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Coffman, Ernest E., collection, 1943-2001

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Coffman, Ernest E., Collection, MS 263

Ernest E. Coffman Collection

Collection Number	MS 263
Title	The Ernest E. Coffman Collection
Repository	Pittsburg State University, Special Collections & University Archives, Pittsburg, Kansas 1701 S. Broadway Pittsburg, Kansas 66762 (620) 235-4883 speccoll@pittstate.edu
Dates	1943-2001
Collection Size	1 binder
Creator	Ernest Coffman
Scope and Content	“A Collection of This ‘N That ‘N Sumthin’ Else,” a binder of Ernest E. Coffman’s accounts of his time during World War II, poetry on experiences and his perspectives of everyday life, and other writings.
Access Restrictions	This collection is open for access. Researchers must use the collection in accordance with the policies of the Special Collections & University Archives, Leonard H. Axe Library, Pittsburg State University
Languages	English
Biographical Note	Ernest E. Coffman was born on a February 23, 1925. He grew up in the mountains of Arkansas and on a family farm in Columbus, Kansas. He registered at his local draft board on his 18 th birthday in 1943. Ernest kept a deck of cards with him which he used to mark down dates and events during his service. He was inducted to the army on July 7, 1943 and in February of 1944 sailed out from New York. From New York, the ship sailed to India and landed March 29. Ernest was in charge of teaching the Chinese soldiers how to handle equipment and weapons before being transferred to teach them carpentry. Afterwards, he was put in the First Provisional Tank Group and was an assistant driver in a light tank. In this group, Ernest travelled from Brahmaputra, India through Burma to south central China alongside the Chinese army and “Merrill’s Marauders.” The Tank Group chased the Japanese army through the jungles of Burma, catching up with them in Kutkai where the tanks began battling, ending with major damage to the Japanese and minor damage to the allied tank group. Ernest was never injured in the service, though his tank ran over a mine and flipped over. The war in the CBI Theater ended early 1945 and after Japan surrendered, Ernest was sent home, arriving in Columbus, Kansas on December 13, 1945.

After the war, Ernest finished high school at Riverton, Kansas where his younger sister attended before working at Ford Motors for four years. Coffman then transferred to Southern Bell where he worked as an installation and repair technician for just over 34 years. Ernest retired in 1986.

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He was an outdoorsman, hunting, fishing, and gardening. He and his wife, Helen Hockett, who he married in 1949, had a daughter and grandson. Ernest passed away on July 20, 2016.

Processing Note

Collection processed in December 2019

Content Description

This collection is primary sources and is divided into the following series:

Binder described by item

Detailed Description of the Collection

- *Yank, The Army Weekly*, March 17, 1945, China-Burma-India Edition
- "Lost at sea... local man remembers," May 25, 2001, an interview with Troy Coffman of his experiences in WWII
- List of the 527th Ordnance, the First Provisional Tank Group in the China-Burma-India Theatre
- Pittsburg, Kansas Vietnam Memorial photos and dedication program
- Short biographies on Ernest, James, Vada, and Troy Coffman, all of whom served in WWII
- "My Incredible Journey," Account of Ernest's time in WWII, 21 pages.
- "I'm a Lucky Man"
- Poetry of experiences, national events like 9/11, and his perspective on everyday life
- Ernest's writings to local government and to newspapers, of opinions, and to loved ones
- Writings and poetry by other authors