CHARLES THOMPSON
PAPERS, MARCH, 1943-JULY, 1945

Collection #:
M 623

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Processed by:
Paul Brockman
22 October 1992

USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 manuscript box, 382 letters (.4 linear feet)
COLLECTION DATES: March, 1943-July, 1945
PROVENANCE: Joseph F. Thompson, Indianapolis, Indiana, 8 October 1992
RESTRICTIONS: None
ALTERNATE FORMATS: None
OTHER FINDING AIDS: None
RELATED HOLDINGS: Thompson, Projects and Expeditions (D 811.5.T56, 1989).
ACCESSION NUMBER: 93.0014
NOTES: Projects and Expeditions contains the transcripts of the letters in this collection with background information.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Charles Frederic Thompson (1895-1989) was born in Attica, Indiana, to veterinarian Louis H. and Elizabeth Tanner Thompson. In 1914 Charles Thompson entered Indiana University Bloomington and developed an interest in medical
research. Three years later, he enlisted in what became U.S. Army Ambulance Service and served as an ambulance
driver with the French and American armies in France attaining the rank of Private First Class and receiving the Croix
de Guerre for bravery at the front. Thompson returned to Indiana University in 1919 to complete his medical studies.
He served as an extern in Long Hospital, Indianapolis, 1922-1923 and surgical resident at Riley Hospital, Indianapolis,
1924-1925. He then entered into his own medical practice in Indianapolis. In 1925 Charles Thompson married Irvene
Bridge. They had three children: Charles Bridge, Joseph Francis, and Susanna Tanner. Thompson became a Fellow of
the American College of Surgeons and qualified as an orthopedic surgeon in 1937.

Before the U.S. entry into World War II, Charles helped organize the 32nd General Hospital out of Indiana University
Medical Center. With the unit's mobilization, Thompson was named Chief of the Surgical Service of the 32nd General
Hospital with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. After completing training at Camp Bowie in Brownwood, Texas,
Thompson and the hospital unit was assigned to administer to wounded soldiers and civilians in England, France,
Belgium, and Germany. After the war, Thompson returned to Indianapolis where he performed medical research at
Riley, City, and Veterans hospitals and served as Professor of Orthopedic Surgery at Indiana University Medical
Center.

*Indiana Book of Merit*, p.731.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection is comprised of 382 letters written by Charles Thompson from March, 1943-July, 1945 while with the
U.S. Army Medical Corps during World War II. Most of the letters were written to his wife, Ila Irvene Bridge
Thompson, but there are letters to his children Joseph, Charles, and Susanna in Indianapolis. Letters were written from
basic training at Camp Bowie, Texas; on board the transport ship from New Jersey to England; and from U.S. Army
hospitals in England, France, Belgium, and Germany. Throughout his letters there are many sketches of the rooms he
lived in and other related drawings. Many of the letters written on board ship and in England are on V-Mail (positive
reduced copies of letters on microfilm). All the letters are transcribed and annotated in *Projects and Expeditions* (D
811.5 .T56 1989).

In his letters Thompson discusses the rigors of basic training, living conditions at Camp Bowie (March 1943-August
1943), and life back home. Letters written while crossing the North Atlantic (September 1943) describe activities on
board a transport ship and family news. Thompson also discusses life and living conditions at the Army hospital near
Oxford, England (September 1943-July 1944) as well as sight seeing and discussions of individuals with whom he
came into contact or formed friendships. There is also acknowledgment of letters and news received from home. Items
contained in letters written from France (July 1944-December 1944) includes a description of the capturing of a
German pilot (August 19, 1944), caring for wounded American and Allied soldiers, civilians, and German POW's.
There is also discussion of news received from home and living conditions at the hospital. Letters written from Liege,
Belgium (December 1944-February 1945) contain comments and advice on family news from home, local living
conditions, and the medical care and other relations with the civilian population. The final set of Thompson's letter
come from his unit's assignment in Aachen, Germany (February 1945-August 1945). In these letters he describes
living conditions among the German people, local travels and sight seeing, news from home and packages shipped,
reports on his patients including the types of wounds, operations performed, etc., and the anticipation of returning
home near the end and after conclusion of the war in Europe.

BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

BOX 1: Correspondence, March, 1943-July, 1945
FOLDER CONTENTS
1 Correspondence, March, 1943-June, 1943
2 Correspondence, July, 1943
3 Correspondence, August, 1943
4 Correspondence, September, 1943
5 Correspondence, October, 1943
6 Correspondence, November, 1943
7 Correspondence, December, 1943
8 Correspondence, January, 1944
9 Correspondence, February, 1944-March, 1944
10 Correspondence, April, 1944
11 Correspondence, May, 1944
12 Correspondence, June, 1944
13 Correspondence, July, 1944-October, 1944
14 Correspondence, November, 1944-December, 1944
15 Correspondence, January, 1945
16 Correspondence, February, 1945
17 Correspondence, March, 1945
18 Correspondence, April, 1945
19 Correspondence, May, 1945
20 Correspondence, June, 1945
21 Correspondence, July, 1945

CATALOGUING INFORMATION

MAIN ENTRY: Thompson, Charles F. (Charles Frederick), 1895-1989

SUBJECT ENTRIES: Thompson, Ila Irvene Bridge
United States. Army. Medical Corps
World War, 1939-1945--Medical care--Europe
World War, 1939-1945--Hospitals--England
World War, 1939-1945--Hospitals--Germany
World War, 1939-1945--Hospitals--France
World War, 1939-1945--Hospitals--Belgium
Medicine, Military--Europe
Hospitals, Military--Europe
Surgery, Military--Europe
Physicians--Indiana--Indianapolis
Soldiers--Indiana--Indianapolis
War--Medical aspects
War--Relief of sick and wounded
Orthopedic surgery