Theodore Miles Collection Accession # _____

Letters, 1942-1945
(Predominantly Oct 1942 – Jan 1943 and July 1945)

.5 Linear foot
Letters, clippings, index cards and one published article

The letters of Theodore Miles were written to his wife Dorothy during their times of separation during WWII. Dr. Dorothy Miles Hanawalt donated them to the Reuther Library in 2003. In addition, Dr. Hanawalt provided index cards that describe the people mentioned in the letters. The collection was opened for research in April 2004.

Theodore Miles was an instructor in the English Department at Wayne University from 1938 to 1942. He served in the Navy from 1942 until his death in 1945, first as an Ensign, eventually promoted to Lieutenant. Ensign Miles was stationed in San Francisco and put in charge of the Fire Control School there as part of the Advanced Naval Training School (ANTS). The first series of letters to his wife from August 1942 February 1943 was during the time when she was still in Detroit and had taken over his teaching duties.

Ensign Miles traveled to San Diego in September1943 to visit the Fire Control schools located there. The second series of letters were written during that time.

In July 1945, Lt. Miles was assigned to the cruiser USS Indianapolis. He wrote the third series of letters to his wife, between July 17 and 27. The USS Indianapolis was on a secret mission to deliver atomic bomb components, which were eventually used to destroy Hiroshima, Japan. After the mission the cruiser was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine on July 30, 1945 and sank in 12 minutes. Of the more than 1100 servicemen on board, only 318 were rescued after 4 or 5 days trying to survive in shark-infested waters.

Subseries A consists of letters from Mrs. Miles to her husband and were returned to her stamped “unclaimed”.

The collection includes a copy of Ted’s published article, a letter from 1991 written by Dorothy to Ted Miles’ brother Pat, and the index cards written in 2003.

In January 1946, Dorothy Miles donated $2000 to Wayne State University to open and furnish the Miles Modern Poetry Room in the General Library. Beginning in 1949, the Miles Modern Poetry Committee was established to sponsor an annual series of lectures and poetry readings by famous poets as well as faculty and students. More information can be found in the University Archives vertical File under “Miles Poetry Week and Room.”

The Miles Modern Poetry Room no longer exists, but the Committee still sponsors a Poetry event each year. See University Archives Accession #150 for correspondence and

financial data of the committee. The Miles Modern Poetry Series (or Lecture or Reading) is sponsored by the WSU English Department.

The letters generally reference domestic and financial matters, social activities, news of friends and family. Also include are many descriptions of daily Navy life, the people with whom he interacted as well as duties he performed. The letters describe interesting events and people that Miles observed in his work. These are not really love letters, but interesting slices of life of that period in U.S. history.

The 1945 series also includes the unclaimed letters that Mrs. Miles wrote to her husband, also full of social activities, family and friends' news and her daily life.

Dorothy Miles married Leslie Hanawalt in 1959. After donating her husband's letters, Mrs. Hanawalt wrote a series of index cards, each one with a brief description of the people mentioned in the letters.

Subjects covered include Wayne University, World War II, U.S. Navy, Fire Control Schools, wartime travel, navy administration, and the U.S.S. Indianapolis.

Contents

1 box

Series I: 1942-1943. Folders 1-7

Letters from Theodore Miles stationed in California, to his wife Dorothy, still residing in Detroit, Michigan. Most of the topics in the letters concern his daily activities, domestic and financial matters and plans for operating the Fire Control School. Files are arranged chronologically, covering the period of August 19, 1942 – February 1, 1943.

Folder 1: Aug 19, 1942 – Oct. 14, 1942.
Folder 2: Oct. 18, 1942 – Oct. 29, 1942.
Folder 3: Nov. 2, 1942 – Nov. 17, 1942.
Folder 4: Nov. 20, 1942 – Dec. 1, 1942. (San Diego)
Folder 5: Dec. 4. 1942 – Dec. 23, 1942.
Folder 6: Dec. 27, 1942 – Feb. 1, 1943.
Folder 7: undated notes.

Series II: September 1943. Folder 8

Four letters from Theodore Miles, written while he visited a Fire Control School in San Diego to his wife Dorothy, who was in San Francisco. Topics included wartime travel, southern California, and details of the school observations.

Folder 8: Sept. 7, 1943 – Sept. 11, 1943.

Series III: July 1945. Folders 9-11

Four letters from Theodore Miles from the U.S.S. Indianapolis to his wife Dorothy in San Francisco.

Folder 9: July 17, 1945 – July 27, 1945.

Subseries A Series III: July 1945: Letters from Dorothy Miles in San Francisco to her husband Ted on the U.S.S. Indianapolis. All were returned, stamped "unclaimed".

