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**Finding Aid for the Marion T. Disbennett Second World War correspondence collection 2017.014.w.r**

Sharon Clairemont

Center for American War Letters Archives

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Leatherby Libraries

Chapman University

Orange, CA 92866

speccoll@chapman.edu

URL: <http://www1.chapman.edu/library/archives/>

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**Language of Material:** English

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

**Title:** Marion T. Disbennett Second World War Correspondence

**creator:** Disbennett, Marion Thomas

**Identifier/Call Number:** 2017.014.w.r

**Physical Description:** .5 Linear feet(7 folders)

**Date (inclusive):** 1943-07-27-1945-05-13

**Abstract:** This collection contains correspondence, photographs and biographical information from S/Sgt. Marion T. Disbennett during his service in the Army Air Forces during the Second World War.

Leatherby Libraries, Special Collections, CAWL Archives

**Storage Unit:** Disbennett Box 1

**Conditions Governing Access**

This collection is open for research.

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Gift of William Fanning in memory of Marion and Margaret Disbennett. Copyright transferred by Norma Hooper.

**Arrangement**

This collection is arranged by material type, author and date. Series list: Series 1. Correspondence from Marion Disbennett to Margaret Disbennett 1943-07 - 1945-05 -- Series 2. Biographical material -- Series 3. Photographs

**Biographical / Historical**

Marion Disbennett was born in Bellflower, Illinois, but graduated from high school in Orange, CA in 1937. His family was living in Orange at the time of the letters in this collection. He retired from the U. S. Postal Service after serving in Orange for 23 years. His parents were William T. and Martha Disbennett of 330 East LaVeta St. in Orange. He had a sister, Ruth. Marion Disbennett enlisted in the Army Air Corps in March 1942 and was discharged in September 1945. -- He married Margaret Mills in St. Louis during his service training. After radio operator training in the United States, Disbennett served with the 40th Bombardment Group in India and China. Marion and Margaret had two sons, Donald T. Disbennett (1945 - 1996) and James M. Disbennett (1950 - 2012).

Background/History of 40th Bombardment Group -

[http://www.historyofwar.org/air/units/USAAF/40th\\_Bombardment\\_Group.html](http://www.historyofwar.org/air/units/USAAF/40th_Bombardment_Group.html), <https://www.40thbombgroup.org/>

**Preferred Citation**

[Item title, Box number, Folder number], Marion T. Disbennett Second World War correspondence (2017.014.w.r), Center for American War Letters Archives, Chapman University, CA.

**Content Description**

This collection contains correspondence between Army Air Corps S/Sgt Marion Thomas Disbennett and his wife Margaret Mills Disbennett during the Second World War and one letter from Mrs. Clifford (Aileen) Bell to Mrs. Marion Disbennett (Jan. 8, 1945). The collection also includes photographs of Marion and Margaret Disbennett and biographical information about them. -- Early letters describe life on base and radio operator training. He trained to be a radio operator on B-17s and B-29s. Later letters tell of overseas assignments in India and China. -- The last assignment of his enlistment was as an instructor at Scott Field, Illinois where he had received his training two years before. -- Disbennett's letters include information about daily life, food, entertainments, instruction and sharing news from his parents and sister in Orange, CA and of Margaret's school teaching in Indianola, Iowa. He shares his regrets of how the war ("this mess") is keeping them apart and how much he loves and misses her. He occasionally shares his thoughts about the war and his role in it -- "I dread to think of going across, but I came in this man's army to get this war finished and a guy can't do any fighting over here. I will sure be glad when this mess is over. It all seems so foolish and wrong."

**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. For further copyright information, please contact the archivist.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Correspondence -- World War, 1939-1945

World War, 1939-1945

United States -- Army -- Air Forces

United States -- Army -- Air Forces -- 40th Bombardment Group

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United States -- Army -- Air Forces -- Radio operator  
Orange (Calif.)  
Disbennett, Margaret

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**Series 1. Correspondence from Marion Disbennett to Margaret Disbennett  
1943-07-1945-05**

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains correspondence from Marion Thomas Disbennett to Margaret Disbennett written during his years of service in the Army Air Corps during the Second World War. The first letter in the collection is undated, but appears to be written before he started radio operator training. In it he tells of having been "eliminated from further pilot training" due to missing instruction while hospitalized and falling behind. Letters beginning in July 1943 are from Truax Field near Madison, WI and Marion is writing to Margaret in Indianola, Iowa. He boasts of the food "lots of milk and butter" and of an easy schedule with little work. After two weeks of "waiting around" Disbennett and others are sent to Philadelphia for training at the Philco Training School. They are assigned hotel rooms with maid service, go to school for eight hours, enjoy city life in the evenings and complain about having to pay 25 cents for a malt. By mid-September 1943 Disbennett is assigned to Smokey Hill Air Base in Salina KS, then to the Army Air Field at Pratt, KS. He writes about training to be a radio operator on B-17 and B-29 aircraft. He tells of studying aircraft recognition, meteorology, radio code, advanced first aid, giving inoculations and blood transfusions. He writes of training flights around the mid-west and to Texas and California, especially of flying over Los Angeles and Orange County. He is made a sergeant in early 1944 and writes of sending Margaret a greater share of his pay or "allotment." By March of 1944 he is stationed on the East coast though not permitted to disclose location, then soon to an undisclosed location in India in what he calls the China Burma India Theatre. His crew is making bombing runs to Japan, he gets "yellow jaundice" and is lonesome and homesick at night. By Christmas he writes of being quite homesick and lonesome especially at hearing the songs "Paper Doll" and "White Christmas" on the radio. During his training and deployment he writes several times of his and Margaret's favorite songs "You'll Never Know" and "You Are My Sunshine." In January 1945 he writes of receiving Margaret's letter telling him of his father's death and he writes of feeling "helpless so far away." By April 1945 Disbennett is back in the United States, at Scott Field, IL and anticipates orders to become an instructor for radio operator school there. In his last letter in the collection, May 13, 1945, he notes he has more than enough points for discharge and anticipates a visit from her.

**Series 2. Biographical material**

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains biographical material about Marion Thomas Disbennett and his service in the Second World War. It also contains a small amount of information about Margaret Mills Disbennett and mention of their sons Donald and James. Gravesite information is printed from [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com). This information pre-dates the death of son James (Jim) October 24, 2012. (Yorba Linda Star, Nov. 1, 2012, p.14) Marion Thomas Disbennett's obituary appeared in the Orange County Register, Nov. 21, 2002. -- The series also contains information printed from Wikipedia about the island of Tinian. Marion Disbennett's bombardment group served in Tinian, but Disbennett did not serve with them there.

**Series 3. Photographs**

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains 11 photographs. Nine of the images are of Marion Thomas Disbennett alone or with family members. Two of the images are of scenery/buildings, one identified as a train depot in Bellflower, IL, the other of a house, trees and powerlines covered in ice or snow. The photographs of Marion Disbennett are images of him as an infant, toddler, young man and in advanced years. One photograph is a color portrait of Marion and Margaret Disbennett.