Finding Aid for the Lester B. Levy Second World War Correspondence Collection 2017.114.w.r

Rob Strauss
Center for American War Letters Archives
08/15/17
Leatherby Libraries
Chapman University
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This collection contains 32 letters and postcards written by Private Lester B. Levy of the US Army Air Corps (later named the US Army Air Forces) to his fiancé, Julie Kostbar, during the Second World War. One letter was written by Kostbar to Levy. Also included in the collection are four photographs, one newspaper clipping, one personal account, and three pages of biographical information. Levy died in a Japanese prisoner of war camp in the Philippines in July of 1942.

Biographical / Historical
Staff Sgt. Lester B. Levy was born in Ohio on September 9, 1916 and enlisted in the Army Air Corps in October of 1940. Levy trained at Chanute Field in Rantoul, Illinois and arrived at Clark Field in the Philippines in mid-1941, where he served with the 28th Materiel Squadron.

Information provided by the donor indicates that Levy was captured after the fall of Bataan and died in a prisoner of war camp on July 3, 1942. According to government records, Levy was interred at Arlington National Cemetery on July 13, 1949.

Preferred Citation
[Item title, Box number, Folder number], Lester B. Levy Second World War correspondence (2017.114.w.r), Center for American War Letters Archives, Chapman University, CA.

Content Description
This collection contains 32 letters and postcards written by Private Lester B. Levy of the US Army Air Corps (later named the US Army Air Forces) to his fiancé, Julie Kostbar, during the Second World War. Levy was assigned to the 28th Materiel Squadron. Although his letters show that he was a Private, later records indicate he rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant.

The collection also includes one letter that Kostbar wrote to Levy. In addition, there are four photographs, one newspaper clipping, a drawing of Levy, and several pages of biographical information about the donor and the recipient.

The letters from Levy begin while he is in training at Chanute Field in Illinois and continue through his overseas assignment at Clark Field in the Philippines. In the letters, Levy writes about activities at Chanute Field. In one letter, dated February 26, 1941, Levy writes about how he was court-martialed and placed under "post restriction" after the barracks chief reported him as AWOL.

Levy also describes sailing overseas on the USS Pierce. In a June 7, 1941 letter, Levy writes that it is the maiden voyage of the USS Pierce as an army transport. In a possible reference to the "Flying Tigers", the letter also describes how the ship was carrying "30 other fellows who are going to China as flyers to fight against Japan."

Levy also writes about being stationed at Clark Field in the Philippines and his letters also describe the buildup in military personnel at the base. An October 3, 1941 letter refers to German Jewish refugees in Manila.

Kostbar’s letter to Levy discusses the attack on Pearl Harbor. Kostbar also writes about a cablegram that Levy had sent to his father reporting that he was safe after the attacks by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor and other bases. The letter never reached Levy and the envelope is marked "Return to Sender. Service Suspended."
There is also a newspaper clipping reporting the death of Levy. Additional information provided by the donor, Kostbar's nephew, says Levy was captured after the fall of Bataan and died on July 3, 1942 at a Japanese prison camp in the Philippines.

**Conditions Governing Use**

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**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

- Correspondence -- World War, 1939-1945
- World War, 1939-1945
- World War, 1939-1945 -- Philippines.
- World War, 1939-1945 -- Prisoners and prisons
- Pearl Harbor (Hawaii), Attack on, 1941.
- Bataan, Battle of, Philippines, 1942
- Clark Field -- Philippines
- Kostbar, Julie, 1917-1995
- Kostbar, Jeffrey

**Series 1. Correspondence from Lester B. Levy 1941-01-09-1941-11-13**

**Physical Description:** .16 Linear Feet (2 folders)

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains letters that Lester B. Levy of the US Army Air Corps wrote to Julie Kostbar while he was stationed at Chanute Field in Illinois and overseas at Clark Field in the Philippines. The letters describe activities at the bases and military life.

In one letter, dated February 26, 1941, Levy writes about how he was court-martialed and placed under "post restriction" after the barracks chief reported him as AWOL. In a March 26, 1941 letter, Levy writes about how a Martin B-26 "cracked up on the runway apron." Levy also describes sailing overseas on the USS Pierce. In a June 7, 1941 letter, Levy writes that it is the maiden voyage of the USS Pierce as an army transport. In a possible reference to the "Flying Tigers", the letter also describes how the ship was carrying "30 other fellows who are going to China as flyers to fight against Japan."

A May 28, 1941 refers to the death of boxer Max Schmeling in battle (He actually was wounded and survived) The letter also refers to President Roosevelt and the draft. Other letters of interest include an October 3, 1941 letter in which Levy writes about German Jewish refugees in Manila. A July 2nd, 1941 letter refers to an order by "Lt. Colonel Maitland" (Lester Maitland) requiring men to grow beards and an October 18, 1941 letter describes witnessing a plane crash. It also describes another accident involving two lieutenants. A letter postmarked June 11, 1941 has a drawing of Levy.

**Series 2. Correspondence to Lester B. Levy 1941-12-29**

**Physical Description:** .25 Linear Feet

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains one letter dated December 29, 1941 that Julie Kostbar sent to her fiance Private Lester Levy while he was stationed at Clark Field in the Philippines. Kostbar's letter to Levy discusses the attack on Pearl Harbor. She also writes about a cablegram that Levy had sent to his father reporting that he was safe after the attacks by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor and other bases. The letter never reached Levy and the envelope is marked "Return to Sender. Service Suspended." Information provided by the donor says Levy was captured after the fall of Bataan and died on July 3, 1942 at a prison camp in the Philippines.
Series 3. Graphic materials 1940-1942

Physical Description: .025 Linear Feet (1 folder)

Scope and Contents

This series includes one photograph of Lester Levy and three photographs of Julie Kostbar. There is also a newspaper clipping, of unknown date, reporting Levy's death.

Information on the back of Levy's photograph says it was taken at Chanute Field on November 11, 1940.

Series 4. Biographical information

Physical Description: .025 Linear Feet (1 folder)

Scope and Contents

This series contains biographical information about Lester Levy from the "Find a Grave" website. There is also information from "Find A Grave" about Levy's father, Harry. In addition, there is a typewritten copy of a eulogy that the collection donor gave about his aunt, Julie Kostbar, in 1995. Kostbar was the recipient of most of the letters in the collection and the author of one letter.