

## MSS. Collection #32

### George Preddy Papers, 1938-1987. 2½ boxes (33 folders), ca. 150 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

Although this collection centers on the life of Major George E. Preddy Jr., it contains no personal material directly relating to his early life in Greensboro. His military career is detailed in outline form only through his "201" military files (5:1). Numerous loose photographs and a photo album (6:3), films, and videotapes also relate to his military career. His diaries, which were used extensively by Joe Noah and Samuel L. Sox Jr. in *George Preddy, Top Mustang Ace*, are included with this collection, but his letters are not..

**Arrangement:** The George Preddy Papers are arranged by document type into eight series. The series are: **Audio Recordings**, 1966; **Correspondence**, 1943-1987; **Diaries**, 1938-1943; **Legal; Military Files**, 1941-1945; **Photographs**, 1941-1945; **Printed**, 1942-1987; and **Scrapbook**.

**Provenance:** The items in this collection came from a variety of sources, including the Preddy family (1967.180, 1970.140). Some material, such as movie film and video, was purchased, and some items have been gifts, especially from Sam Sox Jr. and Joe Noah. The diaries were donated by Rachel Preddy Harris in 1998 and assigned accession numbers 1998.116.1-3.

**Processing:** This collection was likely organized and described by Archivist J. Stephen Catlett before 1996. The diaries and *The New Yorker War Album* were incorporated in the collection and finding aid by volunteer Kimberly Oliver in August 2016.

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

**George Earle Preddy Sr.** (1889-1972) moved to Greensboro with his parents in 1910, living on Park Avenue. He worked for the railroad for 49 years. He first saw Clara Noah (1893-1974), his future wife, while on the train passing by her home near Guilford Battleground. The Preddy's had four children: Jonnice (1917-1939), George (1919-1944), Rachel (1921-2017), and William (1924-1945).

**George Earle Preddy Jr.** was educated at Aycock School and Greensboro High School (ca. 1935) and attended Guilford College for two years before entering the military in 1940. He served in the U.S. Army Air Forces, first in Australia and finally in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) as a fighter pilot for the 352nd Fighter Group (487th & 328th Fighter Squadrons) operating out of Bodney, England. Preddy was accidentally shot down and killed during aerial combat over Belgium, by American anti-aircraft fire, on Christmas Day, 1944. He is credited with 26.83 air-to-air victories and was the leading American ace at his death. His

brother Bill, also a pilot for the Army Air Forces, was sent to the ETO in late 1944 and was shot down and killed over Czechoslovakia on April 17, 1945. [The information concerning George Sr. and Clara is taken from the oral history interview conducted by William J. Moore in 1966 (1:1).]

### **SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE**

The original World War II documents in this collection include: letters from Bill Preddy to his parents, including the January 23, 1945, letter in which he consoles his parents over George's death (2:4); George's Army Air Forces ID card (4:1); his "201" military file (5:1); numerous photos of George, his various airplanes, and original airplane gun camera film (Series 6 and 8); a "Home Coming" celebration broadside for George's last visit home in August 1944 (7:2); a "Goldfish Club" card, received for ditching in the English Channel (7:3); a 1942 *Readers' Digest* (7:10); and a scrapbook made from the metal from one of George's planes (8:1).

A lot of material in this collection relates to various post-war attempts to honor the Preddy men. The Director of the Greensboro Historical Museum, William J. Moore Jr., helped to coordinate the program for the dedication of Preddy Boulevard in Greensboro in 1968 (2:6, 7:11), and for Memorial Day celebrations in the 1980s. There are numerous letters to Moore (2:2) from friends and family. Of note are letters from Joe Noah, George's cousin, and from Red McVay, one of Preddy's airplane mechanics. The letters and reports from R.N. Alford (2:1) document his investigations of Preddy's plane crash in Australia in 1942.

### **SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

**1. Audio Recordings. 2 items. 1966 [Original cassette tapes: GHM Audio Tapes #3b & 4a].** Listen to a digital version of the recordings: [Side 1](#), [Side 2](#).

This oral history interview with George E. Preddy Sr. was conducted in 1966 by Museum Director William J. Moore Jr. Mr. Preddy reminisces about George and Bill, and provides some background about their early lives and interests in flying. He also provides interesting information about the family visits and contacts with George and Bill during the war.

