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James M. Beck papers

Title: James M. Beck papers
Collection No: MSS.397
Extent: 1.5 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: 1938-1997

Abstract: The collection is composed of documents concerning James M. Beck’s World War II service and his civilian work in post-war Germany, as well as materials related to the cotton business in Memphis.

Processed by: James E. Montague, 1999; Gerald Chaudron, 2014.
Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English
Preferred Citation: James M. Beck papers, Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis.

Publication date: August 2014
Biographical information

James Moreno Beck was born on July 29, 1913, in Pensacola, Florida, to Alexander Rabun (1882-1919) and Marie Isla Smith Beck (1886-1985). The Becks moved to Memphis in 1919, and Marie Beck later married Lorenzo Lewis Bland (b.1876) and moved to Birmingham, Alabama. James graduated from Central High School in Memphis in 1931, and then worked for D. Canale and Company and the brokerage business, Campbell Sales Company, before being drafted into the army in 1941. His first assignment was in British Guiana testing uniforms in 1942. In 1943 he was commissioned as a second lieutenant and served as a combat infantry officer in Italy, France and Germany. He left the army to work for the Joint Import-Export Agency in 1946, which was designed to help rebuild the German economy. While he was in Germany, Beck met and married his wife, Gertrude Kotte.

The Becks moved back to the United States in 1948 and he worked in a food brokerage business and then for several transportation companies. Beck also joined the Army Reserve with the rank of captain. In 1954 he started the Memphis Trucking Company which he operated until 1987. By 1964 the company was handling five million pounds of cotton weekly from Memphis to the Southeast textile mills. Trudy Beck assisted her husband in the operation of the company and later became a cotton broker. James Beck died on July 31, 2002.

Scope and contents

The collection is composed of documents concerning James Beck’s World War II service and his civilian work in post-war Germany, as well as materials related to the cotton business.

Beck’s military papers include reassignment and leave orders, promotion and medal notices, as well as documents related to his work as a supply officer in Germany. The collection also contains documents related to Beck’s service with the Joint Import-Export Agency after he left the army in 1946. Other materials concern the Army Reserve, health examinations and the Army Exchange Service.

Two notebooks feature in the cotton-related, one noting the shipments of cotton made from 1970 to 1977, and the other listing companies the Becks worked with. The collection also includes copies of Buenting’s International Cotton Code and additions to the code.

Subject terms

Beck, Gertrude K.
Cotton trade--Tennessee--Memphis.
United States. Army--Supplies and stores.
Inventory

Folder

Box 1

7. Inventory documents during period Beck was a supply officer for Headquarters Military Government, Kassel, Germany, 1945-1946.
8. Inventory documents signed by Beck while a supply officer for Headquarters Military Government, Kassel, Germany, 1945-1946.
10. Results of pre-marital physical examinations, 1947; travel orders for Gertrude Beck and daughter, Frankfurt, Germany to Birmingham, Ala., 1948; Sigrid Leonhardy adoption certificate, 1947.
“Purchases of American cotton made by the Grupo de Importacion del C.A.N. on October 27, 1955”, Memphis and Orleans/Texas.


**Box 2**

**1** Publication: *Active Times*, Vol. 17, No. 9, 1997 May. Article on Beck, pp.6-7, 10.

Unfolded

Notebook: Names and addresses of cotton merchants.
