

# Wilson, Frank Owen and Susan Rinehart, World War II Correspondence

Frank Owen Wilson and Susan Rinehart World War II correspondence

1921, 1941-1945

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## Title Statement

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**Author:** Sharon Defibaugh and student assistant, Emily Shipman

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## Descriptive Summary

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**Unit ID**

[Archival Resource Key](#)

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**Unit ID**

/repositories/3/resources/972

**Unit Date**

1921, 1941-1945

**Language**

English

**Extent**

1.2 Cubic Feet 3 letter size document boxes

**Repository**

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

## Administrative Information

**Conditions Governing Use**

This collection is open for research.

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**

This collection was purchased by the University of Virginia Special Collections Library, from Beltrone and Company on October 12, 2017.

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## Biographical / Historical

Susan Smith Rinehart attended a private post-secondary girl's school called Arlington Hall Junior College for Women, located in an historic building in Arlington, Virginia, that later became the headquarters of the United States Army's Signal Intelligence Service in 1942, according to a Wikipedia article.

## Content Description

The collection contains more than 450 letters written between Lieutenant Frank Owen Wilson from Wilson, Arkansas, who was a University of Virginia graduate and his Charlottesville girlfriend, Susan Smith Rinehart (1925-1995), whose family lived on an estate called "Boxwood." There are 276 letters from Wilson and 180 letters from Rinehart. Wilson's early letters are from Saint Elmo Hall at the University of Virginia. His letters while in military service were not subject to censorship, yet describe his training in detail. Frank's letters are usually hand-written but many of the letters are typewritten and some are accompanied by printed ephemera. The letters describe their courtship, his military service, their families, and her pregnancy, among other topics. Susan was from a wealthy family and her letters reflect how she and her family lived through the war without seemingly any financial concern. Letters describe Albemarle County horse rides and related activities. Her letter of June 6, 1944, regarding D-Day, is of historical interest.

## Keywords

letters (correspondence)

Love letters

World War, 1939-1945 -- Correspondence

## Description of Subordinate Components

## DESCRIPTION OF SUBORDINATE COMPONENTS

### Susan Rinehart to Frank O. Wilson

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

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**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival\_objects/203840

**Unit Date** 1941-1942 October

**Manuscripts [X032668032]** 1 (box)

**Container** 1-5 (folder)

**Extent** 5 folder(s)

#### Biographical / Historical

When Susan Rinehart (1925-1995) and Frank O. Wilson (1923?-) begin their correspondence, she is attending school at Arlington Hall, Arlington, Virginia, but her family lives at "Boxwood" estates in Charlottesville, Virginia. Frank is living in St. Elmo's Hall, Charlottesville, Virginia, the Rho Chapter of the Delta Phi Fraternity, while attending the University of Virginia. At the outbreak of World War II, all of the active brothers joined the Armed Forces. See:

<https://aig.alumni.virginia.edu/elmo/history/>

#### Scope and Contents

Susan and Frank apparently met in Charlottesville, where they both attended several dances and events together and began dating. Their correspondence continued after Frank joined the army as a private and was stationed at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, Company D.(February 1942). In March 1942, Frank transferred to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, to Battery A, 26th Battalion, 6th Regiment Field Artillery. They frequently discussed engagement, but did not want to announce it until Frank was commissioned in the fall.

Susan became a member of the National Honor Society and celebrated her seventeenth birthday on March 17, 1942 (March 9, 1942). Susan apparently graduated from Arlington Hall Junior College for Women by June 1942. Frank is acting Corporal in Fort Sill, Oklahoma around June 24, but still hopes to go to Officer's School. Susan, her Mom and sister take a trip to Fort Worth, Texas, and then up to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where Susan visits Frank (end of June-July 7, 1942).

Susan's Dad received Frank's telegram and approved their engagement (July 12, 1942) and they had an engagement party on August 8, 1942. By the end of August, Corporal Frank Wilson was in Officer Candidate School, Class 36, Ft. Sill, Oklahoma (August 25, 1942). Susan meets Frank's parents (September 28 and October 7, 1942) before they get their wedding license (October 22, 1942) and marry on November 2, 1942. There are no letters from Susan in 1943 as they lived together after their marriage most of that year.

On April 17, 1944, Frank is in Battery B, 325 Field Artillery? Battalion, 84th Division, Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. Also in April, Susan finds out that she is pregnant and the baby is due around the end of October 1944.

### Susan Rinehart to Frank O. Wilson

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival\_objects/203841

**Unit Date** 1944 April-June

**Manuscripts [X032668032]** 1 (box)

**Container** 6-7 (folder)

**Extent** 2 folder(s)

#### Scope and Contents

In these two folders she talks about her daily activities which involved taking long walks, going out to eat, and swimming, while waiting for the arrival of the baby. Susan is preparing for the baby as much as she can. Her mom is buying everything for the baby and is not letting Susan reimburse her. Her mom and dad are trying to sell their house and build a smaller house on their farm.

## Susan Rinehart Wilson to Frank O. Wilson

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival\_objects/203842

**Unit Date** 1944 July- August

**Manuscripts [X032668033]** 2 (box)

**Container** 1-2 (folder)

**Extent** 2 folder(s)

### Scope and Contents

Frank celebrates his 24th birthday (July 4, 1944) while still a 1st. Lt. at the 325th Field Artillery Battalion, 84th Division, Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. Susan, her sister Virginia, and her mother went to Nags Head, North Carolina, for a vacation and Susan describes the trip in detail (July 24-30, 1944). Frank's Dad gives the couple five hundred dollars to hire a nurse to help Susan when the baby comes.

