

Regards... to All My Friends...

By Leslie A. Przybylek,
Curator of History

Mary and Lou Fuchs with their three sons,
Louis ("Dickie"), Robert, and Ronald, c. 1940.
HHC Detre L&A, Fuchs Family Papers.



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Mr. Dickie Fuchs
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"A Gathering of Patrons at Mary's Tea Room." Tea room customers gathered in what had been the first floor living room of Lou and Mary's home. The Fuchs can be seen seated at far right, c. 1940.
HHC Detre L&A, Fuchs Family Papers.



Dear "Tea" Sippers...

"The impossible happened. At our first mail delivery I actually heard my name barked out three times. Those cards you so thoughtfully got off packed the lift of a tank of hydrogen."

- Pvt. Edward Carr in Fort Knox, Kentucky, writing to Mary and Lou Fuchs in Point Breeze, April 27, 1942

"Any kind of mail is good mental ammunition."

- Jackie Morton, "Will He Get My Letter?"
Women's Home Companion, May 1943

Private Edward Carr probably never read *Women's Home Companion*. But he would have approved of the magazine's advice that letters from home were key ammunition in the battle to uphold morale during World War II. Many people agreed. The United States Post Office proclaimed in 1942: "frequent and rapid communication ... strengthens fortitude, enlivens patriotism, makes loneliness endurable, and inspires to even greater devotion the men and women who are carrying on our fight far from home and friends."¹ Posters printed by the Army's Recruiting Publicity Bureau urged, "Be with him at every mail call." "He Lives for Your Letters," a civilian writer reminded her readers in *American Magazine*, while the philosopher Dr. Irwin Edman insisted in *House Beautiful*, "You Can't Be Too Busy to Write."²

Americans got the message. From the beginning to the end of World War II, citizens of every age and background took up paper, pens, and pencils and answered the call to bolster troop morale. Soldiers returned the favor, writing to family and friends as often as their situation allowed. In the process, Americans unleashed a torrent of wartime correspondence nearly unprecedented in the nation's history. Between 1943 and 1945, letters and packages sent overseas from the United States jumped by 513%, increasing from 571 million pieces to 3.5 billion. The volume of mail dispatched in reply was almost as great. Between 1940 and 1945, the Post Office handled a total increase of 10 billion pieces of mail.³

Private Edward Carr's letter was one of those pieces, preserved today in the Fuchs Family papers and photographs in the History Center's Detre Library & Archives.⁴ The Fuchs papers document a neighborhood writing circle initiated by Mary and Lou Fuchs in



Point Breeze, where their confectionary and tea room became a communication hub for locals away at war. The couple began setting out pencils, postcards, and paper every Thursday evening, encouraging the tea room's patrons to write to local servicemen. In return, the young men wrote back. Their letters and postcards trace the journeys of new soldiers from induction centers and basic training camps to more intensive facilities that prepared them for service and combat

overseas. These responses form the heart of the Fuchs collection, documenting the experiences of a generation heading to war and illustrating how a gift of neighborhood generosity maintained a sense of connection in a world of almost constant change.⁵ One of countless writing circles and servicemen's newsletters started by private individuals and civic groups across the country, the Fuchs family papers demonstrate how American civilians and soldiers sustained social bonds

during World War II, representing the tip of a national trove of primary source material that remains largely unexplored by scholars today.⁶

The act of writing was a personal commitment to uphold fellowship with a generation shouldering the duty of military service in increasingly visible numbers. Between 1941 and 1945, Pennsylvania contributed more men to the Armed Forces during World War II than any state but New York. This included approximately

Many enlistees headed off to military service with enthusiasm, especially early in the draft, before America officially entered World War II. This photo shows a group boarding a streetcar to a city train station, November 1941. Courtesy of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.



175,000 people from the Pittsburgh region.⁷ Neighborhoods across the city watched and counted as house after house said farewell to multiple family members, sometimes as many as eight.⁸ Throughout 1942, draft wards from East Liberty to Mount Lebanon routinely threw public send-offs each month for the hundreds of recruits and selectees, celebrating the “boys going off to war” with parades, speeches, and dances.⁹ By 1943, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* announced what area residents already knew:

that city blocks were being “cleaned out of soldiers.” One block in Lawrenceville had 19 men from 15 houses “wearing khaki or navy blue.” A photo showed three triple-star houses (each household contributed three members to the Armed Forces) along one block of 39th Street. That wasn’t even the record: Larkins Way on the South Side had 26 men serving from 17 houses. “The crowd that used to hang out at the corner drug store” was gone, observed one father. He hoped that the

sacrifice meant something: “We ought to be winning the war pretty soon with all the boys we’ve sent.”¹⁰

This sense of loss—the impact of missing faces in familiar gathering spots—resonates in the story of the Fuchs Family papers. Mary and Lou Fuchs had owned and operated the Frick Park Confectionary and grocery on the corner of Reynolds Street and Le Roi Road in Point Breeze since 1930.¹¹ The store was an extension of their personal backgrounds.

Most new inductees first stopped at an Army Reception Center such as this one at Fort George G. Meade. This is where men officially became soldiers, received uniforms, and were given their assignments.

HHHC Detre L&A, Fuchs Family Papers



C. 5 Reception Center—Final Inspection After Clothing Issue—Fort Geo. G. Meade, Md.

Dear Mary & Tea Room Ramblers...

Just received your card and Dorothy's letter, sure was glad to hear from you all.

How is everything going in your tea room?

Boy! I sure do miss it and the gang, but I am so darn busy I don't get time to think.

We drill, drill and drill so[me] more. I am in the infantry and we march almost twenty miles a day.

The living conditions aren't so nice as home of course as we live in tents, and boy it sure gets darn cold at night. We of course don't have no hot weather.

I guess a lot of the boys are leaving or will be leaving soon from around there.

Lou was a meat cutter for city markets; Mary's parents ran a confectionary in East Liberty. They met over the counter when he repeatedly visited her family's shop to buy cigarettes. The confectionary in Point Breeze was Mary's idea.

