

2007-058

**GUIDE TO THE
ROBERT B. GRAVES PAPERS**

**Special Collections
Tuck Library
New Hampshire Historical Society**

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Collection Overview

Title: Robert B. Graves Papers

Bulk Dates: July 1942-June 1945

Accession Number: 2007-058

Physical Description: 2 boxes containing 10 folders

Provenance and Acknowledgments: The Society received the Robert B. Graves papers in 2007. The bulk of the collection consists of around 125-150 letters, a few newspaper clippings, and a few post cards which were given to the Society by Mr. Graves.

Access restrictions: No restrictions

Copyright: For permission requests to publish material from this collection, contact the Special Collections Librarian for copyright information.

Repository: Special Collections, Tuck Library

For Additional Information
see the Special Collections Librarian

Summary:

This collection is composed chiefly of Mr. Graves' letters mostly to his parents. They are arranged in chronological order, those while in the States in Box 1 and those from England in Box 2.

Biographical Note:

Graves was born on April 5, 1915 in Dorchester, MA. and raised in Winthrop, MA. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps shortly after the start of WW II and left for training in July, 1942. Although he was discharged at the end of the war in September 1945, he was recalled for the Korean War. He was discharged after his service there, in B-29s.

Following his service he went to Yale University under the GI Bill and upon graduating went to work for a series of Fortune 500 businesses in industrial research. He was a trade rep in New York City until he fully retired, settling in Laconia, N.H. He then began raising dahlias as a hobby but soon was known as the "Dahlia Man".

His wife had a strong interest in Hollywood movies and filled there home with hundreds of tapes, CDs, and DVDs. He began collecting books, adding them to the shelves of films and then created a scrap book of his war experiences.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection is comprised of about 125-150 letters from Graves to his parents in Massachusetts. In the first box of letters he tells of his duties, activities, and training as he went through basic training in Nashville, Tenn, and on to Cadet training at Maxwell Field in Montgomery, Ala. His descriptions of life at Maxwell Field are vivid and accurate as this writer can attest to. From there he was sent to Primary Pilot training in Douglas Georgia. He failed the final check flight and was sent back to Maxwell Field for reassignment.

From Maxwell he was reassigned to Selman Field, Monroe, La. , for Navigation ground school training and from there to Coral Springs for in the air training as taught by contract with Pan American Airlines. These crews had had experience in over-water flying for long distances for several years before the War. He graduated as a second lieutenant and was then transferred to several airfields around the country for transition training, learning to work with a crew. His aircraft were B-17s, the famous "Flying Fortress".

E-6B DEAD RECKONING COMPUTER

This navigator's tool was not among Graves's artifacts but was donated by Stephen W. Leavenworth, the volunteer who organized these papers. Leavenworth was also a navigator in WW II.

The instrument is simply a circular slide rule and is designed specifically to aid in navigation. As such, Graves would have made extensive use of an E-6B when flying and directing the courses of the B-17 in which he was a crew-member.

I would like to add my story to this. As I trained as a navigator in Hondo, TX, we claimed we had a back-up instrument called a "Roman Hair-Ball". When you were ready to return to base at Hondo, you placed the Hair-Ball on your desk and spoke the following incantation:

"Mumbo Jumbo, bells of the Congo,
Tell me quickly, which way to Hondo."

The Hair-Ball would quiver a little and then a single hair would pop out and point to Hondo. This was a great help on check-flights.

Stephen W. Leavenworth
NHHS Volunteer April 15, 2008