Folder 10: July 24, 1945 – July 31, 1945
Folder 11: Aug. 1, 1945 – Aug. 14, 1945

Series IV: Misc. Folder 12

1991 letter to Ted's brother Pat and wife Vernice.
2003 index cards of notes about people named in Ted's letters.

Series V: Publication. Folder 13

Theodore Miles' published article from 1942 (accessed from WSU subscription to JSTOR database http://www.jstor.org. Retrieved March 10, 2004.)

Description

Series I: 1942 – 1943. Correspondence from California to Detroit
(except the first letter from Hanover, New Hampshire to Omaha, Nebraska).
Summary of each letter follows date of letter, not date on envelope. Letters are handwritten unless otherwise noted.

Aug. 19, 1942. (Pencil note on envelope "Indocrination") Typewritten, mentions an NBC broadcast, an upcoming visit to Montreal, some Miles family characteristics in communication and the fact that he was writing a letter at a time when he was meant to be studying Navy "regs". Pencil note from Dorothy that he had an article published in a British scholarly journal, which explains the final sentence of the letter.

Oct. 5, 1942. Responds to her previous letter and includes instructions on storing his books. He writes a lengthy description of a cigarette case that he wants, and in the middle of his discussion, he mentions misspellings and grammar errors that were in Dorothy's letter.

Oct. 8, 1942. Typewritten. Concerned if previous mail was received. Talks of upcoming social outing with friends who had been at in Detroit at Wayne, but were now

in California. Mentions a couple of incidents involving buses and a newspaper story about a battleship that was sunk – only to meet a couple of officers from that ship from which they had just left in the Bay!

Oct. 14, 1942. Typewritten. He had flowers sent to Dorothy as a surprise. Much of the letter discusses domestic arrangements (often witty) in anticipation of her coming to California. Those matters include their cat, their car, furniture, his books, and dry cleaning. Mentions a few acquaintances, social events and anecdotes. Again a couple of grammar corrections and observations.

Oct. 18, 1942. Talks of California weather, letter from a friend now in the Navy in Boston, upcoming required social event, and his family's "apparent coolness". Describes a ship and a Russian sub in the Navy yard. Mentions his impression of Mr. Wilkie, (probably Wendell Wilkie).

Oct. 20, 1942. Typewritten. Requests editorial news from the Nation and New Republic, describes friend Mr. Raab, upcoming social event sponsored by his Commander. First of several analogies of military life and academic life. Also first mention of fire control schools.

Oct. 22, 1942. Typewritten, no accompanying envelope. Brief letter covering mail, financial matters and mention of an academic colleague now in San Francisco.

Oct. 24, 1942. Begins hand-written, switches to typewriter. Notable entry: Navy ranks to educate his wife on protocol. Anecdote on Russian men buying American shirts. Commentary on musician Frederick Stock, Wayne University's Liberal Arts politics, U.S. presidential politics.

Oct. 29, 1942. Complains of feeling "porely" due to weather and Commander's party. Mentions friends in the service, W.O.(unidentified) survivors. First discussion of Christmas presents, financial matters.

Nov. 2, 1942. Humorous dig concerning lack of mail from wife. Another clever Navy-academic analogy in relation to social activities. Gets official word on his duty as head of the Fire Control school and gives some explanation of the term. Finds an apartment for their San Francisco stay.

Nov. 17, 1942. Refers to friend Stanley (Bien, one of his students at Wayne) and his letters. Talks of upcoming course to teach on fire control and the usefulness of his teaching background. Description of Lt. Kolde, an optical expert. Discussion of college-level courses for first years who intend to join the military.

Nov.8, 1942. Typewritten note (not a letter, he says) to apprise his wife on busy schedule and upcoming trip to San Diego.

Nov. 15, 1942. Typewritten. Financial matters, transportation difficulties for San Diego trip, Christmas presents, plans, comment on car dilemma (car is nicknamed Albert), more discussion college education for ANTS (Advanced Naval Training School).

Nov. 7, 1942. Brief note concerning San Diego plans and Navy leave time.

Nov. 20, 1942. (Written from U.S. Grant Hotel in San Diego.) Details of travel to San Diego, plans to meet his brother Pat, weather and San Diego holiday observations. Description of Mark XIV anti-aircraft sight and director. Anecdote on piano players in hotel lobby.

Thanksgiving Eve, 1942. (Written from U.S. Grant Hotel in San Diego.) Opens with response to a telegram. Refers to wife's joining him in January, shares his feelings about getting along with wife, mothers. Met up with brother Pat in Los Angeles, describes travel problems in wartime. Details of visit with Pat and impressions of his life. Details on travel back to S.D. notably his seatmate, who represented the type of student coming to F.C. school. More discussion of Navy life and expectations for school.