Two years into their marriage, she found housekeeping "dreary" so she opened the store. Soon the gregarious hostess had started a tea room in the downstairs living room of their own adjacent home at 7113 Reynolds Street. At some point before 1940, the Fuchs obtained a liquor license and began selling beer.¹²

The tea room was known by various names, including Mary's Tea Garden, Mary's Tea Room and Social Club, and the Fuchs Emporium. The young men who became beneficiaries of Thursday evening mail referred to the group as the "tea sippers," the "Tea Room Ramblers," or the "Thursday Nighters," and in one

particularly literary flourish, "enjoyers of the brown fluid."¹³ Such names didn't convey the full story. Many of these men had grown up on the streets surrounding Mary's store. Their experience with the family's neighborhood commitment predated their days of drinking tea or beer. Private James "Leo" English, writing to Mary Fuchs from the 1083rd Guard Squadron, Army Air Force Basic Flying School in Greenwood, Mississippi in 1943 recalled: "I think of you & Lou often, and how swell you treated the gang. I remember how you used to be dying to go to bed & ready to close the store, and we'd come in from ice-skating or something, and you used to let us in and fix up hot-dogs and milk-shakes for us."¹⁴ Lou Fuchs also recalled that the store didn't follow regular 9-5 hours, often staying open from 7 a.m. until midnight. "In the Depression, there was no such thing as regular hours,"

he said. "Whenever anybody had a buck, we were ready to take it."¹⁵ By whatever name it was known, the Fuchs' establishment became a neighborhood institution. Open practically from dawn until long after dark, people gathered there to buy necessities, socialize with friends, and find out what was going on in the community.

By 1941, the Fuchs had also added three young sons of their own: Louis "Dickie" Fuchs, age 9, Robert Rudolf, age 8, and Ronald Gilbert, age 5. All three attended St. Joseph's Junior Military School, a Catholic boarding school run by Divine Providence nuns with military components administered by the Marine Corps. A photo taken of the three young boys in their school uniforms, c. 1941-1942, hauntingly echoes the form of so many neighborhood men going off to war a generation ahead of them.¹⁶

Was it thinking of their own sons that prompted Mary and Lou to act? Or ties to the boys who had grown up around the Point Breeze store? In Mary's case, perhaps the memory of those earlier over-the-counter meetings with another young man came to mind. Whatever the reason, sometime in late 1941 or early 1942 Mary and Lou Fuchs began laying out pencils and paper in the tea room on Thursday evenings, convening a rotating group of at least 15 people whose names are recorded among the servicemen's replies. They acted quickly as neighborhood men were called up. Some of the earliest soldier replies came from inductees still waiting at the New Cumberland Army Reception Center near Harrisburg, where more than 500,000 Pennsylvanians, or nearly 90% of the young men from the state who entered the U. S. Army, were processed before being given their unit assignments.¹⁷

A brief postcard from Mike Adams, postmarked Co. H 1301st Service Unit R.C. New Cumberland, February 12, 1942, illustrated the speed of the transition and the uncertainty of what lay ahead:



Hello Folks,

Sorry I didn't get to see you the night I left, but just couldn't make it.

Hope everything is ok. Kenny & Lou are still with me but don't know for how long as we are going to leave here in a few days.

So Long, Mike Adams

P.S. Say Hello! to everyone for me.¹⁸

U.S. Army Enlistment Records show that Mike Adams wasn't officially processed until February 14, 1942, along with Kenneth "Kenny" Bookwalter.¹⁹ By the end of the month, Adams was at Fort McClellan near Anniston, Alabama. As he feared, his friends Kenny and Lou did not accompany him, but mail from multiple members of the Tea Room followed him south. Part of his reply, postmarked February 28, 1942, captured the reality of Point Breeze's new soldiers:

Mary and Lou's sons Ronald, Robert, and Dickie wear their student uniforms from St. Joseph's Junior Military School, c. 1941-1942.

HHC Detre L&A, Fuchs Family Papers.

Dear Mary & Tea Room Ramblers,

Just received your card and Dorothy's letter, sure was glad to hear from you all.

How is everything going in your tea room? Boy! I sure do miss it and the gang, but I am so darn busy I don't get time to think.

We drill, drill and drill so[me] more. I am in the infantry and we march almost twenty miles a day.

The living conditions aren't so nice as home of course as we live in tents, and boy it sure gets darn cold at night. We of course don't have no hot weather.

I guess a lot of the boys are leaving or will be leaving soon from around there.

Adams went on to thank the members of the “tea room rambler” and finished with a P.S.: “Have a beer for me, Kenny & Lou did not come with me. We separated before coming and I don’t know where they were sent.”²⁰

Mike’s buddy Kenny Bookwalter posed the same question to Mary and Lou about a week and a half later. Bookwalter, like many young Pennsylvanians, found himself still at the New Cumberland Service Unit when his initial placement was delayed. He tried to get back to Pittsburgh during those early days, but knew he was operating on borrowed time. On March 11, 1942 he wrote:

Hello, Mary, Lou & Gang,

If I’m lucky enough to get a pass, I’ll drop in and see all of you this Saturday. Thanks to everybody for the cards.

My time is getting short here, so if I get home this Saturday it will probably be the last for months. I haven’t any idea where I go from here.

I’m anxious to find out what you’ve heard from Mike, Lou & Jack Goettman.

Be seeing you I hope, Yours, Ken.²¹

By September 1942, Bookwalter, now a Corporal, was assigned to the 93rd Evac Hospital, Fort George Meade, Maryland. His postcard of a rifle-toting G.I. demonstrated that he hadn’t forgotten about the gang at Mary’s. “A Rough Idea of how I Spend Dream My Time,” it read, and included “Lunch on Beer at Mary’s Tea Room.”²²

A single postcard in the collection also hints at the journey of Ken and Mike’s lost friend “Lou” Fargel. Although undated, Lou’s postcard from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, home of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, echoes Mike and Ken’s correspondence, and probably likewise dates to the spring of 1942:

Sorry I didn’t get to see you before I left & was taken from New Cumberland before Mike and Kenny and I don’t know where they are. If you do, write and tell me or tell my Dad. I will write more when I have the time, Hope the family is well.

