

A Guide to the Papers of James L. and Dorothy Thomson 1936-1987

Papers of James L and Dorothy Knowles Thomson 1943 - 1987
1943 - 1987

A Collection in Special Collections and Archives, Tompkins-McCaw Library 2004/May/6
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Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection is open to research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

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Donated by the Thomson family.

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Biographical/Historical Information

Dr. James L. Thomson was a nationally known neurosurgeon. At the time of his death, he was Chief of Neurosurgery at Norfolk General and DePaul Hospitals, a diplomat of the American Board of Neurological Surgery and a fellow of the American College of Surgeons.

Thomson graduated from the Medical College of the University of Cincinnati in 1934. After his residency, he taught neurological surgery at the Medical College of Virginia from 1938-1941. He served in World War Two as a member of the Medical Corps, assigned as a neurosurgeon to the 45th General Hospital. This hospital was active in Morocco and Italy. He was one of seven officers in the unit awarded the Bronze Star.

After the War, Thomson returned and set up a practice in Norfolk, where he was the first neurosurgeon in the Tidewater area. Due to this fact from 1945 to 1950, he was called upon to do all the neurosurgery for the Naval Hospital in Portsmouth, and the Marine Public Health Hospitals in Norfolk, Portsmouth, Newport News, and Suffolk Virginia.

Building upon the relationships forged in war, Thomson was a charter member of the Excelsior Surgical Society, a group of 80 medical officers who met for the first time in 1945 at the Excelsior Hotel, Rome, Italy. Thomson also helped organize the Neurosurgical Society of the Virginias and was its first president.

In 1959, Thomson was cited by the President's Committee for the Physically Handicapped for his efforts to employ those with physical handicaps while a member of the Medical Advisory Board of the State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Thomson married the former Dorothy Mae Knowles on 15 May, 1940. He had two children, Martha and James Jr.

Dorothy Mae Knowles Thomson; B: 1913, D: -- Dorothy Mae Knowles grew up in Woodard, NC and was accepted into the Medical College of Virginia's nursing program in 1931. She graduated in 1934 with a degree in nursing and started right away to work at the Hospital. From 1937-1940, Knowles was an Instructor and Supervisor of Operating Room Technique at MCV.

She married Dr. James Levi Thomson on 15 May, 1940 and soon both were caught up in world events. Dr. Thomson was called into active service with the 45th General Hospital and sent to Italy.

After his return the couple moved to Norfolk, Virginia. With her husband, Thomson was a charter member of the Excelsior Surgical Society. She continued this association even after her husband's death in 1973.

Thomson is an active MCV alumni and member of the MCV Foundation. In 1995 she established the James L. Thomson, MD and Dorothy Knowles Thomson, RN Fund for the School of Nursing. This fund was created to heighten awareness of the many forms of alternative and complementary therapies available. Uses of the fund include the purchase of printed and audiovisual materials, research, conferences and stipend for lecturers.

Scope and Content

This collection contains the personal papers, war memorabilia, photographs, and general information concerning the 45th General Hospital Group dating from 1936-1985, the bulk of the collection dating from 1939- 1963. The collection is divided with one half being Dr. Thomson's World War II memorabilia and photographs along with paperwork with the Excelsior Club, as group of surgeons brought together by the war. The other half of the collection is papers of his wife, Dorothy Knowles Thomson, who was an instructor of operating room nursing at the Medical College of Virginia, and includes notebooks, course manuals, certifications as well as personal effects.

Arrangement

Records are listed in chronological order.

Contents List

Dorothy Knowles Thompson - Nursing papers, MCV 1931 - 1944

Box-folder 1

Operating Room Guide

Box-folder 1.1- 1.3

Scope and Content

This is the first part of a series of three folders encompassing the handwritten, typed, guidebook used by Mrs. Thompson during her years as a surgical nurse.

Urological Instruments 1941

Box-folder 1.3

How to Obtain Maximum Service from Hypodermic Syringes, Needles, Clinical Thermometers and Ace Bandages. 1940

Box-folder 1.3

New Dermatoma for Cutting Calibrated Skin Grafts 1939

Box-folder 1.3

Photograph

Box-folder 1.3

Scope and Content

Photograph of a proper surgical tool layout.

