

MSS. Collection #204

Doug Dickerson Papers, 1939-2006 [bulk 1995-2006]. 1 box (10 folders), 32 items.

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

INTRODUCTION

The Doug Dickerson Papers consist of scrapbooks, clippings, photographs, memorabilia, and miscellaneous items collected by Douglas F. Dickerson. The materials relate to his service in the 82nd Airborne Division during World War II and also include donations he received from other veterans and their families for his small museum. Researchers looking for information about the actions of local veterans or the history of the 82nd Airborne will find this collection worthwhile.

Arrangement: This collection is organized into five series and arranged within the series by document type and date. The series are: **Miscellaneous**, 1987-2006; **Museum Memorabilia**, 1939-ca. 1998, **Photographs**, 1943-ca. 1996; **Printed Materials**, 1945-2005; and **Scrapbooks**, 1995-2006.

Provenance: The bulk of this collection was donated by Doug Dickerson in November 2009 and assigned accession number 2009.32.1. Materials donated prior to that include a German photograph album assigned accession number 1998.50.12 and most of the oversize items.

Processing: This collection was organized and the finding aid was prepared by intern Travis Souther in July 2014.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Born in Greenville, South Carolina, on March 5, 1920, Douglas Farnum “Curly” Dickerson (1920-2011) and his family moved frequently before they finally settled in Greensboro in 1929. Dickerson developed an affinity for athletics early in his youth and was an active member in the local chapter of the Knothole Gang, a youth baseball organization. He attended Greensboro Senior High School (later Grimsley) from 1936 to 1939. The recipient of an athletic scholarship to North Carolina State College (later NC State University), Dickerson played quarterback on the college football team and outfield on the college baseball team. He attended North Carolina State College from 1939 until he was drafted in early 1942.

Shortly after enlisting in the United States Army, Dickerson volunteered to join the paratroops of the 82nd Airborne Division and took basic training at Ft. Lewis, Washington. Two months after being assigned to Ft. Lewis, he volunteered to join a specialized commando unit within the 82nd Airborne and was transferred to Ft. Benning, Georgia, for jump school. Dickerson and his 30-man “hit squad,” as he referred to them, shipped out of the United States and saw their first active combat in Sicily in 1943. Often operating behind enemy lines, the “hit

squad” participated in six major campaigns across Europe, including Sicily, Italy, Normandy, Holland, Belgium (Battle of the Bulge), and Germany, spending a total of 371 days in and out of combat.

Highly decorated for his service, Dickerson was awarded numerous medals and commendations, including two Bronze Stars, two Purple Hearts, the Expert Infantry Badge, and the Presidential Unit Citation. He was one of a very select group to have received the rare Triple Combat Infantryman Badge. France and Belgium each awarded him their respective Croix de Guerre. To add to an already impressive list of awards, the French Legion of Honor gave Dickerson the rank of “Chevalier” or “Knight” in 2006.

After the war, Dickerson returned to Greensboro and resumed his education at Guilford College and then High Point College (later High Point University), from which he graduated in 1949 with a teaching certificate in Social Studies and Physical Education. Following a short career as an educator, Dickerson joined the United States Postal Service in 1952 and had a 32-year career as a postman. Among his many personal accomplishments, he was immensely proud of his role as a coach for local athletic teams. Originally an assistant coach for Guilford College and High Point College, he later coached teams at Liberty High School (1947-1949), Gibsonville High School (1949), and Notre Dame High School (1959-1962). Dickerson was also proud of leading several Little League baseball and football teams that included later prominent political figures Howard Coble and Erskine Bowles.

Dickerson married Edna Lee Kearns (1923-1997) and had one child, daughter Rebecca Ann Whitlock. He was a long-time member of West Market Street (United) Methodist Church. In 1996, he turned the pool house behind his home into a “mini-museum” displaying memorabilia gathered during his time overseas and items donated by other veterans and their families. He operated the museum until 1998 when he donated much of his collection to the Greensboro Historical Museum. Also in 1998, Dickerson published his wartime memoirs, *Doing My Duty*, in which he vividly described his wartime exploits.

Biographical Sources: The sources used to compile this biographical note include Doug Dickerson’s obituary (*News & Record*, May 27, 2011, see the first folder of the collection) and materials within the collection including clippings from the *News & Record* and *High Point Enterprise*.

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

The bulk of this collection relates to Dickerson’s military service in World War II and is assembled in several scrapbooks that detail his unit’s actions through the course of the war. The Dickerson Papers also include photographs, newspaper clippings, and memorabilia that he displayed in his small house museum, as well as miscellaneous items that illustrate his meritorious service abroad. The collection is quite extensive as to the important contributions that a local citizen made during the course of the Second World War and his endeavors to see that those contributions were remembered.