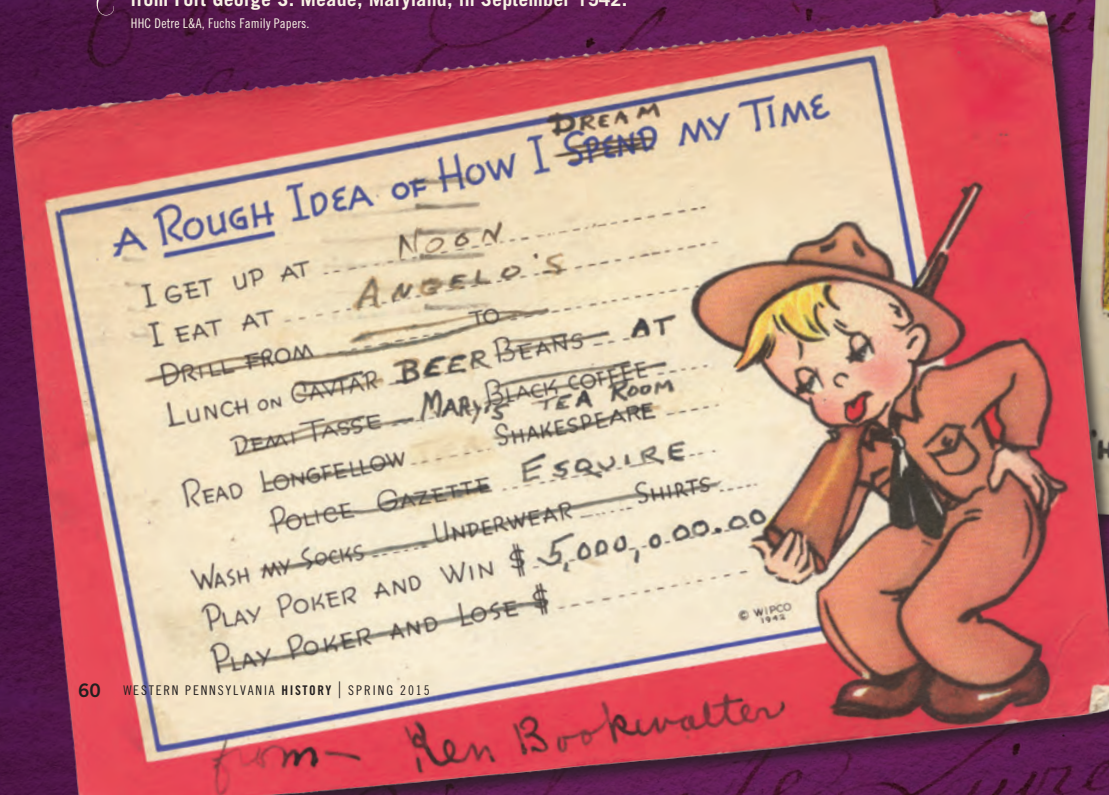
Lu Fargel²³

This sequence of notes from three Point Breeze friends underlines the service provided by the tea room. In a world of strange new faces, with days spent in endless drill and cold February nights passed in tents, where friends ended up scattered from Maryland to Alabama without word from each other, letters from the neighborhood provided a touch of stability and a link with those left behind. As Seaman Second Class Dan Snyers put it, “Your letter writing nite I think is a swell idea. You know the ‘tea room’ is sort of a second home to us boys so a letter from there is just like getting one from home.”²⁴

The sense of dislocation expressed by Mike Adams, Ken Bookwalter, and Lou Fargel also appeared in letters from other Western Pennsylvanians, especially those stationed in camps throughout the American South. The region’s climate, large tracts of open land, and dispersed population made states such as Alabama, Tennessee, Florida, North Carolina, and Missouri fertile ground for Army bases

Dreaming of more carefree days, Corporal Ken Bookwalter expressed his feelings about regimented Army life in this postcard sent to Mary and Lou from Fort George S. Meade, Maryland, in September 1942.

HHC Detre L&A, Fuchs Family Papers.



Barney J. Weaklen commented humorously upon multiple challenges of life in the Army, including hot weather in the South, a lack of young women, and, in this postcard, the notoriously ill-fitting Army uniforms.

HHC Detre L&A, Fuchs Family Papers.

and airfields. Of the U.S. Army's nine largest training camps during World War II, eight were in the south.²⁵ In 1943, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* noted: "In 1939, the Army had only two air training fields.... now the whole southern half of the United States is dotted with fields to supply pilots and crews for the swarms of new combat planes taking to the air each month."²⁶ Men from Point Breeze, Homewood, and Wilkinsburg found themselves sharing space with unfamiliar accents from across the country, many with a distinct drawl. Private Ed Carr at Fort Knox, Kentucky, described the linguistic stew:

You have no doubt heard the army described and redescribed, praised and cussed, so I won't play echo. The boys in our Company hail from all over the country. In our platoon Penna. anthracite coal miners are still waging the Civil War with Tennessee hill-billies led by a very vocal Alabamian. The issue is still in some doubt but the Southern drawl is in the majority.²⁷

Private John English, training with the 317th Infantry in Camp Forrest, Tennessee, resorted to comics characters to portray the situation:

Inform John O'Connor this [here?] business is hard to learn in so damn many dialects sometimes. I even think I'm a Southerner myself and sometimes a hill-billy of which there are quite a few down here. I bet quite a few are from Dog Patch although I haven't seen Lil Abner yet but think I've located a few of the Scraggs.²⁸

Regional difference proved challenging in other ways as well. "Only one complaint," wrote Corporal William Lawton from the 565th Squadron School headquarters in Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, in February 1942. "Hill Billy music almost drives me nuts, and it's all these Arkansas & Missouri ridge runners play, even on the Radio."²⁹ Others lamented the weather and missed the amenities of a city,

Many Western Pennsylvania soldiers found themselves experiencing the climate and culture of the American South for the first time. Sergeant Raymond E. Paulin from Mount Oliver and McKees Rocks sent this postcard to the McKees Rocks Maennerchor Club from Keesler Army Air Field in Biloxi, Mississippi.

HHC Detre L&A, McKees Rocks Maennerchor Records.