**2. Correspondence. 6 folders (ca. 75 items). 1943-1987.**

This series contains no letters from George Preddy Jr. The only contemporary war letters are the three from his brother Bill to their parents. The January 23, 1945 (misdated "1944") letter is charged with emotion as Bill, having just learned of his brother's death, consoles his parents in their loss.

The miscellaneous letters (2:2) relate to the various efforts to memorialize George and Bill Preddy, but a few from Joseph "Red" McVay, who was one of Preddy's assistant crew chiefs at Bodney, reflect on George Preddy's World War II service.

Other items of note in this series include the investigations (2:1) undertaken in Australia by R.N. Alford in 1987 to document the 1942 crash sites of airplanes piloted by George Preddy and

John Sauber (who died). The series also includes substantial documentation on the plans, and planning for, the dedication of Preddy Boulevard in Greensboro in 1968 (2:6).

### **3. Diaries. 4 folders (6 items). 1938-1943.**

This series contains three diaries kept by George Preddy during 1938, 1942, and 1943, as well as photocopies of these diaries. In the first diary, Preddy detailed his daily activities when, in February 1938, he took a train from Greensboro to Hollywood and lived there for a month. While in Hollywood, he looked into an aviation course but found it too expensive, attended many programs, and saw numerous celebrities. Preddy rode in an airplane for the first time in November, and called it "the most wonderful experience I ever had." At the end of this diary are several pages of addresses (3:2).

In January 1942, Preddy sailed from San Francisco to Melbourne, Australia. After arriving in February, he was assigned to the 9<sup>th</sup> Squadron and practiced flying in the area for several weeks. He spent many months in the towns of Darwin and Bachelor, taking to the air when Japanese planes raided the area. He wrote that the Japanese would keep his outfit occupied for two or three days, followed by weeks of calm. Preddy was seriously injured in a crash in July 1942, and spent several months recuperating after moving south to Adelaide. He met future fiancée Joan Jackson in September and was made 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant in October; his entries during this time are filled with commentaries on the state of the war. In October, Preddy returned to the U.S. on leave. After spending ten days in Greensboro during November, he traveled to California to be transferred, then to Orlando where he attended a few days of flight school. Preddy was assigned to the 326<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Command in December, and returned to Oakland (3:3).

Preddy traveled to New York in January 1943 and was assigned to the 320<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 326<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group in Massachusetts, where he trained for six months. He was promoted to captain in March, his parents came to visit in May, and he sailed to Glasgow in July. Preddy was stationed in Walton, outside of London, before moving to Clairmont Hall, where he attended aviation lectures and classes. He spent several days in August on leave in London, and his group began flying missions in Europe during September 1943 (3:4).

### **4. Legal. 1 item.**

This folder contains George Preddy Jr.'s U.S. Army Air Forces identification card, or papers.

### **5. Military Files. 2 items. 1941-1945.**

This folder contains George Preddy's official military papers, commonly known as a "201" file. They are his official orders and other documents, from his first assignments in 1941 until his death in 1944.

### **6. Photographs. 7 folders (ca. 42 items). 1941-1945.**

This series focuses almost entirely on George Preddy, except for one portrait of his brother Bill. There are images of Preddy's various airplanes, and numerous loose images of him in flying "gear." The lone photograph album (6:3) focuses heavily (if not exclusively) on his service in

Australia in 1942, and his hospital recuperation from a crash that severely injured his leg and hip. Included are images of his future Australian fiancée, Joan Jackson.

This series also includes movie film (6:2) and video tapes (6:6). The 16mm movie film consists of airplane gun camera footage (also copied on videotape, see 6:6); a can of film entitled "AAF 2154 Major George E. Preddy-Fighter Ace," which includes flying footage taken at Bodney, probably after Preddy shot down the six German planes in one day; [there is also a small reel showing Preddy on his last visit home in August 1944](#). This color film includes a lighthearted view of Preddy at home with his mother, and driving an antique car (owned by Edgar Knees, the Minister at West Market Street Methodist Church). Also included is a ceremony at the Overseas Replacement Depot (ORD), probably honoring George after his death. ORD buildings and Col. Paul Younts are shown in the film.