Teaching Manual 1940-1942

Box-folder 1.4

Scope and Content

This folder contains the teaching manual for Mrs. Thompson's course on Operating Room techniques. typed, mimeograph, and handwritten pages.

Course outline and exams 1942

Box-folder 1.5

Related source material.

Box-folder 1.6

Problems of Curriculum Administration. Proposed Revision of the Curriculum for Nursing Schools. 1936

Box-folder 1.6

Factors Determining the Development of Nursing and Schools of Nursing. 1932

Box-folder 1.6

Letter of Acceptance 24 Jun, 1931

Box-folder 1.7

Scope and Content

This folder contains a copy of the Mrs. Thompson's acceptance into MCV's nursing school.

Supplemental source material

Box-folder 1.8

Scope and Content

Autoclaving Surgical Supplies and Instruments , Boiling Instruments and Utensils , Chemical Sterilization vs. Alcohol , Bard. Parker Formaldehyde Germicide , "Phenylmercuric Compounds. "

James L. Thompson, Personal and military memorabilia

Box-folder 2

Box-folder 2.1

Scope and Content

This folder contains multiple assorted memorabilia including stamps, currency, playbills and maps.

Memorabilia: Trip to Rabat, Oman. 1943

Box-folder 2.2

Postcards

Box-folder 2.2

Scope and Content

Images of local people, the Fountain Arabe, and several pen and ink images of local places.

Translation

Box-folder 2.2

Scope and Content

Paper with English to Arabic translations.

Business cards of local folks.

Box-folder 2.3

Scope and Content

Docteur Canto (French), Ahmed Bennani (Moroccan), Tomail Mahdi Khattab (Egyptian).

Perfume tags

Box-folder 2.2

WW2 GI Comic books.

Box-folder 2.3

Mud, Mules and Mountains

Box-folder 2.3

Scope and Content

by Bill Mauldin

This Damn Tree Leaks

Box-folder 2.3

Scope and Content

by Bill Mauldin

Memorabilia: Trip to Switzerland 1945

Box-folder 2.4

Scope and Content

This file contains various items including official military instructions, travel papers, hotel tags and brochures, postcards, and other documentation.

Frac. dislocation of cervical spine in infancy. Px by skeletal traction 1937

Box-folder 2.5

Scope and Content

45th General Hospital Group

Box-folder 3

US Army Office of the Surgeon: Circular Letter 1944-1945

Box-folder 3.1

Scope and Content

(1944) 30, 36, 48 (1945) 8

Outline, US Army program for Plastic and Maxillofacial surgery 1945

Box-folder 3.1

Outline, US Army program for Plastic and Maxillofacial surgery 1935

Box-folder 3.1

Scope and Content

U of Cincinnati

Newspaper clippings of Unit 1944-1945

Folder 3.2

Scope and Content

All Richmond Times Dispatch unless noted.

Allied Hospital Area Hit In Beachhead Area

Folder 3.2

Scope and Content

Picture caption

Unknown

Folder 3.2

Scope and Content

Written in Arabic

Modern Street Scene 17 Nov, 1945

Folder 3.2

Scope and Content

Picture caption (Tel Aviv)

Jewish City Is Cultural, Industrial

Folder 3.2

Scope and Content

Picture caption. (Tel Aviv)

Springtime in Italy Finds War Fought to Stalemate 2 Apr, 1944

Folder 3.2

Zionists Raid Arms Depot Near Tel Aviv 11 Oct, 1945

Folder 3.2

Playbills, Christmas booklets, telegrams

Folder 3.3

Telegrams (2) Birthday, promotion

Folder 3.3

Christmas programs 1942, 1944

Box-folder 3.3

Scope and Content

Camp Lee, 1942; Italy, 1944

Thanksgiving programs 1942, 1944

Folder 3.3

Scope and Content

Camp Lee, 1942; Italy, 1944

Armistice Day program

Folder 3.3

Scope and Content

MCV 1942

Playbill

Folder 3.3

Scope and Content

"This Is The Army " by Irving Berlin

Folder 3.4

Scope and Content

Newsprint

Clippings about awards won

Scope and Content

Newsprint

General Orders #163

Folder 4.1

Scope and Content

Award of Bronze Star and Legion of Merit

Award of Meritorious Service Unit Plaque 25 Jun, 1945

Scope and Content

People listed include: People listed include: Maj. R. D. Butterworth, Maj. James L. Thompson, Maj. B. W. Rawles Jr, Cpt. B. B. Clay, Cpt. E. C. Toone, Cpt. A. G. Brown III, Cpt. J. R. Massie, Lt. Col. Morton M. Pickney, 1st Lt. Mary Louise Roberts, 2nd Lt. Elaine Arletta Roe, 2nd Lt. Rita Virginia Roarke.