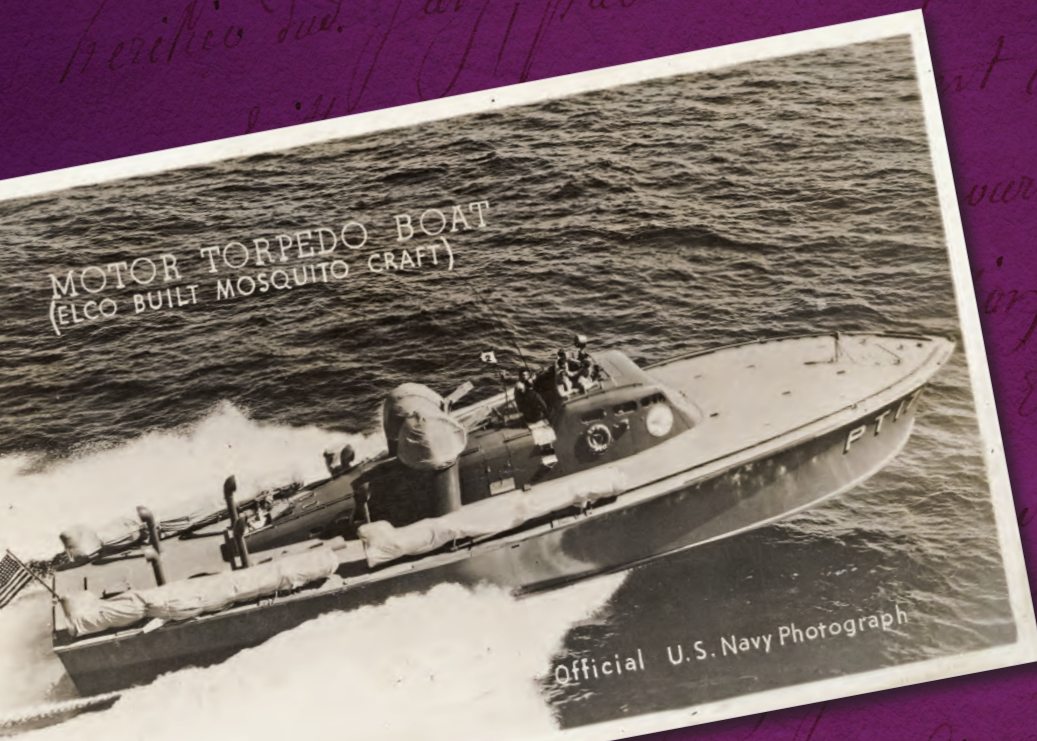
This Alabama climate doesn't suit me any too well as it has been to [sic] blasted hot. They tell me that July & August are the hotter months down here so I guess I got plenty of heat coming.

since many new bases were purposely located in rural areas. Private B. J. Weaklen, writing from the Advanced Flying School at Napier Field in Dothan, Alabama, liked his "regular job"—"This of course has to do with planes, and I enjoy that. I have two planes to look after and service and see that they are ready for flight at all times"—but found other aspects of his situation less tolerable:

This Alabama climate doesn't suit me any too well as it has been to [sic] blasted hot. They tell me that July & August are the hotter months down here so I guess I got plenty of heat coming.³⁰

The oppressive heat wasn't the only thing Weaklen disliked:

Our camp is not well situated for any one who has been used to a large city. We are about ten miles from town and the town has a population of fifteen thousand ... all the boys go to Dothan. That just makes it that about all one sees when he goes to town are soldiers and that also makes a scarcity of women or should I say girls. To make matters worse the only single girls around are mostly very young — maybe I am too damn particular but I like them out of the high school class.³¹



Besides girls, there was one something else that the men dearly missed: beer. They lamented its absence, decried the taste of other regional brews, and only grudgingly accepted the low-alcohol 3.2% beer available through military exchanges, especially in the historically dry south.³² “The beer here, & at St. Louis,” complained Corporal William Lawton, “tastes like dishwater.”³³ To Private Bud Roberts at Camp Croft, South Carolina, it tasted “like hell.”³⁴ Private Gene Liebler wrote from Camp Forrest, Tennessee, in August 1942:

I received your card yesterday they forwarded it from New Cumberland ... how is everything at Mary's Tea room sure wish we had one beer as I could use a good one all they have here is that 3 points beer and you can't drink enough of that to even feel good.³⁵

Writing from the Panama Canal Zone, Private William (“Bill”) Herold called the beer “terrible” and “rotten.” His solution? “We drink mostly whiskey these days.” In one postcard, he thanked tea room writer Mrs. Grace Kessler for offering cigarettes, but said he didn’t need them: “we get them for 60 (cents) a carton. I should be sending them to you.” What did he really want? “Save me a few Duquesne pilsners.”³⁶ Likewise, Private Warren Ringer, stationed at the 466th Air Base at Henley Field in Dallas, Texas, summed up what many were feeling:

The thing I miss most is a bottle of Iron City Lager beer. The beer we have here is very light and doesn't taste a bit like the beer at home.³⁷

Private Ringer's words express what was at the heart of the beer complaints: missing home. In a time when regional breweries created distinct local beers, strange flavors, weak brews, and limited access symbolized the dramatic changes that had taken place in



The men who benefitted from the writing circle developed a close relationship with the Fuchs family. This poignant card was sent by James Evans Brown from the Great Lakes U.S. Naval Training Station to young Dickie Fuchs: “When you get bigger.... Maybe you will be the Captain and I will have to work for you.” It was sent two days before Dickie died of leukemia on February 6, 1944.

HHC Detre L&A, Fuchs Family Papers.

The thing I miss most is a bottle of Iron City Lager beer. The beer we have here is very light and doesn't taste a bit like the beer at home.

the lives of all the tea room correspondents. Behind the humorous accounts of bad beer, hot weather, and "hill billy" music lay the sense of loss of a generation that signed up to do something big but nonetheless missed family, friends, and the sense of community at gathering spots like Mary's.

They all faced uncertain futures. This was vividly illustrated through one of the most descriptive set of letters in the collection. Private John C. ("Jack") Goettman had enlisted earlier than many of his fellow tea room "Last Callers."³⁸ By the time he sent his first documented response on March 11, 1942, Goettman, stationed with the 28th Division Artillery at Camp Livingston, Louisiana, was already reminiscing:

It will be a year that I have been in the Army in another two weeks, and I often think of the fine party you gave me last year....

Mary & Lou — Hope you and the kids are well. Sure am missing the store and the times we used to have. Hope this war is over soon and I can enjoy them again. Made quite a tour of New Orleans on a week end, but wish I was still back at the Tea Room.

Well Folks — thanks for remembering me and hope to be back with you all soon again. We are now in intensive training, and this has been made a Triangular Division, soon to be ready for combat.³⁹

Goettman wrote three more times from Camp Livingston, in April, May, and July 1942. Then six months passed. Goettman's next letter came from Camp Gordon Johnston in Carrabelle, Florida, in February 1943. He apologized for the delay:

This is about the first chance I have had to drop you a line. Thanks a lot for your thoughts of me again.... It is

