

Sgt. Eleanor F.M. Olmstead Leiss Papers, 1943-1990



Overview of the Collection

Title:	Sgt. Eleanor F.M. Olmstead Leiss Papers, 1943-1990
Creator:	Eleanor Olmstead Leiss (1912-1995)
Accession:	PPL-MSS-2009-019
Size:	1.5 linear feet, comprised of: One (1) half document box One (1) oversize box
Repository:	Plainfield Public Library, Local History Department, 800 Park Avenue, Plainfield, NJ 07060
Abstract:	The Sgt. Eleanor F.M. Olmstead Leiss Papers document her tour of duty with the United States Air Force during WWII. Record types include: photographs, newspaper clippings, military papers, ephemera, and artifacts. The collection dates from 1943 to 1990, with bulk dates of 1943 to 1946.
Language:	The records are in English.

Biographical

Eleanor Olmstead was born in Plainfield, NJ on March 30, 1912, and graduated from North Plainfield High School in 1931. She attended the Drake Business School in Plainfield for six months, and learned typing and shorthand. She also attended the Hartridge School in Plainfield. Eleanor entered the military service in March 1943, after working as a clerk & typist for eight years at J.M. Matheas, Inc. - a New York advertising office.

She enlisted in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) from February 24, 1943 to September 1, 1943, and the Women's Army Corps (WAC) until December 1944. During that time, she served overseas in England, France, and Germany for 19 months. She was awarded the Bronze Star in France, and was authorized for the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Ribbon, the American Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal.

Eleanor began her military service as a Personnel Clerk at March Field, California. While overseas, she worked in the Operations Section of the United States Strategic Air Force in England and France, as well as the Army Airways Communication System in France and Germany. She was the assistant chief clerk in the File Section of Operations, where she handled top secret material, classified correspondence, and messages for filing. Later, she became supply sergeant and first sergeant of the WAC detachment in Germany, where she made out requisitions for clothing and equipment, took inventories, created duty rosters, and looked after the well-being of Company 36.

Upon her honorable discharge from the military in January 1946, Eleanor moved back to Plainfield, NJ. She worked as a secretary during the late 1940's and 1950's. In 1957, she married Joseph F. Leiss, a construction foreman, golf professional, and president of Woodbridge Golf Range. Eleanor passed away in October 1995. She was 73 years old.

Historical Information

The Women's Army Corps in World War II

"Over 150,000 American women served in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) during World War II. Members of the WAC were the first women other than nurses to serve within the ranks of the United States Army. At first, the Army and the American public had difficulty accepting the concept of women in uniform. However, political and military leaders, faced with fighting a two-front war and supplying men and materiel for that war while continuing to send lend-lease material to the Allies, realized that women could supply the additional resources so desperately needed in the military and industrial sectors. Given the opportunity to make a major contribution to the national war effort, women seized it. By the end of the war their contributions would be widely heralded."

[Source: <https://history.army.mil/brochures/WAC/WAC.HTM>]

Scope and Contents

The Sgt. Eleanor F.M. Olmstead Leiss Papers include a variety of material dating from 1943 to 1990, with bulk dates of 1943 to 1946. The collection documents her tour of duty in the Women's Army Corps during WWII. Record types include: photographs, military papers, ephemera, and artifacts. Included in the collection are Eleanor's honorable discharge and enlistment papers, award certificates, and medals of citation. There are also two photo albums and numerous loose black and white photos of various sizes.

Arrangement

The Sgt. Eleanor F.M. Olmstead Leiss Papers are arranged into three series:

Series 1: Personal Papers

Series 2: Photographs

Series 3: Artifacts

Index Terms

People:

Leiss, Eleanor F.M. Olmstead (1912-1995)

Organizations:

United States Air Force
United States Armed Forces
Women's Army Auxiliary Corps
Women's Army Corps

Places:

Plainfield (N.J.)

Subjects:

Military history
Plainfield, NJ--History
Women's Army Auxiliary Corps / WAAC
Women's Army Corps / WAC
Women's studies
World War, 1939-1945--Women
WWII

Related Items

Local History Vertical Files, "Veterans"

To Serve My Country, To Serve My Race : the Story of the Only African American WACS Stationed Overseas During World War II. Moore, Brenda L., New York University Press, 1966.
DIVERSITY 940.54 MOO RILEY COLL (non-circulating; must be viewed on site)

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

This collection consists of paper documents that do not require any additional technology for access.

Series Description

Series 1: Personal Papers [1944-1952, 1990, undated]



Series Description

Series 1 contains military discharge papers, award certificates, citations letters, and a letter from Walter McLeod of the Plainfield Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Arrangement

Series 1 is arranged chronologically and fills one folder.

Series 2: Photographs [1943, 1945, undated]



Series Description

Series 2 contains two photo albums and numerous loose photos. The series documents Eleanor's military life in the United States and overseas. They provide an insight into her life on and off duty. There are official Army photographs as well as those taken by friends and fellow WACs. Her training and enlistment time spent at March Field is well documented.

Arrangement

Series 2 loose photographs are in sleeves and fill two folders. The larger photo album is in Box 1, and the smaller "Bavaria" album is in Box 2.

Series 3: Artifacts [1944]



Series Description

Series 3 contains Sgt. Olmstead's military medals. There are three medals including a Decoration Medal for Good Conduct, a Bronze Star, and a medal for Campaign Service and Victory for WWII. All date from 1944.

Arrangement

Series 3 is housed in a small artifact box within Box 1. The medals are in their original military boxes.

Administrative Information

Access & Restrictions

The Sgt. Eleanor F.M. Olmstead Leiss Papers are available for research.

Access is restricted to materials prepared by the Local History department staff. All materials must be viewed in the Plainfield Room and may not be removed to another area of the library without permission of the Library Director or designee. Materials must be handled carefully and kept in order. Materials must not be leaned upon, altered, folded, ripped, or traced upon. Marks may not be added or erased from materials. Materials must be returned directly to Local History department staff and inspected before the researcher leaves the Plainfield Room.

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Preferred Citation

Identification of item; Date (if noted); "Sgt. Eleanor F.M. Olmstead Leiss Papers", Box and Folder Number, Local History Department, Plainfield Public Library, Plainfield, New Jersey.

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated by Mr. Olmstead, Eleanor Leiss' brother.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Sarah Hull in June 2009. The finding aid was written by Sarah Hull in July 2009 and updated by Sally Weiner in September 2024. Finding aid content follows the guidelines suggested by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*.

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Personal Papers [1944-1952, 1990, undated]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	1	Paper Documents	1944-1952, 1990, undated

Series 2: Photographs [1943, 1945, undated]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1		U.S. Official Seal photo album	1943, undated
2	1	Photographs	1943, undated
	2	Photographs	1943, undated
	3	"Bavaria" Photo Album	1945

Series 3: Artifacts [1944]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1		3 military medals	1944