

Collection #
SC1361

**EDGAR B. SMITH JR.
COLLECTION, 1967-1969**

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Collection Information | 1 |
| Biographical Sketch | 2 |
| Scope and Content Note | 3 |
| Contents | 4 |

Processed by

Maire Gurevitz
December 2024

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

*

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 9 manuscript folders

COLLECTION DATES: 1967-1969

PROVENANCE: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Smith Sr., Bloomington, IN

RESTRICTIONS: None

COPYRIGHT:

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1968.0713

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Edgar B. Smith Jr. (September 7, 1943-November 15, 2010) was born in Dayton, Kentucky to Edgar B. Smith Sr. and Irene Brock Smith. Smith grew up in Bloomington, Indiana with his two older sisters, Nancy and Sara. He attended Bloomington High School and Indiana University where he received a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in education. Smith was a part of the Indiana University ROTC, graduating in 1965, and served as a military police officer in the United States Army from July 1966 to July 1968, spending a year on deployment in Vietnam after training at Ft. Gordon and Ft. Leonard Wood. Smith received two bronze stars, including one for valor during the Tet Offensive. Upon his honorable discharge from the Army, Smith returned to civilian life as a teacher at Smithville High School. He was married to Carolyn Jean Molnar, a registered nurse, on August 16, 1969 and the couple had two children, Al and Amanda. Upon retirement from teaching at Monroe County Community School Corporation, Smith manned the security desk at Bloomington High School North. He was a member of the Simpson Chapel Methodist Church.

Sources:

“Carolyn Molnar, Edgar Smith Jr. On Honeymoon.” *The Times-Mail*. 17 August 1969, Page 16

“Edgar Buchanan Smith” <https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/11788162/edgar-buchanan-smith>

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains letters written by Edgar B. Smith Jr. to his parents, Edgar Sr. and Irene, while he was deployed in Vietnam as an officer of Company A, 504th Military Police, Battalion A. Smith's letters begin on July 14, 1967, the day after he arrived in Vietnam. For most of his time in Vietnam, Smith is located in Nha Trang, where he writes of his experiences on escort convoys and his travels to different locations after he is made Executive Officer to give the various detachments of troops their pay. Smith discusses his living conditions, the weather, his daily schedule, and his interactions with ARVN troops, Korean troops, and local civilians, especially those who work for the U.S. military as cooks, janitors, washers, and mechanics. He tries to keep up on sports scores back home, especially for IU Football, and asks his parents to sign him up to receive a weekly sports supplement from the Indianapolis Star. During this time, Smith's father, Edgar Sr. is running to be the State Superintendent of Education in Indiana and he occasionally inquires or gives advice on the campaign, which Edgar Sr. ultimately lost. Smith's letters also recount the very real threat from the Viet Cong, especially with guerilla tactics like planting bombs to go off in planned succession in crowded areas, destruction of bridges used by convoys, and land mines. In a letter written on January 29, 1968, Smith writes that there is a buildup in the north around Hue, noting that, "today is the first day of Tet. There are firecrackers and weapons going off all over town." Smith is eventually moved up to Hue briefly in late April through early May 1968, and these letters are his most tense, as he feels overwhelmed by responsibilities and understaffed to fulfill the duties of the unit, all while feeling an existential threat of the invasion of the city by the enemy. By May 19, 1968, Smith has moved to An Khe, where he enjoys the nicest facilities he's experienced while in country including hot showers and access to the PX, officers clubs, and a swimming pool. There are occasions when Smith comments on the political situation in the United States and the mounting protests against the war. Smith's family chose to share a letter he wrote on March 16, 1968 with the Indianapolis Star's opinion section. In the letter, Smith voices his frustration with critics of the war back home. He writes, "We will eventually win this war (militarily and politically) if the people back home don't forsake us and make everything our men do over here a useless sacrifice by selling us out just when victory is in sight..." Ultimately, Smith writes in an earlier letter on September 17, 1967, and this appears to be the general attitude that comes through his writing, which is that "over here the entire and sole objective of everyone is to simply survive and get back in reasonably safe and sane condition." Smith sends the last letter of his tour home on June 28, 1968 detailing the dates he will depart An Khe for Cam Ranh Bay and then on to Fort Lewis.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Letters, July 1967

Letters, August 1967

Letters, September 1967

Letters, October 1967

Letters, November 1967

Letters, December 1967

Letters, Jan.-Feb. 1968

Letters, Mar.-Apr. 1968

Letters, May-June 1968

CONTAINER

Folder 1 of 9

Folder 2 of 9

Folder 3 of 9

Folder 4 of 9

Folder 5 of 9

Folder 6 of 9

Folder 7 of 9

Folder 8 of 9

Folder 9 of 9