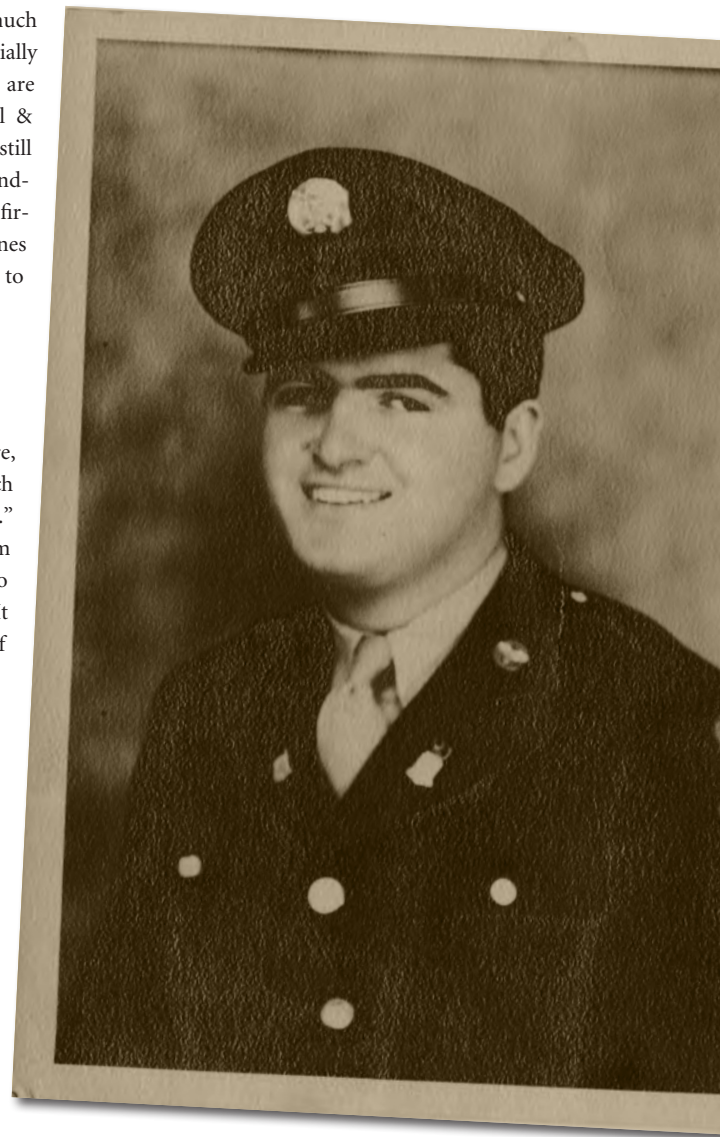
the only chance I now have, as we are busy every other day and night. This is a real commando training, and just as tough as any training existing today. All we do is work, eat, and glad to fall into bed at nights. I am right on the Gulf. This place has few comforts or facilities as the training is made to be as much like actual warfare as possible. Especially the conditions which the marines are now encountering in Guadalcanal & the Solomons. I sure am glad I can still swim as much of the training is landing operations from boats. Also the firing of every weapon in the marines & army. We are the first Division to receive this new training.⁴⁰

His letter also referenced some surprising news:

How do you like the Dairy Store, Mary? I supposed you get to bed much earlier without so many "last callers." I sure will hate to (see) the Tea Room closed up, when I return again to civilian life so see what you can do. It just wouldn't seem right. It's sort of part of home to me.⁴¹

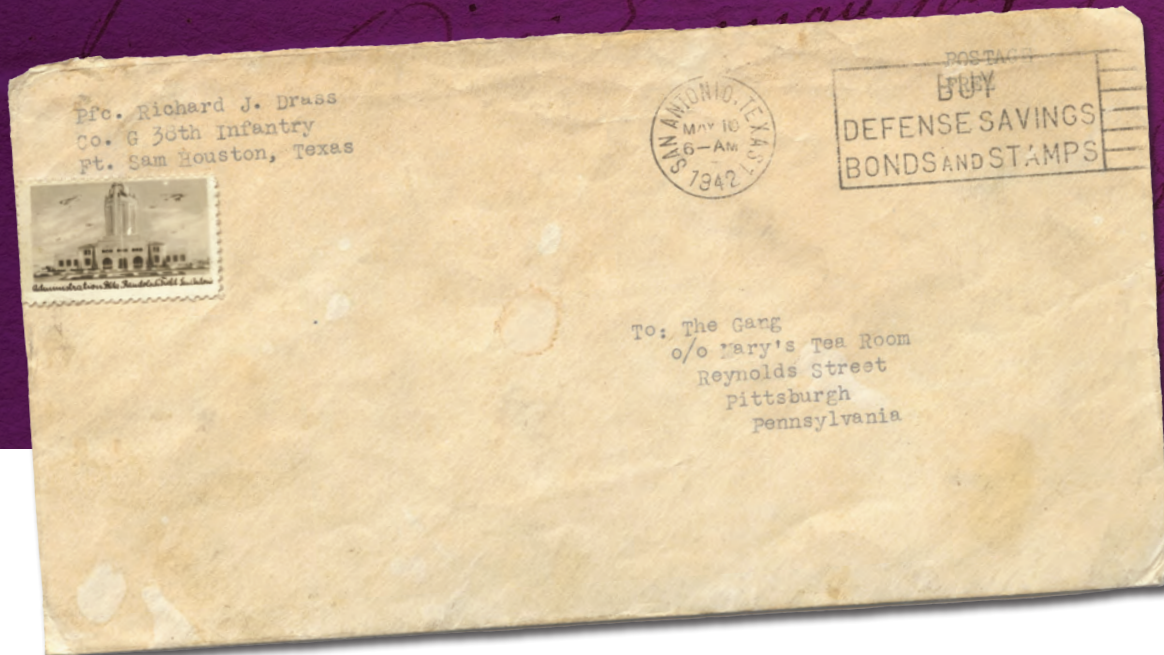
Goettman was right about Camp Gordon Johnston: also known as "Hell-by-the-Sea," the crude, sprawling base had been created as an Army amphibious training unit, and the 28th Division was headed to combat. They deployed overseas in October 1943, and after further training in Southhampton, England, landed at Normandy in July 1944. The unit pushed into Germany by early November. On December 16, 1944, they engaged the German army in what became known as the "Battle of the Bulge." As the 28th fought to hold the Ardennes region, Goettman

was reported captured on December 17, 1944. According to the official record, he ended up at Stalag 2D, a German POW camp in Stargard, Pomerania (near the northern border between Germany and Poland).⁴²



James "Leo" English was one of many Point Breeze soldiers who appreciated Mary and Lou Fuch's kindness to the neighborhood gang long before they were in the military.

HHO Detre L&A, Fuchs Family Papers.



Addressed simply to "The Gang," this envelope sent by Private First Class Richard J. Drass from Fort Sam Houston near San Antonio, Texas, captures the closeness felt by the members on both sides of the tea room writing circle.

HHC Detre L&A, Fuchs Family Papers.

