

Rena Robbins collection

AFC 2001/001/75902

Guides to the Collections in the Veterans History Project



**Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
December 2010**

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/vhp.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018655341>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/eadvhp.vh018006>

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Finding aid encoded by Samantha Meier, June 2018

Collection Summary

Title: Rena Robbins collection: Veterans History Project (U.S.)

Inclusive Dates: 1942-1945

Call No.: AFC 2001/001/75902

Creator: Robbins, Rena

Extent (photographs): 9 photographs.

Extent (manuscripts): 40 letters (158 pages)

Language: Collection material in English.

Location: Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018655341>

Summary: Collection includes photographs and correspondence written by Rena Robbins to her parents about her experiences as a United Service Organizations (USO) performer during World War II.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Robbins, Joyce

Robbins, Rena, 1919-

Robbins, Rena, 1919- --Correspondence.

Organizations

American Folklife Center

United Service Organizations (U.S.)

Veterans History Project (U.S.)

Subjects

Entertainers--Correspondence.

Women violinists.

World War, 1939-1945--Personal narratives, American.

Form/Genre

Correspondence.

Manuscripts.

Photographs.

Acquisition

Accessioned, 2010.

Copyright Status

Duplication of collection materials may be restricted.

Access and Restrictions

Collection is open for research; access restrictions apply. To request collection materials, please contact the Veterans History Project at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/vhp.contact>

Preferred Citation

Rena Robbins Collection (AFC/2001/001/75902), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

Biographical Notes

Rena Robbins was born in Los Angeles, California, on March 3, 1919. As a young woman, she took time out of her studies at Juilliard to share her musical talents with American troops. Robbins signed up to play the violin for the United Service Organizations (USO) Camp Shows during World War II. Her unit, #223, was one of several in the new concert division of the USO-Camp Shows. In 1944 and 1945, Robbins and four other musicians played “An Hour of Musical Charm” in North Africa and Europe, traveling to countries including Morocco, Algeria, Italy, France, and Germany to perform classical and light opera for servicemen and civilians alike. Notably, Robbins celebrated V-E Day in Liege, Belgium. Her time with the USO ended a few months later, after which she returned to New York, where she had a distinguished career as a violinist and an artist. Rena Robbins passed away at the age of 59.

Scope and Content

Collection includes photographs and correspondence written by Rena Robbins to her parents between 1942 and 1945, during her tenure as a USO performer in World War II. Though the majority of Robbins' letters date from 1944 and 1945, according to the donor (Robbins' sister), Rena Robbins toured with the USO from 1942 to 1945. Precise dates for certain letters are unknown.

Arrangement

Material has been arranged into two series, Manuscripts and Photographs. Manuscripts have been arranged chronologically, with undated material at the end of the series.

Description of Series

Container

Series

Series I: Manuscripts

Series II: Photographs

Container List

Container	Contents
	Series I: Manuscripts
BOX-FOLDER MSS2092/1-2	Correspondence, 1944-1945, undated 2 folders containing 40 letters, 158 pages MS01: 40 letters written by Robbins and sent to her parents during World War II. Robbins wrote to her parents a few times each month about her life as a USO entertainer traveling throughout the European Theater. She updated them on her concert performances, daily life, and other experiences during World War II. Robbins emphasized how appreciative American troops were to interact with USO performers, especially women. Topics covered include: food; health issues such as "G.I. stomach"; being on vacation with other USO performers; censored mail; receiving mail; sending money to family to purchase food and clothes; playing at concerts; USO shows in general; musicians and singers; news back home; weather conditions; service locations; scenery of Germany, France, and other countries Robbins visited; interactions with Italian and German citizens; rules and regulations for USO performers; first outside concert; war ending; homeless refugees; celebrating V-E Day in Liege, Belgium; visiting Paris; ration books; physical exams; Navy day in New York City.
	Series II: Photographs
BOX-FOLDER MSS2092/3	Original photographic prints, 1942-1945 9 photographs PH01: Unidentified man posing. PH02: Robbins, and unidentified man and women posing. PH03: Unidentified servicemen working in open field. PH04: Brick wall. PH05: Robbins posing. PH06: Unidentified serviceman. PH07: Unidentified servicemen standing in open field. PH08: Rena and unidentified friends in swim suits. PH09: Rena and unidentified serviceman talking.