Thanksgiving Day, 1942. (Written from U.S. Grant Hotel in San Diego.) Responds to a letter just received from wife. Thanksgiving dinner in mess hall, much discussion on household items to store, discard or ship in anticipation of wife's move to S.F. Mentions her Christmas plans, expenditures and lastly discusses her ill health. Closes with "Damn, Clarence…" referring to Clarence Hilberry.

Nov. 29, 1942. (Written from U.S. Grant Hotel in San Diego.) Use of beaches in late November in southern California, description of Fire Control school visits and encounters with Navy chief, gunman and visit on a destroyer. Discusses term SNAFU.

Dec. 1, 1942. (last letter from U.S. Grant Hotel.) Plans to return to S.F., but will miss an opportunity to ride a destroyer on a short range firing test run. Attended the Ballet Russe. Plans to visit Aunt Betty Chase (A.B.C.) who lives near San Diego with daughter. Discusses opinions on Christmas cards, presents and anticipation of being back in San Francisco.

Dec. 4, 1942. Just returned to S.F. Details of visit with A.B.C. and her sister including residence, personalities, memories and other conversations. Interesting observations on Navy life and the Pearl Harbor attacks.

Dec. 10, 1942. Sense of administrative activities. Refers to flowers (asters) being sent to wife (weekly basis while they are separated). Talks of books, Christmas presents, and storage of books. Interesting comment on Pearl Harbor, opinion on world issues relating to war, politics. Closes with request for his published journal article.

Dec. 12, 1942 (in same envelope as Dec. 10 letter.) Refers to an insurance policy to be signed (probably a separate document included). Social activities, detail about Thomas Jefferson biography just purchased, more discussion on Christmas presents. Final paragraph on their car and road incident.

Dec. 15, 1942. Talks of new apartment and includes floor plan drawing. Tells of a colleague's unexpected promotion and how it impacts him and the Fire Control school.

Undated partial letter written about this time. Many details of the apartment including a list of things to bring and their new neighbors. Tells of other mail received and details of social activities.

Dec. 23, 1942. Details on Christmas plans, both personal and professional. List of mail (packages) received. Closes with domestic matters and weather update.

Dec. 27, 1942. Discussion on her Christmas present to him, letters received. Refers to an "enclosure" which is probably a photograph. Details of new apartment with a revised layout drawing and closes with regret that his Christmas surprise for wife was spoiled.

Jan. 6, 1943 (no envelope; date corrected; typewritten). Opening paragraph "essay" on war emotions. Most of the letter is a list of necessary items to bring and to store in anticipation of her moving to San Francisco. Each item has details about why to bring or why to store/giveaway. Observations on a Mrs. Gray and naval authority

Jan. 14, 1943. Typewritten. Details of navy beaurocracy recently encountered, concerning Mr. Walter's promotion, lengthy paragraph on personal finances; further observations on Mrs. Gray/married women and overview of current reading.

Jan 17, 1943. Lists weekend activities, including a concert of music; comments on friends who seemed to have had a miscarriage which lead to his view on having children; financial details; news of a friend; anticipation of opening Fire Control School.

Jan. 26, 1943. Describes social activity; commentary on men in general; details of financial transactions since previous July; requests for insurance policies; mention of Clarence Hilberry; vaguely mentions a "court" case before telling of new Fire Control Chief assigned to him (who had survived his ship sinking and had been plucked from the ocean - eerily close to Ted's U.S.S. Indianapolis yet to come). Mentions another "court martial" case (Ted must have been pressed into service as some sort of case reviewer). Closes with news of friend Stanley.

Jan. 28, 1943. Comments on friends; moved to write a limerick; views on child rearing. Talks of visiting a battleship; encounter with "Annapolis" cordiality; weather and seasonal changes.

Feb. 1, 1943. Written on ANTS memorandum paper. News of a visiting friend, life at Fire Control School, views on FDR; domestic notes; a letter from a friend causes a prediction of a war "bulge" of students going through school. Anticipates wife's arrival.

Series II: September 1943. Correspondence from San Diego to San Francisco. Summary of each letter follows date of letter, not date on envelope. Letters are handwritten on U.S. Grant Hotel stationery.

Sept. 7, 1943. [Enclosure] Returned to visit Fire Control schools. Two clippings (no sources) enclosed in letter, labeled A &B. Clipping A (referred to in letter as "enlightenment") showed the meaning of names including Miles. Clipping B (referred to as "instructional") is an advertising picture of military medals, and branch and name of decoration or honor. Letter details train conditions, travel plans, refers to her blood donation and observations on San Diego living.