Original orders, receipts and tags 1942-1943, 1945

Folder 4.2

Scope and Content

Original orders, receipts and tags.

Memo to Officers About to Embark for Overseas 30 Nov, 1942

Folder 4.2

Extract of Special Order 34 9 Feb, 1943

Folder 4.2

Extract of Special Order 29 2 Feb, 1943

Folder 4.2

War Department address card 31 Mar, 1943

Folder 4.2

Room assignment for transatlantic trip aboard HMS Andes

Folder 4.2

Welcome Home 7 Sep, 1945

Folder 4.2

Martha Thompson papers: Report on Italy

Folder 5

Scope and Content

This report contains many photographs taken by her father, James Thompson while on assignment at the 45th General Hospital.

Excelsior Surgery Club

Folder 6

Photographs 12 Oct, 1985

Folder 6.1

Scope and Content

39th Excelsior club meeting

Yearbook, invitations to 29th meeting

Folder 6.2

Memorabilia

Folder 6.3

Scope and Content

Copy of 39th Meeting program, Copy of 25th Meeting program, 45th G.H. Newsletter May/1999, clipping of finishing of girder work on what is now West Hospital. Special letters and rolls.

Memorabilia

Folder 6.4

Scope and Content

Letters and recommendations, meeting memorabilia, Guideposts featuring Dr. Michael De Bakey, a member. Copy of the 28th Meeting program.

Letters and memorabilia

Folder 6.5

Scope and Content

Minutes of annual meetings 1963, 1966, 1971. Copy of the 2nd and 4th annual meetings.

Folder 7

Nursing School 1932 - 1944

Folder 7.1

Scope and Content

This set involves the nursing school education of Dorothy Knowles. The photographs are of her and other students, generally on the rooftops of the main hospital buildings. People indicated include Dr. James

Baker, Dr. James L. Thompson, Dr. Kenneth Cherry, Dr. Beverly Clary, Ruth Kipps, Meredith Gladding, Marian Cassiday, Ruth Warner, Jannie Buchanan, Evelyn Neal, Elizabeth Watkins, Queenie Victoria Jones, G.H. Addleman, Virginia Lewter, Sarah Ingold, Polly Carlton, Alma Paucake, Muriel Price.

Nursing School: Large Photographs

Folder 7.2

Scope and Content

This folder contains the large photographs of the above set

Richmond Skyline

Folder 7.3

Scope and Content

This series includes several pictures taken from the rooftop of one of the hospitals. Also there are street photographs after a snowstorm including one of snow in an open topped car.

MCV Hospital

Folder 7.4

Scope and Content

This series has photographs of what is now the West Hospital and an ivy covered Egyptian Building.

Dr. David Tucker 1939

Folder 7.5

Scope and Content

This series has a photograph of the donation of the portrait of Dr. David Tucker by members of his family to MCV.

Photographic Collection - James Thompson 1944 - 1945

Folder 8

Photographs - Ischice

Folder 8.1

Scope and Content

This series shows Dr. Thompson and others aboard a ship viewing Italian ruins from the water. The photographs are not labeled and no people are identified.

Biah 1944

Folder 8.2

Scope and Content

This series is of local images around the town where the 45th was stationed. Photographs include liberty ships, a sunken hospital ship, and images from Naples (Italy) harbor. People indicated include Sgt. Tucker Carter, Duncan Caulder, Bill Daner, Capt. Tommy (Tee) Thompson.

Amalphia Drive - Italy 1944

Folder 8.3

Scope and Content

This series shows images taken from an estate atop a steep cliff. People indicated include Capt. Larry Massey and Russel.

