



Claude Turner Papers (SP0027)

Collection Number: SP0027

Collection Title: Claude Turner Papers

Dates: 1942-1944

Creator: Turner, Claude, 1922-1944

Abstract: The Claude Turner papers consist of letters written by Claude Turner to his family in Webb City during World War II. Claude served on the *USS Spence*.

Collection Size: .25 cubic foot
(5 folders, 6 photographs)

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-Springfield](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at springfield@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

Restrictions on Use: The Donor has given, assigned, and transferred to the Society all copyrights, and associated rights the Donor may possess in the materials.

Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Claude Turner Papers* (SP0027); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Springfield [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Springfield].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Jon Turner on December 15, 2017 (Accession No. SPA0033).

Processed by: Processed by Erin Smither, December 15, 2017

Biographical Note:

Joseph Claude Turner was born in Lineville, Oklahoma, on October 23, 1922, the son of Joseph Claude Turner, Sr. and Elsie May Turner Jones. He was first cousins with the popular actress Lana Turner, and he mentions watching one of her movies in one of his letters. When he was a young teenager, his family moved to Webb City, Missouri, where he attended Webb City High School. He graduated with the class of 1942 and soon after joined the Navy. Claude trained at Great Lakes Training school and was assigned to the *USS Spence*. The *Spence* saw much action in the war, participating in several battles, aiding in the sinking of several Japanese vessels and was responsible for the destruction of a number of enemy barges. The *Spence* also participated in the bombardment of enemy positions in places like Buka Island, Tiaraka, Teopasino, Bougainville, Kavieng, Emirau Island, Palau, Yap, Ulithi, Woleai, Aitape, Tanahmerah Bay, Humboldt Bay, Guam and Saipan among others. From her commission on January 8, 1943, to the end of her career the *Spence* earned eight battle stars. Tragically, the *Spence* encountered Typhoon Cobra on December 18, 1944. The *Spence* struggled in massive swells and her electrical equipment got wet. Electricity failed, the rudder became unresponsive, and the destroyer listed hard to port and then capsized killing all on board save for twenty-four survivors. Claude Turner was among the casualties. His letters report nothing about the *Spence*'s illustrious career, citing the censors. He acknowledges the lack of information in his letters and often apologizes to his family for being able to say so little. Claude Turner has a headstone in Webb City Cemetery.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into four folders and is arranged chronologically.

Scope and Content Note:

The Claude Turner papers consist of letters written by Claude Turner to his family in Webb City during while he served in the United States Navy during World War II. Claude served on the *USS Spence*.

Container List:

Box 001	f. 1	Photographs, 1942-1944
	f. 2	Correspondence, 1942-1945
	f. 3	Official correspondence, 1942-1948
	f. 4	Service record, 1942-1945
	f. 5	Booklet and postcards, 1942

Index:

Index Term	Folder	Image
Turner, Joseph Claude, 1922-1944	1-4	Yes
Spence (Destroyer)	1-4	Yes

Index Term	Folder	Image
World War, 1939-1945	1-4	Yes