

Collection #
SC2858

JAMES CLARK DAVIS LETTERS 1937-1947

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	8 manuscript folders and 1 photograph folder
COLLECTION DATES:	1937-1947
PROVENANCE:	Gift from Shirley Howell
RESTRICTIONS:	None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: The USS Indianapolis Collection (M0645), Colleen Mondor-USS Indianapolis Correspondence, 1995-96 (M0782), and *Fatal Voyage: The Sinking of the USS Indianapolis* by Dan Kurzman (D774. I5 K87 1990)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2009.0093

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James Clark Davis grew up in Texas. He lived with his father, Thomas, his mother, Ava, and his sister JoAnn. Based on the sentiment in the letters they had a close family. Thomas was a former military man. James began boot camp in 1942. From there he went on to Radioman School in 1943 where he remained until he was called to join the crew on the USS *Indianapolis* in November of 1943.

The heavy cruiser USS *Indianapolis*, CA 35, was commissioned in November 1932. It saw its first combat of World War II in the South Pacific Theater in February 1942. The *Indianapolis* became the flag ship for the 5th Fleet and it saw extensive combat duty in the South Pacific, receiving ten battle stars for action in numerous engagements including the assault on the Marianas ("The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot"), June-August 1944, the covering of the Iwo Jima landings, February-March 1945, and the pre-invasion bombardment of Okinawa, March 1945.

On 16 July 1945 the ship departed from Mare Island Navy Yard in California on a secret cargo mission to Tinian Island in the Marianas. The cargo mission entailed carrying several parts for the assemblage of the atomic bomb, including uranium. After successfully delivering its cargo on 26 July, the ship was torpedoed and sunk by a Japanese submarine between Guam and Leyte four days later. Because of the secret nature of its mission, there was some confusion after the ship's sinking and it was four days before all the survivors were rescued. Of the 1,196 men on board only 316 survived, many perishing because of the elements while waiting to be rescued.

James C. Davis was on the ship when it was torpedoed. He was never found. On August 12 his parents received the telegram stating that he went missing on 30 July 1945.

Sources:

Collection guide for the USS *Indianapolis* Collection (M0645).

Information gathered from the letters in this collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains 8 manuscript folders and one photograph. The letters were mostly written to James' mother but there were also some to Thomas, his father, and JoAnn, his sister. Within each folder the letters are arranged in chronological order.

The first five folders of this collection comprise letters written to Ava M. Davis, James' mother, from her son as well as some of his friends and their family. These include letters from James while he was at boot camp, radioman school, and on the USS *Indianapolis*. Also included in this section are letters from some of James' military buddies. The later letters are from some of James' buddies as well as family members writing to the family to express their sympathy for the loss.

The next two folders contain letters written to JoAnn and Thomas from James and Robert Findley (James' close friend). There are also a couple of others who wrote to Thomas during this time.

The last manuscript folder contains some documents that were received with some of the letters as well as the death/memorial card with a picture of James and a poem written by Robert Findley after James' death.

The photograph of Robert Findley was sent to JoAnn in a letter in 1944.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Letters to Ava Davis, 1942	Folder 1
Letters to Ava Davis, 1943	Folder 2
Letters to Ava Davis, 1944	Folder 3
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Letters to Ava Davis, 1946-47	Folder 5
Correspondence, n.d. and 1943	Folder 6
Correspondence, 1944-46	Folder 7
Miscellaneous Documents	Folder 8
Photograph of Robert Findley	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.

3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC 2858).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.