Sept. 9, 1943. Describes more of southern California climate, scenery and people with whom he interacted. Details of activity at the training school, including a visit to a firing station to witness weapons testing. Itinerary for rest of trip and first day back.

Sept. 11, 1943. Passing mention of radar operators' school. Includes a note left at hotel desk from family member ABC (Aunt Betty Chase). News of her family, relayed via phone conversation.

Series III: July 1945. Correspondence from U.S.S. Indianapolis to San Francisco. Summary of each letter follows date of letter, not date on envelope. All envelopes bear a stamp reading "Passed by Naval Censor."

July 17, 1945. Sentimental opening – not sure of when they'll be together again. Describes rough waves and then calm seas. Warns that his opportunities to mail letters may be far apart. Notes the price of a carton of cigarettes. Next paragraph written the following day: comments that he is not a typical writer of love letters, but affirms his love for her. Comments that his time is "censorable", but does detail some daily activity.

July 21, 1945. Writes of the weather, ocean life, recent clean up of ship, food, and card games. Talks of being extremely busy and unable to read any books he took along.

July 25, 1945 (same envelope). Describes ocean sunsets, anticipation of receiving mail, his daily watch schedule, food, laundry and hair cuts on a ship.

July 27, 1945. Weather, timetable of stops (no locations given). Missed shore leave due to short stay "where Francis is stationed", and again at another stop because of being on duty. Comments on mail received from other friends. Last line includes his "hope to make her a faculty wife as soon as possible."

Subseries A: July 29, 1945 – Aug. 14, 1945. Dorothy Miles' letters returned, stamped "unclaimed".

July 24, 1945. Reply to July 17th letter. Describes mail from friend Julia, meeting Ted's brother Pat at a train station, who then stayed overnight. Upcoming plans with friends, domestic notes.

July 26, 1945. News of weather and recap of previous day. Social news and activities; domestic life, plans to seek a civil service job. Talks of reflection on their past and future. War news in a Post Script.

July 29, 1945. News of her social activities, further plans for a job, news of family and friends. Comments on a newsreel seen. Includes clippings from New Republic – no mention of why, or what she wanted him to read.

July 31, 1945. [Enclosure] Had received letters of July 21 and July 25. Confesses to feelings of perhaps depression and/or loneliness in previous letters, but not "finding balance." More social activities and news of friends. Discusses her current readings, news of war end predictions. Encloses a letter received from her mother.

Aug. 2, 1945. [Enclosure] Recap of lunches, dinners and activities with friends. Talks of being on University of California-Berkeley and meeting a friend. Includes a cartoon and card on which friends wrote notes to Ted while they were at dinner.

Aug. 4, 1945. Social news of friends, her activities and what she would be doing if Ted were there.

Aug. 6, 1945. [Enclosure] No news, includes articles from New Yorker.

Aug. 8, 1945. [Enclosure] Mentions the atom bomb dropped on Japan. Had received his third (July 27th) letter. Hears news of a second atom bomb while writing this letter. Tells of more social activities and encloses a review of a concert which she attended.

Aug. 11, 1945. Anxious for a letter from him. Writes of social news, family news and mentions peace is soon to some. Tells of books recently read.

Aug. 14, 1945. Had been notified (by wire) that Ted was missing, as had his mother. Writes now because it comforts her. Tells of respect his friends have for him and how it now sustains her. Holds a "slight hope" that they will be together again, but is planning to go home to wait for word from him.

Index to Subjects

Annapolis, 1:6
Atom bomb, 1:11
FDR, 1:2,6
Hillberry, Clarence, 1:4,6
Hiroshima, Japan, 1:11

Russian submarine, 1:2
Wilkie, Wendall, 1:2
Wayne University, I:1-4,6
World War, 1939-1945 - 1:1-7; II:8-9; III:10-11
World War, 1939-1945 – Missing in action, III:11
World War, 1939-1945 – Naval Operations - Hawaii, I:5
World War, 1939-1945 – Naval Operations, 1:1-7; II: 8-9; III:10-11
World War, 1939-1945 – Naval Operations, Advanced Naval Training School (ANTS), I:3, 6
World War, 1939-1945 – Naval Operations, American, Fire Control Schools, I:2-6; II:8
World War, 1939-1945 – Naval Operations, American, I:1-6; II:8; III:9
World War, 1939-1945 – Naval Operations, American, San Diego, I:4; II:8
World War, 1939-1945 – Naval Operations, American, San Francisco, I:3-6
World War, 1939-1945 – Naval Operations, American, travel, I:3-4; II:8, III:9
World War, 1939-1945 – Naval Operations, U.S.S. Indianapolis, III:9
World War, 1939-1945 – Personal narratives, American, I:1-7; II:8-9; III:10-11