The videotapes (6:6) include a copy of the 16mm gun camera film (described above) and two versions of the biographical video "Preddy, The Mustang Ace," produced by Musten Communications of Raleigh, N.C.

### **7. Printed Material. 12 folders (ca. 26 items). 1942-1987.**

The most interesting items in this series are in the first folders: 1944 Home Coming celebration broadside (7:2); the "Goldfish Club" card, which made Preddy an honorary member after having to ditch his plane in the English Channel (7:3); and the two certificates "...Of Supreme Sacrifice," from the West Market Street Methodist Church, honoring the deaths of George and Bill. Also included is George Preddy's copy of *The New Yorker War Album*, a book of war cartoons (7:1).

### **8. Scrapbook. 1 folder (1 item).**

This item has a metal cover, made from one of Preddy's airplanes, with a portrait photo of George Preddy on the front. It contains original photographs of Preddy in uniform, in the cockpit of his airplane, and with other pilots and military personnel.

### **FOLDER LISTING**

<b><u>Series</u></b>	<b><u>Folder</u></b>	<b><u>Contents</u></b>
1	1	Audio Recordings -- Interview with George Preddy Sr., 1966 [See: GHM Audio Tapes # 3B/4A] Listen to a digital version of the recordings: <a href="#">Side 1</a> , <a href="#">Side 2</a>
2	1	Correspondence -- Alford, R.N. (1987) -- Report on crash sites of George Preddy & John Sauber in Australia, July 1942
	2	“ -- Miscellaneous (1967-1985) *M. Maurer; Wm. J. Moore; Joseph W. Noah; Rachel Preddy Harris; Joseph J. "Red" McVay
	3	“ -- Moran, Glennon T. (1968)
	4	Correspondence -- Preddy, Mr. & Mrs. (Letters to, 1964) *Clarke, Thomas S.M.
	5	“ -- Preddy, William R. (1943, 1945)

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
2	6	Correspondence -- Preddy Boulevard, Greensboro (1967-68)
3	1	Diaries -- Preddy, George Jr. (1938, 1942-1943)
	2	“ -- Photocopies (1938)
	3	“ -- Photocopies (1942)
	4	“ -- Photocopies (1943)
4	1	Legal -- Preddy, George Jr. -- U.S. Army Air Forces ID card
5	1	Military Files -- "201" File (1941-1945)
6	1	Photographs -- Airplane -- "Cripes A'Mighty"
	2	“ -- Movie Film (1944, 1945)
	3	“ -- Photograph Album (1942- )
	4	“ -- Preddy, George E. Jr.
	5	Photographs -- Preddy, William R.
	6	“ -- Videotapes
	7	“ -- World War II
7	1	Printed -- Book -- <i>The New Yorker War Album</i> (1942)
	2	“ -- Broadside -- "Home Coming Celebration Honoring Maj. George E. Preddy Jr." (1945)
	3	“ -- Cards -- "Goldfish Club" (Capt. George Preddy, January 1944)
	4	“ -- Certificates -- West Market Street Methodist Church (1946)
	5	“ -- Newspaper -- <i>Greensboro Daily News</i> (1945)
	6	Printed -- Newspaper -- <i>News &amp; Observer</i> , Raleigh (January 16, 1945)
	7	“ -- Pamphlets -- American Battle Monuments Commission (1959, 1961)
	8	“ -- Pamphlets -- VFW, Maj. George Preddy Jr. Post 2087
	9	Printed -- Periodicals (1969, 1987) * <i>Air Classics; International Plastic Modelers Society Quarterly</i>
	10	“ -- Periodicals -- <i>Readers' Digest</i> (December 1942)
	11	“ -- Programs -- Dedication of Preddy Boulevard (1968)
	12	Printed -- Print -- "Cripes A'Mighty" (autographed by 8th Air Force veterans)
8	1	Scrapbook -- Preddy, George Jr.

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Note: The numbers following the name/subject entry -- e.g., 1:1 -- Series#:Folder# (or, if no ":", Series only) that name/topic can found.

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 Australia: photos during World War II, 6:3

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**Clarke**, Thomas S.M.: 2:4

**Goldfish** Club: World War II honorary member's card, 7:3  
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**Harris**, Rachel Preddy: 2:2

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