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James Cortese papers

Title: James Cortese papers
Collection No: MSS.311
Extent: 1.5 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: 1942-1988 and undated

Abstract: The collection comprises primarily the drafts of the manuscript for James Cortese’s 1988 book *Air Commandos Also Laugh*. There are also original drawings by his wife which may have been intended for the book. In addition, there are copies of the newspapers Cortese worked for while in the Army Air Force at Camp Williams, Wisconsin, and Sedalia Army Air Field, Missouri, in 1943-1944.

Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English
Preferred Citation: James Cortese papers, Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis.

Publication date: April 2014
Biographical information

Anthony James Cortese was born in 1917, a member of the well-known Memphis family. He served as a reporter for camp newspapers at army air force bases in Wisconsin and Missouri during the Second World War before being posted to the Philippines. He married Anna Lee Slagle (1920-1999) and they had four sons: Angelo (Ted), Jim (William James), Richard Anthony and Michael Wesley. Cortese worked as a reporter for the Commercial Appeal newspaper in Memphis, retiring in 1979. He died in 2006.


Scope and contents

The collection comprises primarily the drafts of the manuscript for James Cortese’s 1988 book Air Commandos Also Laugh. There are also original drawings by his wife which may have been intended for the book. In addition, there are copies of the newspapers Cortese worked for while in the Army Air Force at Camp Williams, Wisconsin, and Sedalia Army Air Field, Missouri, in 1943-1944.

Subject terms

Cortese, James, 1917-2006.
United States. Army Air Forces. Sedalia Army Air Field.
United States. Army Air Forces. Troop Carrier Squadron, 318th.

Inventory

Box 1

Folder

“History of 318th Troop Carrier Squadron, 3rd Air Commando Group, October 1943-October 1945”:
1 Ellis, Frederick M. and Tommy Thompson, “Highlights: The 318th Troop Carrier Squadron – Commando -, October 1943-October 1945”, undated.
Typescript with some corrections and drawings, 57p. Thompson original manuscript.

2 Typescript pages 4, 4, 5, 7.

“Air Commandos Also Laugh”:


5 Page proofs, with corrections, 8p. Chapter 1: “The Bastards Learn to Sing”.

“Flying High”:

6 Typescript with corrections. Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-29. Page 1 is headed “Air Commandoes Also Laugh”.

7 Typescript with corrections. Chapters 4-9, pp. 30-85.

8 Typescript with corrections. Chapters 10-19, pp. 86-159.


10 Typescript with corrections. pp. 1, 55, 78, 117-120.


“Misplaced Warrior”:


13 Typescript with some corrections, pp. 65-70, 72-81, 91-126.

14 Typescript with some corrections, pp. 127-193.


17 Typescript with corrections, pp. 133-159, 168-204.


19 Miscellaneous papers, 1943-1944:


   Letter: Tishie Ann Lee to James Cortese, undated. Lee was part of a USO show Cortese interviewed for Troop Courier.

   “Troop Carrier Command”, Fortune magazine offprint, 1943 October.

   Poems: drafts with corrections. Possibly for Troop Courier:

   “Ain’t No Santa Claus”, by Ralph L. Morey.

   “Swan Song”.

   “Bug House Fable”, by ‘SAAF poet’ Ralph L. Morey.

   “Air Minded”.

   Play script: “Wings Over Missouri”. 3-act play with references to training at Sedalia Army Air Field.

   Radio interview, 1944 January 10. Interview with Sergeant George Sanders, professional boxer and boxing promoter on base.
Untitled story on bond drive and Sedalia Army Air Field, 5p.
Troop Courier survey.
20 Drawings: Signed by Slagle (Anna Slagle Cortese):
“I Was Classified”.
“We Made an Inspection”.
“Best Dressed G.I. Joe”.
“Charge of Quarters”, 1944 September 22.
“’I Disagree’, Said the Little Wackie”.
On one sheet: “He Belonged at Home”, “With Twinkling Eyes He Read for Half an Hour”, “Dictionary Lore”.

Box 2
Newspapers:
The News of Camp Williams, Camp Williams near LaCrosse and Tomah, Wisconsin.
   Vol. 1, No. 1-5, 1942 August 1-September 4.
   Vol. 1, No. 6-16, 1942 October 9-December 18.
Troop Courier, Army Air Force Base, Knob Noster, Missouri.
Clipping: “Even some of his comrades at the Sedalia Training Field didn’t know he was THE Jackie Coogan”, St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 1943 February 6, p. 3C.

Separated materials

The following material has been separated from the collection and disposed of as follows:

Separated to Special Collections book collection.