While quite exhaustive on Dickerson’s military record, researchers looking for information on Greensboro and the surrounding area will be disappointed. Most of the information relating to local activities and events is focused on Dickerson as the curator for his house museum. The

collection lacks substantive detail regarding Dickerson's experiences as a local athletic coach, although he viewed that role as a major highlight of his life.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Miscellaneous. 2 folders (3 items). 1987-2006.

This series contains an X-ray dated 6-9-87 in which a German bullet can be seen still lodged in Dickerson's body. Also in this series is a small poster detailing the accomplishments and military service of all three Dickerson brothers (ca. 1998) and a two-minute DVD entitled, "A Video Tribute to Doug Dickerson," highlighting his military honors.

2. Museum Memorabilia. 2 folders (9 items). 1939-ca. 1998.

The memorabilia displayed in Dickerson's museum consists of a color topographic map of Omaha Beach, a small German photograph album found in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge, a letter and two copy photographs detailing the service of a member of the Merchant Marine, a letter noting the historicity of two Japanese swords, and a reproduction photograph featuring the crew of a Martin B-26 Marauder. Also included are a small poster with images of Dickerson's awards and medals, and a large poster containing reproduced photographs and details about the missions in which he participated.

3. Photographs. 1 folder (8 items). 1943-ca. 1996.

This series contains original and reproduction photographs focusing on Dickerson's military service. One photograph is a collage of three images showing Dickerson in his uniform in 1944, with his wife Lee circa 1945, and with his wife circa 1985. Other images show Dickerson in his military uniform in 1945, in a corduroy sports jacket circa 1985, and standing beside a large sign advertising his museum circa 1996. Oversize photographic materials include a laminated black and white reproduction showing Dickerson with his unit at Fort Bragg in 1943, as well as two matted photographs showing displays in his museum and one showing the outside of the museum itself.

4. Printed Materials. 3 folders (9 items). 1945-2006.

The printed materials include an issue of *Airborne Quarterly* (Fall 1996), a copy of *All American All the Way: The Combat History of the 82nd Airborne Division in World War II* by Phil Nordyke (2005), and numerous newspaper clippings regarding Dickerson and his house museum. The *Airborne Quarterly* contains an article about Dickerson and on the back cover has a picture of him during jump training at Fort Benning. This series also contains multiple clippings from the *Greensboro News & Record* and one from the *High Point Enterprise* regarding Dickerson's museum. An oversize clipping from the *News & Record* details the military service of Doug Dickerson and his two older brothers, Fred and Herman. Also present is an oversize reproduction of the V-E Day issue of the 82nd Airborne newspaper, *The "All American" Paraglide*.

5. Scrapbooks. 2 folders (3 items). 1995-2006.

This series consists of three scrapbooks that shed light on Dickerson's wartime service. The first (5:1) is housed in a three-ring binder and comprised primarily of pages from a disassembled monograph entitled *Saga of the All American* (1946), which details the combat actions of the 82nd Airborne Division in all of its operations in World War II. Dickerson wrote notes or highlighted sections in which he was actively involved. This scrapbook also contains newspaper clippings, photographs of Dickerson with his displays at the local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2087, and scanned photographs.

A second scrapbook (5:2) contains articles printed from websites and photocopies of original materials such as photographs, maps, newspaper articles, letters from individuals and organizations, and an X-ray. There are also several biographical vignettes detailing the variety of addresses at which Dickerson lived in his youth and the various schools that he attended.

A third unbound scrapbook (5:2) contains many duplicates of materials already described as well as photocopies of newspaper articles, personal letters, and personal narratives not found in the previous two scrapbooks. Of note in the third scrapbook is Dickerson's response when asked by Colonel James M. Gavin to volunteer for the paratroopers: "I ain't never been in an airplane, much less jumped out of one!" (1:2, Scrapbook #3, pg. 26). Photocopies of two short stories both authored by Dickerson can be found in the unbound materials, as well as a photocopied image of a park bench with a plaque honoring Dickerson and his two older brothers, Fred and Herman, for their military service (5:2, Scrapbook #3, pg. 55).

FOLDER LISTING

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	1	Miscellaneous -- DVD (2006)
	2	“ -- Poster (ca. 1998)
	3	“ -- X-Ray (1987)
2	1	Museum Memorabilia (1939-1944)
	2	“ (1989-ca. 1998)
3	1	Photographs (1943-ca. 1996)
4	1	Printed Materials -- Book -- <i>All American All The Way</i> (2005)
	2	“ -- Periodical -- <i>Airborne Quarterly</i> (Fall 2006)
	3	“ -- Newspapers and Clippings (1945-2005)
5	1	Scrapbooks (1995-2006)
	2	“