By that time, as Goettman had worried, the tea room in Point Breeze had indeed closed. In 1942, Mary and Lou Fuchs had purchased a building at the opposite end of the block—7103 Reynolds Street. They eventually opened a new store and closed the tea room. Although some letters in the collection suggest that the writing circle continued, responses after early 1943 became far less frequent. Conflict with neighbors may have spurred the store change. Bill Herold alluded to this in a note to Mary and Lou:

I received a letter from Jim McShane and he was telling me you people were going to be forced to close in April. He said the people in Le Roi Road were complaining.... I hope everything turns out O.K.⁴³

Other factors may have intervened as well. The Fuchs' oldest son, "Dickie" became seriously ill, eventually succumbing to leukemia on February 6, 1944.⁴⁴ Perhaps the uncertainty of illness and loss, coupled with long hours and changes in the neighborhood, persuaded Mary and Lou to return to their roots, operating a store rather than a drinking establishment. They retained their commitment to Point Breeze, running the new Frick Park Market until their sons took over in the 1970s.⁴⁵

In 1978, Point Breeze gathered at the Frick Park Market to celebrate Mary and Lou's 50th wedding anniversary. They had been

operating stores along Reynolds Street for 48 years.⁴⁶ The year and a half of the writing circle in 1942-1943 may seem brief but the impact of Mary and Lou Fuchs' gesture is measured not in time but in the thanks of the men whose lives the tea room circle touched. As Corporal Charles Reber wrote in 1943 from a Coast Artillery base in the Pacific, "I sure was glad to hear from two of the swellest people in Pittsburgh."⁴⁷

¹ *Annual Report of the Postmaster General, For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1942*, as recounted in Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "Will He Get My Letter? Popular Portrayals of Mail and Morale During World War II," *The Journal of Popular Culture* (Vol. 23, No. 4, 1990: 21-43), 22. Letter-writing as a force for maintaining morale is also explored in: Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "'Writing is Fighting, Too': The World War II Correspondence of Southern Women," *The Georgie Historical Quarterly* (Vol. 76, No. 2, Summer 1992: 436-457).

² This poster, from 1945, is widely reproduced. See: The object record from *The Price of Freedom: Americans at War*, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, at: <http://amhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/collection/object.asp?ID=553&back=1>. Mary K. Browne, "He Lives for Your Mail," *American Magazine* (October 1944: 102-107); Dr. Irwin Edman, "You Can't Be Too Busy To Write," *House Beautiful* (November 1943: 60-112).

³ Statistics are drawn from the *Annual Reports of the Postmaster General*, for the fiscal years ended from June 30, 1942 - June 30, 1946, as recounted in Litoff and Smith, "Will He Get My Letter?," 23-24.

⁴ Fuchs Family Papers and Photographs, 1933-1951, MSS 580, Detre Library & Archives, Senator John Heinz History Center. The collection includes 13 folders of material. Folders 1-5 hold news clippings, family photos, and scrapbook remnants. Folders 7-13 hold letters, postcards and ephemera sent by the soldiers back to Mary and Lou Fuchs or other members

of the writing circle, and are arranged in alphabetical order by last name of the correspondent. The collection was received as a gift from Ronald Fuchs in 2010.

⁵ Some of the letters in the collection were partially reprinted in an earlier article, see: Patricia Lowry, "The Next Page: War letters home—before the shooting started," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 24, 2009.

⁶ Collections of World War II era servicemen newsletters and writing circles can be found in archives nationwide. Another example of a Pittsburgh initiative can be found in: Curtis Miner, "'Hi Butch': the World War II Letters of Everett Johns," *Pittsburgh History* (Holiday 1989: 178-191). For national examples, see: The Adeline King Papers (Smyrna Bulletin), bulk 1931-1989, Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN; The Ruth Baker Stephan Collection of World War II Letters, bulk 1941-1947, RG 069: 158, accession 2011-084, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, CT; and examples of *The Soujourner*, a student-run newsletter from Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, made available on-line through *The Home Front: Manitowoc County in World War II*, Manitowoc County Historical Society: <http://digioll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/WI/WI-idx?type=browse&scope=WI.SOJOURNER>.

⁷ Miner, "Hi Butch," *Pittsburgh History*, p. 180.

⁸ Regular updates in city newspapers routinely mentioned the contributions of multiple family members. See, for example: "You're in the Army Now!," *The Pittsburgh Press*, April 27, 1942, which mentioned at least three sets of brothers, including twins; and "With Our Fighting Forces," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 10, 1945, which noted one family with three sons serving, and a brother and sister combination, Private Dorothy M. and Sergeant John C. Vetter from Wilkinsburg. For a later remembrance of a larger contribution, see: Len Barcoucky, "North Side family sent eight brothers to war," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 11, 2014.

⁹ City newspapers reported the send offs through 1942; the practice diminished as the war went on. See, for example: "Pittsburgh Gives a Cheer for the Boys Going off to War," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 3, 1942; "Aviation Cadets and Selectees Feted at Farewell Parties / Crowds Cheer 400 More Off to War Duty," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 10, 1942;

and "Selectees Feted in East Liberty," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 20, 1942." One report in June suggested that some organizers eventually shortened the festivities because selectees requested more time to spend with families: "New Departure in Farewells / Carrick, Knoxville Selectees Honored," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 19, 1942.

¹⁰ "Block in Lawrenceville 'Cleaned Out of Soldiers'," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 2, 1943, 6. The photo feature accompanying it appears under the headline: "Three Triple-Star Houses in Lawrenceville Block."

¹¹ Alex M. Toner, *Finding Aid: Guide to the Fuchs Family Papers and Photographs*, pg. 2; Obituary, "In Memory ... Mary Fuchs," unidentified clipping, Box 1, Folder 1, Fuchs Family Papers; Mary Fuchs later recalled that the couple opened their first store on May 8, 1930. See: Kathy Kiely, "After 48 Years, City Market Still Their 'Baby'," *The Pittsburgh Press*, July 19, 1978.

¹² The license was in Louis G. Fuchs' name, and he may have been the motivating force behind adding beer to the tea room. It wasn't always a smooth process. Louis had his liquor license at 7113 Reynolds Street revoked for five days in 1940, see: "Board Revokes Liquor License," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 9, 1940.

¹³ A/C McShane, Jas. F., postcard from Maxwell Field, Ala., August 20, 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

¹⁴ English, Pvt James, L, letter from 1083rd Guard Squadron, Greenwood, Miss., 1943. Fuchs Family Papers.

¹⁵ Kiely, "After 48 Years," *Pittsburgh Press*, July 19, 1978.

¹⁶ Box 1, Folder 5, Fuchs Family Papers.

