

MSS. Collection #197

Burton H. Taylor Papers, 1944-1945. ½ box (9 folders), 43 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 Burton H. Taylor Papers consist exclusively of correspondence from Burton Taylor to his future wife, Helen Knott. Written while he was serving in the 353rd Infantry, 89th Division during World War II, the letters provide details about the unit's activities in Europe, including military movements and duties, and leisure activities. Researchers interested in this particular unit or General George Patton's Third Army, to which it was assigned, will find this collection helpful.

Arrangement: This collection is organized in one series and arranged within the series by date. The series is **Correspondence**, 1944-1945.

Provenance: This collection was donated by Helen Taylor in December 2008 and assigned accession number 2008.61.1.

Processing: This collection was organized and the finding aid was prepared by volunteer Kimberly Oliver in June 2016.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Burton Henry Taylor (1921-2000) was born in Edgecombe County, North Carolina, to Reuben and Mattie Taylor. He attended Oak Ridge Military Academy and North Carolina State College (later North Carolina State University), graduating in 1944 with a degree in Agriculture. Taylor fought in World War II as a lieutenant in charge of a mortar platoon in the 353rd Infantry, 89th Division assigned to General George Patton's Third Army. He received the Combat Infantry Badge in 1945. After the war, he was an agent for the North Carolina Agricultural Extension, serving Nash County from 1948 to 1956. Taylor moved to Greensboro in 1956 and was Guilford County's Agricultural Extension agent until 1977. He married schoolteacher **Helen Ruth Knott** (1924-2020) in 1948, and the couple had two children, Julia and Henry. Taylor was a charter member and deacon at Lawndale Baptist Church. He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star in 2000.

Biographical Sources: The biographical information was gathered from *The Agromeck* (North Carolina State College, 1944), Burton Taylor's obituary (*News & Record*, February 5, 2000) and "Posthumous Bronze Star keeps vet in minds of widow, children" (*News & Record*, January 3, 2001).

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists exclusively of letters written by Burton Taylor to his future wife, Helen Knott. The letters give detailed information about Taylor's activities while serving in the 353rd Infantry, 89th Division, but they contain very little contextual information. Both the lack of variety in materials and wider context are major limitations of this collection. Since the content focuses on Taylor's activities in Europe rather than Knott's experience in Mount Olive, North Carolina, researchers interested in the impact of World War II on the home front will not find this collection helpful. Instead, it will be most intriguing to researchers studying the activities of the 353rd Infantry, 89th Division and General Patton's Third Army in Europe.

SERIES DESCRIPTION

1. Correspondence. 9 folders (43 items). 1944-1945.

This series contains correspondence from Burton Taylor to Helen Knott between December 1944 and May 1945. In December, Taylor wrote from somewhere in the eastern United States to reminisce about his Christmas visit home (1:1). A change of address card shows that he was a member of the 353rd Infantry, 89th Division.

In January, Taylor sailed to France. He wrote about being very seasick on the journey, sometimes causing him to skip patrol duty, but the camaraderie of his unit kept morale high. After landing, he commented that the French seemed happy to see the American soldiers and the weather was warm but muddy (1:2). The subject of mail was frequent, with Taylor telling how as an officer he censored the mail posted by the unit and that he was unable to give many details about their location due to censorship rules. He also noted how long it took for both his and Helen's letters to be delivered to one another, with some seemingly lost or arriving out of order.

In February, Taylor wrote about his unit receiving French lessons at school outside of the camp (1:3-4). The men explored nearby towns where residents tried to sell them overpriced items. He commented on receiving a lot of mail from Helen, including a perfumed card that both he and other officers enjoyed, and responded to her mention of having difficulty receiving his letters. The unit moved from their tent camp to actual living quarters with electricity and water. He used rationed cigarettes to trade with the French and sent Helen a sample of the French money he received.

The 89th Division was assigned to General Patton's Third Army in March (1:5-6). They moved to Luxemburg, then Germany, where Taylor liked the scenery but commented that the native people lived "too dirty." They stayed in a German town where they had real furniture. In April, Taylor was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge, which came with a \$10 pay increase (1:7-8). He visited Paris on leave in May, and was transferred to the Ninth Army (1:9). Taylor asked about V-E Day celebrations in the U.S. but reminded Helen that he was still in the army regardless.

FOLDER LISTING

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	1	Correspondence (1944, December)
	2	Correspondence (1945, January)
	3	Correspondence (1945, February 1-11)
	4	Correspondence (1945, February 12-25)
	5	Correspondence (1945, March 1-21)
	6	Correspondence (1945, March 24-30)
	7	Correspondence (1945, April 1-19)
	8	Correspondence (1945, April 20-29)
	9	Correspondence (1945, May)