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**Finding Aid for the Walter Keeler Second World War correspondence collection  
2016.134.w.r**

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Center for American War Letters Archives

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**Language of Material:** English

**Contributing Institution:** Center for American War Letters Archives

**Title:** Walter Keeler Second World War correspondence

**source:** Treling-Kendall, Sherry

**creator:** Keeler, Walter, 1914-?

**creator:** Keeler, Florence (nee Mesner)

**Identifier/Call Number:** 2016.134.w.r

**Physical Description:** 1 Linear Feet(1 carton)

**Date (inclusive):** 1944-1946

**Date (bulk):** bulk

**Abstract:** This collection contains over 360 correspondence between Technical Sergeant Walter Keeler, USAAF, and his wife, Florence, during the Second World War. Also included are several greeting cards from Walter to Florence.

Leatherby Libraries, Special Collections, CAWL Archives

#### **Arrangement**

This collection is arranged by author and date: Series 1: Correspondence from Walter Keeler - Series 2: Correspondence from Florence Keeler.

#### **Biographical / Historical**

Walter Keeler, a Technical Sergeant (T/SGT) in the United States Army Air Force, was born c. 1914. Walter and his first wife, Lola, lived in Waukegan Township, Lake County, Illinois, just north of Chicago. His sister, Helen, and her family resided in nearby Lake Forest.

Walter's marriage to Lola ended and, in 1945, he met Helen Mesner, while visting California. At the time of their meeting, Walter was stationed in Tohopah, Nevada, but the two corresponded daily and, with several furloughs spent in Los Angeles, where Florence was living at the time, the two quickly formed an attachment and were married before the year was out.

Their courtship was swift and, relatively, tumultuous. Apart from the usual troubles which arise from long-distance relationships, as well as fear and distrust stemming from prior experience--Florence had also been previously married--the couple were confronted with additional difficulties, namely, an unplanned pregnancy and Florence's decision to abort. Florence discusses her decision and describes her physical and emotional experiences in a moving series of letters postmarked April 25-May11, 1945.

Walter and Florence were married the first week of August.

#### **Conditions Governing Access**

This collection is open for research.

#### **Conditions Governing Use**

There are no restrictions on the use of this material except where previously copyrighted material is concerned. It is the responsibility of the researcher to obtain all permissions.

#### **Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Gift of Sherry Treling-Kendall.

#### **Preferred Citation**

[Item title, Box number, Folder number], Walter Keeler Second World War correspondence (2016.134.w.r), Center for American War Letters Archives, Chapman University, CA.

#### **Content Description**

This collection contains 368 correspondence between Walter Keeler, a Technical Seargeant in the United States Army Air Force, and his wife, Florence (nee Mesner) during the Second World War. Their correspondence occurs over the span of one year: 1945.

Also included are several correspondence written to Florence from her brother, Johnnie, and one SGT William Y. Hecht.

#### **Subjects and Indexing Terms**

World War, 1939-1945

United States -- Army -- Air Forces

Atomic bomb -- Japan

Nagasaki-shi (Japan) -- History -- Bombardment, 1945

V-E Day (1945)

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Correspondence -- World War, 1939-1945

Treling-Kendall, Sherry

Keeler, Walter, 1914-?

Keeler, Florence (nee Mesner)

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carton 1,  
folder 1-5

**Series 1. Correspondence from Walter Keeler 1945-02-13-1946-11-26**

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains 185 correspondence written by T/SGT Walter Keeler to his wife Florence (nee Mesner) in the year 1945. These correspondence cover the earliest days of their relationship through the first few months of their marriage.

The majority of Walter's correspondence are of the romantic variety and, for the most part, discuss two things: the weather - usually in the first paragraph - and his love for Florence. All other topics are, more or less, incidental: even VE Day gets only a passing mention (see letter dated May 8, 1945).

There is one letter, however, in which Walter provides some rather poignant insights relating to the atomic bomb: "The last report I heard tonight is that we dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki which created utter destruction . . . makes one wonder about the future of the world if it gets into the hands of unscrupulous nations such as Nazi Germany or Japan" (see letter dated August 9, 1945).

carton 1,  
folder 6-11

**Series 2. Correspondence from Florence Keeler 1945-02-09-1945-12-18**

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains roughly 180 correspondence written by Florence Keeler (nee Mesner) to her husband, T/SGT Walter Keeler, during 1945. These correspondence cover the earliest days of their knowing each other through the first few months of their marriage.

Most of Florence's letters discuss her day-to-day goings on: her job as a coat-check girl in some of Los Angeles' larger theaters, her opera glass rental business, her work as a Termination Advisor, the furnishing of her home, etc. One of her most amusing letters discusses the unfortunate and unexpected onset of "the curse": "[it] wasn't due until tomorrow the 23rd but I have to be funny and start like a river overflowing it's banks--at a most unopportune moment" (from the letter postmarked March 23, 1945).

Not all of Florence's letters, however, are this amusing. In April, Florence discovered that she had become pregnant. In a series of letters, postmarked April 25-May 11, 1945, Florence shares with Walter her plans and feelings - physical and emotional - regarding the pregnancy, her decision to abort, and the effects of this situation on their relationship, present and future.