¹⁷ The figure 500,000 is given in: "Chapter One: Mobilization and Opposition," *The Arsenal of America: Pennsylvania During the Second World War*, found on ExplorePAhistory.com: <http://explorepahistory.com/story.php?storyId=1-9-19&chapter=1>, and; Barbara E. Hightower, "Written Historical and Descriptive Data, New Cumberland Army Depot," PA-80, report for the Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, 1984, 18-20.

V-Mail is Speed Mail

"The last few weeks the ladies were in their glory. Some of the boys have written to tell them they received their cards and letters. It has been a long time since so many smiles have been passed around. A few of the ladies were looking for a magnifying glass to read V-mail letters with."

The Mannerchor News, May 1944

Some people celebrated it. Others bemoaned its size and reached for their magnifying glasses. During World War II, V-Mail was a national experiment born out of challenges witnessed in World War I. Years before Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Postal Service anticipated that American involvement in another global war would increase mail usage and delay national communication. Planning began in 1938 for a mail system that would save space and time, no matter where a letter originated.

Also called "Tiny Mail" or "Funny Mail," V-mail debuted in June 1942. It relied on microfilm to condense and translate full size letters written on special stationery to film format. The film, shipped overseas or back to the United States, was reprinted in processing centers at one quarter of its original size and distributed to its intended recipients. The system saved thousands of tons of shipping space; an estimated 37 bags of regular mail could be reduced to one bag of microfilmed V-mail.

Use of the new mail system was never required. But government officials encouraged it, and multiple advertising campaigns were launched to inspire civilians to use V-mail. The experiment lasted 41 months, until November 1945. While it was deemed a success, certain shortcomings, such as the reduced size of the final document, were never resolved. Microfilm technology has never again been used for personal military mail.

"My Dearest Husband: How V-Mail Changed War Communication," National World War II Museum, online article at www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/take-a-closer-look/v-mail.html.

Victory Mail, online exhibition and resource list, National Postal Museum, Smithsonian Institution, at postalmuseum.si.edu/victorymail/index.html.

V-Mail, or Victory Mail, was developed by Eastman Kodak as a secure way to communicate while making transport easier by transferring letters to microfilm and printing them at their destination. Whether Americans used regular mail or v-mail, this poster by the Army's Recruiting Bureau made clear that sending mail to those in uniform was a patriotic duty.

Poster designed by Lejaren Hiller,
University of North Texas Digital Library.





Corporal Charles Reber was serving with the U.S. Army Coastal Artillery in Hawaii, but Reber's joking island wear was just about the only part of his image that got past the censor's cuts.

HHC Detre L&A, Fuchs Family Papers.

Mississippi Press, 1997), xvi - xvii. In contrast, the U.S. Navy had training facilities in the Great Lakes and along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

²⁶ "Army Bombs Rome's Military Targets With Precision Learned at Air Training Fields," *The Pittsburgh Press*, August 4, 1943. The article includes a map showing the location of many of the new southern training fields. For a wider discussion of military bases in the south, see also: David J. Coles, "'Hell-by-the-Sea': Florida's Camp Gordon Johnson in World War II," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* (Vol. 73. No 1, July 1994: 1-22); and Dewey W. Grantham, *The South in Modern America: A Region at Odds* (Fayetteville University of Arkansas Press, 1994), 170, 172-173.

²⁷ Carr, Pvt. Ed, letter from Co. B, 14th A. F. R. T. C., U.S. Army, Fort Know, Ky., April 27, 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

²⁸ English, Pvt. John V, letter from Co. I, 317th Infantry, 80th Div, A. P.O. 80, Cap Forrest, Tn., October 20, 1942. Fuchs Family Papers. English's references to the cartoon strip *Li'l Abner* would have conjured up a whole cast of mock southern characters for his Point Breeze readers. Published starting in 1934, Al Cap's *Li'l Abner* was one of the few American comic strips of the time read widely by adults, and it extended historically out of the humor of the mid-south region. See: Arthur Asa Berger, *Li'l Abner: a Study in American Satire* (University Press of Mississippi, 1970).

²⁹ Lawton, Corp. Wm, post card from 565th sch. Sq. Hdq. Flt., Jefferson Barracks, Mo., February 12, 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

³⁰ Weaklen, Pvt. B. J., letter from 431st Sch. Sq. Napier Field, Dothan, Al., June 29, 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

³¹ Ibid.; A letter from Ray F. Eversman, Co. C, E. T. Btn 2nd, no date, Fuchs Family Papers, similarly noted the remote nature of Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Eversman described the camp as "a big one," with 37,000 men in 2,000 buildings on 86,000 acres, and 40 miles from the nearest town.

³² Soldiers during World War II should have considered themselves lucky to have beer in camp; it was prohibited during World War I. In addition to accommodations made with national liquor laws, military beer supplies were also hindered by rationing, supply shortages, and sometimes difficult relationships between major brewers and the Army Exchange Service (PX). See: James J. Cooke, *Chewing Gum, Candy Bars, and Beer, The Army PX in World War II* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 3, 5, and especially Chapter 5, "No Beer," 77-94.

³³ Lawton, post card, Jefferson Barracks, Mo., February 12, 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

³⁴ Roberts, Pvt. Bud, postcard from Co. C, 38th BN, Camp Croft, S.C., October 16, 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

³⁵ Liebler, Pvt. Gene, letter from Btry A. 905th F.A., Camp Forrest, Tenn., APO #80, U.S. Army, August 15, 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

³⁶ Herold, P. F. C. Wm. C, postcard from 56th Ord Co. (AM), Ft. Clayton, CZ (Canal Zone), March 9, 1942; Herold, P. F. C. Wm. C, postcard from 56th Ord Co., Ft. Clayton, CZ to Mrs. Grace Kessler, April 28, 1942; and Herold, P. F. C. Wm. C, postcard from 56th Ord Co., Ft. Clayton, CZ, April 27, 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

³⁷ Ringer, Warren PFC, letter from 466th Hdq. & Air Base Sq., Henley Field, Dallas, Tx. Fuchs Family Papers.

³⁸ Goettman officially enlisted on March 25, 1941, see: Goettman, John C, Jr, Army Serial Number 33034450, World War II Army Enlistment Records, Electronic Army Serial Number Merged File, ca. 1938-1946. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, accessed June 5, 2014. The 28th Division, comprised of units of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, was activated for World War II on February 17, 1941. It became known as the "Bloody Bucket" by German soldiers, due to the red of the Pennsylvania shield and the division's record in combat.