Mt. Vesuvius, 1944. Tommy, Guy Horsley, Jud Butterworth and others. 1944

Folder 8.4

Scope and Content

This series shows a trip to Mt. Vesuvius by the three indicated in the title. People indicated include Guy Horsley, Jud Butterworth, Kels Boland (43rd G.H. Atlanta)

Mueller Living Quarters, Naples Italy 1944-1947

Folder 8.5

Scope and Content

This series includes images of the family that Dr. Thompson boarded with while in Italy. Commentary discusses price of wine after the war, and images from a party. People indicated include the Mueller family, Angelo, Josephine, Rosa, and Mr. and Mrs. Mueller

Sorrento 1944

Folder 1944

Scope and Content

This series includes photographs of Mt. Vesuvius and the immediate vicinity of the Victoria Hotel.

Photographs - Venice 1945

Folder 8.7

Scope and Content

This series includes images of Venice, Italy including St. Marco's church and the Venice bell tower. There are images of gondolas and canals as well. People indicated include Tee Thompson and Jim Baker.

Rome 1944 1944

Folder 8.8

Scope and Content

This series includes images of Rome Italy after WW2 including Vatican City, St. Peter's basilica, bridges over the Tiber River, the gravesite of the poet Keats, and the Castle of St. Angelo.

Photographs - Anzio, Cassina, and Capua 1944

Folder 8.9

Scope and Content

This series includes images from the ruins of three Italian cities. Anzio images depict tombstones from a cemetery. Cassina and Capua images are of damaged buildings, bridges, and warning signs.

Photographs - Trip to Cairo - Athens, Greece - Wailing Wall, Jerusalem 1944

Folder 8.10

Scope and Content

This series includes images of the Egyptian pyramids, the Sphinx, the Wailing Wall, and the Acropolis in Athens. Also included are many photos taken within the transport plane. People indicated include 1st Lt. Jean Jack, Capt. Dorothy Volker, 1st Lt. Mildred Littlejohn, 1st Lt. Jane Atyett, 1st Lt. Ann Shanaly, 1st Lt. Marjorie Hollingsworth, 1st Lt. Axtell, Capt. Tee Thompson, Capt. Robert Massey, Major Buckles, Capt. Larens, and Lt. Col. Sandzen.

Photographs - Trip to Cairo - Athens, Greece - Wailing Wall, Jerusalem. Large Photographs.

Folder 8.11

Scope and Content

This series includes the larger photographs of the above collection.

Photographs - Dr. James L. Thompson 1944, 1945

Folder 8.12

Scope and Content

This series includes photographs taken from the side of the road. People indicated include Tee Thompson.

Base Hospital #45 1944-45

Folder 8.13

Scope and Content

This series includes images of the Hospital complex, buildings, tents and staff who were assigned to this Hospital. People indicated include Mike Pinchney and Powell Williams.

Base Hospital #45: Large Photographs 1944-45

Box-folder 8.14

Scope and Content

This series includes the larger photographs of the above series.

Photographs Neurosurgical Italy 1944

Folder 8.15

Scope and Content

This series includes images from the neurosurgery ward at the 45th G.H. Also included are photographs of a garden planted between two of the far buildings. People indicated include T/5 Emmitt Luchard, Doris Shaffer, Florence Feik, John Marshall (ward boy), T/5 Chilter, T/5 Campbell, PFC Hatcher

Untitled 1941-1945

Folder 8.16

Scope and Content

This series is a collection of loose photographs that may have come from the other series but are put together here. There are images of the 45th hospital complex, cityscapes, City of Pompei ruins, and local scenery. People indicated include Tee Thompson, Dr. Guy Horsley, Dr. Beu Rawls, Dr. W.T. Thompson, Doris Shaffer, Capt. Lawrence Hurt, and Dr. C. C. Coleman.

Untitled - Large Photographs 1941-1945

Folder 8.17

Scope and Content

This series contains the larger photographs of the above series.

Oran, Algeria

Folder 8.18

Scope and Content

This series contains photographs of artwork, and architecture.

Oran, Algeria - Large Photographs

Folder 8.19

Scope and Content

This series contains the larger photographs of the above series.

Medical Procedures

Folder 8.20

Scope and Content

This series includes x-rays, diagrams, and examples of prosthetics used by the Army during WW2.