



*Special Collections
Charles E. Shain Library
Connecticut College
New London, CT*

Catherine D. and Frederic W. Irwin Collection

Descriptive Summary

- Title:** The Catherine D. and Frederic W. Irwin Collection
- Extent:** Approximately 140 items (excluding books and videos cataloged separately)
- Repository:** Connecticut College Special Collections
- Abstract:** The Irwin Collection covers the years 1944 to 1999 with the bulk of the material from 1942 to 1945. The primary focus is correspondence with and about Irwin during his time as navigator during WW II and his captivity in a German prisoner of war camp. Other materials include photographs, news clippings, books, military records and awards, and information on other crew members.

Administrative Information

- Provenance:** The Catherine D. and Frederic W. Irwin Collection was donated to Connecticut College in 1999 by Catherine Irwin.

Publication Rights:

Biographical Note:

- 1918, Aug. 8 Born, Pittsburgh, PA
- 1941 Enlists in the Army
- 1942 Achieves rank of 2nd Lieutenant. Assumes duties as Navigator with the 333rd Bomb Squadron, 94th Bomber Group of the 8th Air Force.

1943, Dec. 30	Plane crash lands at St. Mary's in the Marsh. Crew survives but plane is destroyed.
1944, Jan. 11	Plane is shot down while taking part in an attack on an Luftwaffe parts factory near Brunswick, Germany. Initially reported as Missing in Action, Irwin becomes prisoner of German Government.
1944, March	Imprisoned at Stalag Luft I in Barth, Germany.
1945, May 13	Liberated from Stalag Luft I.
1946	Serves as a navigation training officer at Morrison Field, Florida.
1947	Applies for, and is accepted as, a liaison officer with the Allied High Command in Italy.
1948	Reassigned as a Navigator flying on the Berlin Airlift.
1948, July 13	Transfers to inactive reserve.
1952	Retires from military service
1995	Retires, along with wife Catherine, from personal business.
1996, Dec. 16	Died, Niantic, Connecticut

Scope and Content Notes:

The Frederic Irwin Collection spans the years 1944 to 1999 with the bulk covering 1942 to 1945. The primary components of the collection are series of letters and correspondence between Irwin and his Mother, Mrs. Manola Ness Irwin Baker; Mrs. Baker and acquaintances of Irwin's; and governmental correspondence. Other materials include historical publications, correspondence with authors, military records and citations, photographs and news clippings. In addition, Irwin maintained an extensive library of books pertaining to World War II and the Eighth Air Force, which were donated along with the collection and have been added to the Shain Library catalog.

The Frederic Irwin Collection provides an opportunity to study the impact of World War II from both a global and highly personal perspective. Newspaper and magazine clippings provide a glimpse of American Life and the war effort in the 1940's, while the

personal correspondence recounts the terrible impact on individuals. Equally compelling is the view afforded the German war effort with the inclusion of the German publication “Battle and Victory” produced by the German Propaganda Office.

Description of Series/Container List

(Box 1)

Series 1 – Correspondence

Divided into three subseries: Individuals, Governmental and Authors/Researchers.

Individuals Subseries

Correspondence: Individuals, 1944-1998 (bulk 1944-1946).

Consists of letters to Irwin or sent by him. Also included are letters written about Irwin during his captivity, particularly to and from his mother, Mrs. Manola Irwin Baker.

Arranged chronologically under the correspondent.

Mrs. Manola Irwin Baker, 1944-1945.

Frederic Irwin, 1944-1945.

Pierre Auclair, 1944-1968.

William L. Martin, 1945-1999

Governmental Subseries

Correspondence: Governmental, 1942-1945.

Consists of letters and communication from the military and elected officials pertaining to Irwin’s training, status and locations.

Arranged chronologically according to type of correspondence.

Official Letters, 1942-1944.

Telegrams, 1943-1945.

Authors/Researchers Subseries

Correspondence: Authors/Researchers, 1988-1997

Consists of Irwin's correspondence to and from individuals completing research for books about WW II and the Eighth Air Force.

Arranged chronologically under the correspondent.

Cliff Hall, 1989-1990.

Frank Halm, 1988-1989.

Jaap van der Kuylen, 1989-1997.

Ian McLachlan, 1989-1990.

Hans-Heiri Stapfer, 1988-1989.

Ferdinand Schmidt, 1997-1998.

Russell Zorn, 1988-1990.

Series 2 - Military Documentation

Divided into three subseries: Awards and Certificates, Military Records, and Missing Air Crew Reports.

