived in Campbellsburg, Indiana with his father George, mother Pearl, and brother George Eugene. During the World War II Nelson held a variety of jobs in Campbellsburg, including working on a railroad gang with his father and in a tomato canning factory. In 1942 he feared that he would be drafted and his older brother gave him advice on which branch of the service to join and which schools he should attend. For reasons unknown, however, Hedrick was able to remain on the home front. He had many friends in Campbellsburg and when his buddies joined the military during World War II he corresponded with them extensively. This collection consists of 116 letters from Nelson's brother George Eugene Hedrick and friends Alvin Walton, James Walton, William Martin, Ernest Charles Smith, and Dale Trinkle.

Alvin "Razz" G. Walton joined the army 12 June 1943 and was initially stationed in New Orleans. In his letters to Nelson Alvin complained about the South, inquired about their classmates, and speculated about the Giants and Notre Dame's football team. Over the course of the war, he was stationed in France and England and eventually ended up in Le Havre, France. In March 1945 Alvin was promoted to captain and put in charge of two houses and a jeep. By January 1946 he had enough points for a discharge but the army held him over until later that year.

George Eugene Hedrick, Nelson's older brother, was born around 1918 in Campbellsburg. He married a girl named Marjorie and when he joined the army air corps she traveled with him to the Souix Falls Army Technical School in 1942. The next year Gene was transferred to Boca Raton, Florida where he was promoted to corporal and assigned to the 44th Academic Squadron. He was in charge of preparing materials for the base's school in addition to working on a flight maintenance line. After the war he and Marjorie purchased the Tash Insurance Agency in Campbellsburg. They eventually added a real estate agency to their business, changing the name to Hedrick-Tash Insurance and Real Estate. In 1954 he founded and led the Washington County Mental Health Association with Marjorie serving as his vice president.

James C. Walton was born in Campbellsburg around 1925 to Ives and Lalah Walton. He joined the marines and trained in San Diego. In 1945 he was sent to Okinawa where his company suffered several casualties.

William M. Martin was born in Campbellsburg around 1927. During World War II he joined the army and was stationed at Fort McClellan, Alabama. In 1946 he went to Germany where he guarded General Clay's house and a WAC Unit barracks in the Berlin District.

Ernest Charles Smith was born in Campbellsburg around 1921 to Burley and Blanche Smith. "Smitty" joined the navy and trained at Chicago's Navy Pier in early 1942. He attended Aviation Machine Gunner School and was sent to the Naval Air Station at Seattle, Washington. In June 1942 he was promoted to Petty Officer Third Class and by August of

that year had been shipped to Kodiak, Alaska. Smitty and his roommate Ray Hunter had big plans to marry pretty girls and buy a ranch in Montana after the war ended. Hunter went missing in the summer of 1944 and Smitty eventually learned that he had been killed. Lacking enough points for a discharge at the end of the war, Smitty remained on the U.S.S. Puget Sound and traveled to Manila, Okinawa, and Pearl Harbor. By August of 1946 he had put in a request to be transferred back to Kodiak, Alaska.

Like the rest of his buddies, Dale Trinkle grew up in Campbellsburg. He joined the army and was initially stationed at Camp Kilmer in New Jersey. He attended cooking school and eventually became a cook for the air corps ground forces. In November he was transferred to Plant City, Florida where he met his girlfriend Ruth. In January 1944 he was transferred to Hunter Field near Savannah, Georgia. By April he was stationed in England and by October he had joined the liberation forces in France.

Sources:

Materials in collection

Claude E. Cook Papers, SC 2496

Ancestry Library Edition. [www. Ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) 24 September 2005

History of Washington County, Indiana 1916–1976. Evansville, Ind. : Unigraphic, 1976. *Indiana Historical Society Reference Room Collection F532.W45 H5 1976*

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of 116 letters written to Nelson Paul Hedrick by his friends from Campbellsburg, Indiana during World War II. Alvin Walton, George Eugene Hedrick, James Walton, William Martin, Ernest Charles Smith, and Dale Trinkle corresponded regularly with Nelson and their letters contain inquiries about news from home and their other Campbellsburg friends. They also discuss the shows that they have seen, the girls they are dating, and the bases where they are stationed. The letters also discuss a common hope that the Giants will win the pennant and that Notre Dame will have the best football team.

Alvin Walton describes life in New Orleans, his frustrations with getting a transfer in the army, and his thoughts about missing his own graduation ceremony. In his 1944 letters Walton confides his fears about being taken out of his non-combatant unit and describes his experiences in England and France. In his 14 May 1945 letter Walton writes Nelson about their V-Day parade and the ice cream he ate in celebration. Later that year, he writes about his frustrations over not getting a discharge.

In their letters George “Gene” Hedrick and his wife Marjorie describe life at the Sioux Falls Army Technical School. Marjorie requests Nelson to send her the February 1943 issue of *Pic* Magazine because it printed a disparaging article about the base. Gene quipped, “no matter what it said, it didn’t say enough.” After his transfer to Boca Raton, Florida Gene witnessed a mid-air collision and one of his letters to Nelson contains a diagram of how the pilot managed to escape.

In his correspondence, William M. Martin describes his base in Alabama and his machine gun training. In the 1946 letters he describes his duty as a guard in the Berlin District and his experiences with the German black market.

Ernest Charles Smith describes his experiences at Navy Pier. Like the rest of Nelson's friends, he looked forward to receiving letters and writes, "I want to hear from you and the other boys as the routine gets dull and a letter helps keep up the morale." After his transfer to Seattle, Smitty confides his fears about being bombed by the Japanese as well as his excitement over the visit of Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox. Smith tells Nelson about his plans to buy a ranch in Montana with his buddy Ray and in subsequent letters he inquires after his old girlfriend Ruby to see if she would be interested in marrying him and sharing the ranch. The disappearance of his buddy in the summer of 1944 causes Smith to realize his own mortality and he sends his will to Nelson's father.

In his correspondence, Dale Trinkle describes his life as an army cook. He writes candidly of his great interest in getting a girlfriend and the perils of having too many women fighting over him. Trinkle also describes war-time London and France.

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M0857).

5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.