³⁹ Goettman, Pvt. J.C. (Jack), letter from Headquarters Battery, 28th Division Artillery, A.P.O. 28, Camp Livingston, La., March 11, 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

⁴⁰ Goettman, Pvt. J.C. (Jack), letter from Headquarters Battery, 28th Division Artillery, Camp Gordon Johnson, Carrabelle, Fl., February 6, 1943. Fuchs Family Papers; Camp Gordon Johnston was established during World War II as an Amphibious Training Center. It opened on September 10, 1942 and featured notoriously crude and dangerous conditions. Columnist Walter Winchell reputedly called it the "Alcatraz of the Army." Other soldiers simply called it "Hell-by-the-Sea." See: Coles, "Hell-by-the-Sea," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* (Vol. 73. No 1, July 1994: 1-22).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Goettman, John C., Jr., Army Serial Number 33034450, World War II Prisoner of War Data File, 12/7/1941 - 11/19/1946, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, accessed June 5, 2014.

⁴³ Herold, Bill, letter with no date or location, presumed to be P. F. C. William Herold, writing from Fort Clayton, CZ. Fuchs Family Papers; Le Roi Road intersected with Reynolds Street right at the point where Mary and Lou's home and business stood. A relatively new development of homes, c. 1929, the Le Roi Road community sat along a no-outlet cul-de-sac. The development welcomed a new Swedenborgian Church in 1930. See: "Congregation of 125, Subscribing to Beliefs of Famous Swedish Theologist, Will Carry Out Extensive Work in Handsome Structure," *The Pittsburgh Press*, December 13, 1930. It is possible that changing neighborhood demographics made the sale of beer and liquor more problematic than it was worth.

⁴⁴ Toner, "Finding Aid: Guide to the Fuchs Family Papers," 2; Lowry, "The Next Page," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 24, 2009.

⁴⁵ Obituary, "In Memory ... Mary Fuchs," unidentified clipping, Box 1, Folder 1, Fuchs Family Papers; Kiely, "After 48 Years," *Pittsburgh Press*, July 19, 1978; and Patricia Lowry, "Point Breeze mom and pop store carries on a tradition of quality and service," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 7, 2009.

⁴⁶ Kiely, "After 48 Years," *Pittsburgh Press*, July 19, 1978.

⁴⁷ Reber, Cpl. Charles, letter from A.P.O. 953, Bty K-97th CA AA 5 P.M. San Francisco, Calif. Fuchs Family Papers. Reber was writing from the 97th Coast Artillery base in Hawaii, although that information was censored out of the photographs he included with his letter.

¹⁸ Adams, Mike, postcard from Co. H, 1301st Service Unit, New Cumberland, Pa., February 12, 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

¹⁹ Adams, Michael R, Army Serial Number 3315092, World War II Army Enlistment Records, Electronic Army Serial Number Merged File, ca. 1938-1946. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, accessed July 22, 2014 ; and Bookwalter, Kenneth C., Army Serial Number 33150970, World War II Army Enlistment Records, Electronic Army Serial Number Merged File, ca. 1938-1946. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, accessed July 22, 2014.

²⁰ Adams, Mike, letter from Fort McClellan, Ala., February 28, 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

²¹ Bookwalter, Pvt. K. (Ken) C., postcard from Co. H, 1301st Service Unit, New Cumberland, Pa., March 11, 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

²² Bookwalter, Corp K. C., postcard from 93rd Evac Hospital, Fort George S. Meade, Md., September 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

²³ Fargel, Lou, postcard from Fort Bragg, Nc., no date. Fuchs Family Papers.

²⁴ Snyers, Dan, letter from Seaman 2/C, U.S. Navy, Unknown location, May 1942. Fuchs Family Papers.

²⁵ The exception was Fort Lewis in Washington State, see: Neil R. McMillen, *Remaking Dixie: The Impact of World War II on the American South* (University of

"Hi Butch" and "Dear Jim"

By Leslie A. Przybylek, Curator of History

Many Western Pennsylvanians took it upon themselves to maintain connections with soldiers serving during World War II. In addition to the Fuchs Family Papers, other collections in the Heinz History Center's Detre Library & Archives also document these efforts.

The **Everett Johns Collection** includes 62 letters written between 1942 and 1945 by an Order Department employee at the American Standard Company in downtown Pittsburgh. Using office stationery and addressing most of the letters "Hi Butch," Mr. Johns wrote monthly updates about homefront news to about 75 former employees. Relaying information on everything from the latest rationing lists to the city's response to early Air Raid drills, Johns' letters provide a valuable glimpse into the realities of daily life on the homefront. As one example, Johns wrote on June 16, 1944:

Somber is the mood that gripped Pittsburgh when D-Day struck. There were few cheers, but many prayers. Throngs streamed in and out of churches all day long. Clergymen of all denominations held special services, ranging far into the night.

HHC Detre L&A, Everett Johns Collection, 1942–1945, MFF 2750. Selected letters from the Everett Johns Collection were published in: Curtis Miner, editor, "Hi Butch": the World War II letters of Everett Johns," *Pittsburgh History* (Holiday 1989): 178–191.



The **McKees Rocks Maennerchor Records** document the efforts of a German social club that lost about 200 members to wartime service. To keep service members up-to-date and boost morale, Maennerchor Club Secretary James Petraitis published *The Maennerchor News* from 1943 through 1946. Petraitis solicited updates from servicemen and shared information about locations when possible. Sometimes he knew where members were located

more clearly than someone serving in the same part of the globe. William E. Burgunder wrote to Petraitis in February 1945:

Can you tell me if there are any of the fellows from the club serving anywhere in these Islands. I don't know if I'll have an opportunity to see any of them, but if there are, I would like to try and locate them.

Befitting such a social organization, Maennerchor members serving overseas were encouraged to collect and send beer labels documenting their travels. They also received cards from the Maennerchor Ladies' Bowling League and enjoyed Vargas girl pin-up postcards. Electrician's Mate third class Bertrand Jean ("John") Lureau, serving in the Solomon Islands, celebrated the receipt of his "girlie" on December 24, 1944:

Allright allright what is this, a "tease"? Meaning, of course, that beautiful "Varga[s]" girlie! if she's a "sample on approval" like why send her along! But thanks this coral pile don't see any.

Many soldiers reiterated just how much the efforts of people such as Petraitis and *The Maennerchor News* bonded them to the community. Corporal Richard E. Sushansky summed it up well in comments in the November 1944 newsletter:

[I] was pleased as hell when I received your letter. In my three and one half years in the Army, I really learned how to long for my home town. Honestly, the way I feel, every girl in the Rox is my sweetheart and every gentleman my pal.

HHC Detre L&A, McKees Rocks Maennerchor Records, 1944–1946, MSS 928. The records were received in 2013 and are a rich source awaiting more detailed scholarly attention.