Awards and Certificates Subseries

Military Documentation: Awards and Certificates, 1942-1950.

Consists of individual and group military honors, training certificates and official appointment notices.

Arranged chronologically.

Military Honors, 1942-1950.

Certificates, 1942-1950.

Military Records Subseries

Military Documentation: Military Records

Consists of official forms and records covering Irwin's military career and from Stalag Luft I during his imprisonment.

Arranged chronologically under entity.

U.S. Army, 1942-1950.

Stalag Luft I, 1944-1945.

Missing Air Crew Report Subseries

Military Documentation: Missing Air Crew Reports

Consists of completed casualty questionnaires pertaining to the crash of Jan. 11, 1944. Some of the copies are of poor quality and partially illegible.

Missing Air Crew Report, 1944

Series 3 – Publications

Divided into three subseries: Newspapers, Prisoner of War Bulletins and Miscellaneous. Large individual items are list separately.

Newspaper Clippings Subseries

Publications: Newspaper Clippings

Newspaper Clippings, 1944-1999.

Prisoner of War Bulletins Subseries

Publications: Prisoner of War Bulletins

Prisoner of War Bulletins, Originals, 1944-1945.

Prisoner of War Bulletins, Copies from American Red Cross, 1943-1945.

Miscellaneous Subseries

Publications: Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous Publications, 1943-1999.

(Includes account of 12/30/43 flight and crash, a poem entitled *Christmas Eve in 'Forty Four*, and a copy of *Barth Hard Times* from May 5, 1945)

(Box 2)

Series 3.1 - Life Magazine
1 item. 1945.

Series 3.2 - "Battle and Victory". (*Bildokumente von Kampf und Sieg*)
1 item. [1940]. Note: See Ferdinand Schmidt correspondence file for further information.

Series 3.3 - "Flier in Flight" (*Flieger im Kampf*)
1 item. 1939.

Series 3.4- "Kriegie Memories", the POW Diary of Ben Phelper
1 item. [].

Series 3.5- Flight Diary of Peter Van Slycke
1 item. 1942-1945.

(Box 1)

Series 4-

Organizations

Covers the two veterans groups Irwin was active in: The 94th Bombers Group Memorial Association and the Eighth Air Force Historical Society.

The 94th Bomber Group Memorial Association, 1984-1999

The Eighth Air Force Historical Society, 1994-1997

Series 5 - Pictures and Maps

Divided into three subseries: photographs, illustrations and maps.

Photographs Subseries

Pictures and Maps: Photographs

- P/1 Enlargement of down plane #A239822 O (crash of 1/11/44)
- P/2 Mounted 8x10 of Irwin entering/leaving cockpit of a small plane
- P/3 Mounted 8x10 showing tail section of downed plane #A237820 R (crash of 12/30/43)
- P/4 Mounted 8x10 of Irwin standing on the wing of a small plane
- P/5 Formal picture of Tom Sheedy (co-pilot)
- P/6 Enlargement of photo of Stalag Luft I glee club
- P/7 Small photograph of 4 men, including Joe Miksic (tail gunner), from 1943
- P/8 Formal picture of Sgt. W.L. Martin (RAF)
- P/8 Photograph of Martin and his sister
- P/9 Irwin at the Sacramento reunion of the 94th BGMA
- P/10 Formal picture of Irwin in uniform
- P/11 Photograph of sign in Niantic Post Office of Irwin's request for support of the Red Cross

Photographs Subseries

Pictures and Maps: Photographs

P/12-24 Photographs from Irwin's burial at Arlington National Cemetery
Dec. 1996.

Illustrations Subseries

Pictures and Maps: Illustrations

- D/1 Rendering of B-17's in flight
- D/2 Diagram of B-17
- D/3 Charicature of "Fred, Tom and Don"

Maps Subseries

Pictures and Maps: Maps

Maps of Bury St. Edmunds, [1944] and 1999.

Series 6 - Miscellaneous

This series encompasses information pertaining to the memorial service for Irwin and the dedication of the Irwin Collection at Connecticut College on November 12, 1999.

Irwin Dedication, 1999
(Includes biography written by Gerald Kercher)

Irwin Memorial Service and Obituary, 1996-1997

(Box 3)

Series 7 - Oversize Materials

There are four items in this series: a hat Irwin wore during his time as Prisoner of War, his collection of medals framed and mounted, a large (panorama) photograph of the 94th Bombers Group Memorial Association at a reunion, and Irwin's *Pilot's Flight Log* book from his training at Hicks Field.