Susan's sister Jane and Fred are apparently wealthy enough during the war to ship horses across the United States and have the use of a whole railroad box car during the war. Her brother William shipped out for military duty on September 4, 1944.

## Frank O. Wilson to Susan Rinehart

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival\_objects/203843

**Unit Date** 1941-1942 October

**Manuscripts [X032668033]** 2 (box)

**Container** 3-5 (folder)

**Extent** 3 folder(s)

### Scope and Contents

Frank is staying at the Regis (September 10, 1941). These letters discuss his love of riding horses, especially Barrel, and his jealousy over Susan dating other men. On February 14, 1942, Frank goes to Ft. Oglethorpe, Georgia. In folder 4, Frank discusses his work with training horses in the Army and he represents the Battery in horse shows and jumping events. In folder 5, Susan and Frank discuss becoming engaged and Frank begins Officer Candidate School, Number 36.

## Frank O. Wilson to Susan Rinehart Wilson

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival\_objects/203844

**Unit Date** 1943 November

**Manuscripts [X032668033]** 2 (box)

**Container** 6 (folder)

**Extent** 1 folder(s)

### Scope and Contents

Frank O. Wilson is transferred to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, after his graduation from Officer Candidate School, November 1943.

## Frank O. Wilson to Susan Rinehart Wilson

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival\_objects/203845

**Unit Date** 1944 February-May

**Manuscripts [X032668033]** 2 (box)

**Container** 7-8 (folder)

**Extent** 2 folder(s)

### Scope and Contents

Frank is currently in Battery B, 325th Field Artillery Battalion, 84th Division, Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, and describes in detail his drills, maneuvers and various training exercises in the field, especially those under fire. He also writes to Susan about the baby, how his work is stressful, his exhaustion and state of tiredness, and how much he wishes he were home with Susan and the baby, Suzie. Mentions a warrant officer, who was talking on the phone during a thunderstorm who was struck by lightning and killed (April 22, 1944). He also told of his firing his gun at night using only his instruments and a penpoint light and his thrill at getting the approval of a two star general (May 12, 1944).

## Frank O. Wilson to Susan Rinehart Wilson

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival\_objects/203846

**Unit Date** 1944 June-December

**Manuscripts [X032668034]** 3 (box)

**Container** 1-2 (folder)

**Extent** 2 folder(s)

### Scope and Contents

Frank is still in the field and hasn't been able to come home to see Susan or the baby. His address changes to an APO address in New York City and by October 19, 1944, he is in England.

## Frank O. Wilson to Susan Rinehart Wilson

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival\_objects/203847

**Unit Date** 1945 January-November

**Manuscripts [X032668034]** 3 (box)

**Container** 3-6 (folder)

**Extent** 4 folder(s)

### Scope and Contents

Letters in folder three show Frank Wilson as somewhere in France (January 19, 1945) and then Belgium (January 29, 1945). He is in the infantry division away from his Battery unit, experiencing "physical exertion and nervous tension" as well as exhaustion. Hopes are high among the men when they hear that Hitler is dead (May 2, 1945). The war ends in Europe (May 8, 1945) and Frank travels to Holland for a vacation and relaxation (May 15-23, 1945). He is concerned about going to fight in the war in the Pacific. Letters in folder four discuss that Frank will be going to the Pacific theater but he doesn't know when or what he will be doing. He receives news that Susan's sister Jane and her husband Fred are filing for a divorce. Frank has received an unnamed medal and takes a fun trip to Paris. Rumors have arisen that they will not be going to the Pacific after all. His daughter Suzie is getting bigger and able to crawl. Folder five of the letters, reveals that Frank is in charge of a boxing league during the summer and they begin to hope that the war will end soon and everyone will be sent home. Jane has changed her mind about divorcing Fred. Folder six mentions that Frank's base has received hundreds of prisoners of war and they work at the base, doing work such as cleaning the rooms. Suzie's one year birthday will be in October. By September 28, 1945, Frank is in the 12th Armoured Division of the Artillery, in Heidenheim, Germany. They are getting hundreds of new officers a day. His division was leaving to go to Camp Baltimore, near Rheims (October 4, 1945). Sailing date for going home has been postponed due to strikes in New York, so he had leave to Brussels instead (October 10-28, 1945). The news is that they will ship out of Marseille in November for home (November 1, 14, 1945).

## Frank O. Wilson to Susan Rinehart Wilson

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival\_objects/203848

**Unit Date** circa 1942-1946

**Manuscripts [X032668034]** 3 (box)

**Container** 7 (folder)

**Extent** 1 folder(s)

## Miscellaneous Correspondence and Military Papers

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival\_objects/203849

**Unit Date** 1921, 1942, 1944

**Mixed Materials [X032668034]** 3 (box)

**Container** 8 (folder)

**Extent** 1 folder(s)

### Scope and Contents

Susan writes to Natalie thanking her for five dresses for the baby that used to be Frank's (July 8, 1944). There is a note about Frank's mom slipped and hurt her ankle.

## Correspondence with the parents of Frank Wilson

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival\_objects/203854

**Unit Date** 1944 July-August

**Manuscripts [X032668034]** 3 (box)

**Container** 9 (folder)

**Extent** 1 folder(s)