



Robert C. Silhavy Papers (R1393)

Collection Number: R1393

Collection Title: Robert C. Silhavy Papers

Dates: 1941-1942

Creator: Kyser, James K., 1906-1985

Abstract: The Robert C. Silhavy Papers contain the episode script of the show “Story of Lieutenant Robert C. Silhavy” from the *Kay Kyser’s Kollege of Musical Knowledge* radio program. The episode aired on July 22, 1942. It featured the heroic actions of Silhavy, a member of the United States Army Corp of Engineers and discussed the actions of the engineers in the rearguard of the retreating United States Army during the Battle of Bataan in December 1941.

Collection Size: 0.01 cubic foot
(1 folder)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Rolla](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at rolla@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Robert C. Silhavy Papers* (R1393); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Rolla [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Rolla].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by Don Blackhahn on February 3, 1993 (Accession No. RA0558).

Processed by: Processed by Erin Smither, June 29, 2018

Historical Note:

Robert Carl Silhavy was born in St. Louis, Missouri on December 25, 1919, to Charles Silhavy and Bessie Silhavy. He served with distinction during World War II and his heroic actions were featured on the radio show of Kay Kyser. Silhavy served with the United States Army Corp of Engineers. He graduated from the Rolla School of Mines (now the Missouri University of Science and Technology) and proceeded to Fort Belvoir, Virginia, where he studied Army Engineering. In December 1941, Silhavy was stationed in Bataan, Philippines assisting in the withdrawal of troops under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur. Engineers destroyed bridges, severed communications, and destroyed anything of use to the enemy. Silhavy, under intense fire from the Japanese troops, blew up a bridge just before the enemy reached it, at serious risk to his own life. It was for this heroism that he was featured on Kay Kyser's radio show. Silhavy survived the war, and on June 7, 1947 married Bonnie Gormley. He died January 24, 1996, at the age of 75 and is buried in Holy Cross Cemetery in Spokane, Washington.

Kay Kyser's Kollege of Musical Knowledge was a radio program hosted by orchestra leader and radio personality Kay Kyser. The show began as a local program in Chicago, Illinois in 1934. Because of its immense popularity it moved to New York City in 1938, where it could reach a national audience. A combination of a comedy, musical and quiz show, the show attracted an audience of 20 million people each week. From 1941 to 1945, Kyser aired his show from more than 500 military bases, installations, and hospitals. He would be the first bandleader to perform for troops on February 26, 1941, at a Marine base located in San Diego. A list of episodes reveals that his show often featured the heroic actions of individual soldiers. The show continued to air until 1949. Kyser attempted to transition to television, but the show was not as successful and ran for only two seasons on NBC.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged as one item in one folder.

Scope and Content Note:

The Robert C. Silhavy Papers contain the episode script of the show, "Story of Lieutenant Robert C. Silhavy" from the *Kay Kyser's Kollege of Musical Knowledge* radio program. The episode aired on July 22, 1942. It featured the heroic actions of Silhavy, a member of the United States Army Corp of Engineers and discussed the actions of the engineers in the rearguard of the retreating United States Army during the Battle of Bataan in December 1941.

Container List:

Box 001 f. 1 "A tribute to Lieutenant Robert C. Silhavy and the United States Army Engineers Corps" script, 1942

Index:

Index Term	Folder
Bataan, Battle of, Philippines, 1942.	1
Kyser, James K., 1905-1985	1
Overland (Mo.)	1

Index Term	Folder
Silhavy, Robert Carl, 1919-1996	1
United States. Army. Corps of Engineers	1