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# "Honey, I am Keeping My Promise to You and Expect the Same in Return": A Study of the Challenges Faced by Relationships, Specifically the Institutions of Marriage, Courtship, and Dating, during the Great Depression and World War II

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## Abstract

Relationships are complex and intricate entities, especially the institutions of marriage, courtship, and dating. It is difficult to maintain and cultivate a successful relationship during peacetime; however, the task becomes even more challenging during wartime and periods of economic hardships. Two such significant time periods in American History were the Great Depression and World War II. Some scholars have attributed the moniker "The Greatest Generation" to the generation that experienced the effects of financial crises as children during the Great Depression and were subsequently called into service, abroad and on the home front, for the good of the country during World War II. However, in recent scholarship, authors attempt to present the generation, not as a single-minded, homogenous society that was free of flaws and morally perfect, but as human beings that were unique, complex, and inherently imperfect. This paper attempts, through the utilization of statistical data, advice literature from the time period, and correspondences between Wisconsin soldiers and loved ones back home, to showcase the complexities faced by love relationships caused by stressors outside of these individuals' control. The stressors challenged these relationships—marriage, courtship, and dating—in unique ways which are evidenced through statistical data, such as marriage and divorce rates, and through anecdotal artifacts that substantiate the soldiers' fears of infidelity and subsequent feelings of jealousy.

‘“You ask me how I’m doing?
I’m the most lonesome man in the world.
But I’m a lucky fellow
To have you for my girl.
I sure enjoy your letters,
So do my buddies here.
They help to bolster our morale
and bring a note of cheer.
It makes a lad feel manly
and gives him added grit
To know he has a Sweetheart
who always does her bit.
Some day when I come home again
and hold you in my arms
I’ll be thinking of your letters
and say “Darling, …??????’

You’ll have to wait till that day comes Darling, and maybe by then I’ll think of something that rhymes with “arms.” […] Darling, always remember that I love you with every ounce of love I have. You’ll always be the only one I’ll love and live for.”[1]

[1] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki (later Konopacki), October 3, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin), 51.

## Introduction

The excerpt from the correspondence of Clarence Konopacki captures the personal importance of his relationship with his future wife, Marianne. The most intriguing part of the poem is how it ends—Konopacki leaves the poem unfinished in the hope that he could complete it when he returned home. This is a striking example of an effect of war on a love relationship, and this stress manifested itself differently in different situations. In Konopacki's case, he notes that he is lonely but that the letters he receives from her makes him feel better. In fact, letters and care packages, especially ones filled with baked goods or everyday essentials not found near the battlefield, like shaving razors, had an important effect on more than the soldier receiving the package. As Konopacki writes, "I sure enjoy your letters,/ So do my buddies here./ They help to bolster our morale/ and bring a note of cheer." This symbolizes the importance of contact with the home front and the security that can be found in relationships that did not exist elsewhere. The concept highlights the importance of an escape for soldiers from the battlefield, the carnage, and the unknown countries in the form of letters and packages from loved ones. It is important to consider the content of the letters and packages the soldiers received. Not every soldier had the benefit of a supportive relationship to turn to. Some soldiers were deployed before they had the opportunity to fix or deal with their problems. Others corresponded with girlfriends they had never met face to face.

When considering wars, most historians study soldiers on a large scope to determine objectives, tactics of the collective war effort. Large scope study allows for the discovery of over-arching themes, yet it overlooks small, intimate details that describe the human experience during war. For example, a broad overview fails to take into regard the

lives of individual soldiers, including approximately 332,200 Wisconsin residents, served in the armed forces during World War II.[2] Although not all of the soldiers from Wisconsin were in a love relationship, many were. This paper is a study of marriage and courtship of soldiers from Wisconsin during World War II. [3] The analysis of advice literature of the time period, dissertations concerning relationships during the Great Depression and World War II, and correspondences between Joseph Charles Myrechuck of Milwaukee to Loretta Pitsch of Fond du Lac, Clarence Konopacki of Manitowoc to Marianne Kruzucki of Rosholt, and "Mr. and Mrs. Smith"[4] of Milwaukee tell both the group and individual experiences between these Wisconsin soldiers and their loved ones at home. This paper utilizes the advice literature, dissertations, statistical information, and correspondences to explore the generation who grew up during the Great Depression and were called into the service of their country during World War II. Special emphasis is placed upon relationships, specifically the institutions of marriage, dating, and courtship. The intention is not to portray the generation in a negative light, but to recognize that relationships during war and previous economic hardships can face challenges, specifically jealousy and infidelity.

[2] Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, *Wisconsin's Role in World War II: Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of World War II: On the Battlefield, On the Homefront*, by The World War II Commemorative Community Program (Madison, Wisconsin: Department of Veterans Affairs, [1994?]), 24.

[3] The author acknowledges that the sample of examples of relationships available is not extensive enough to conclude that each relationship during World War II was genuinely different from every other. Also, the author focuses on correspondences from soldiers who fought in the European front, who fought in the Army, who could be considered in a lower to middle socioeconomic class and were culturally and ethnically Caucasian, and were originally from Wisconsin. The author can not assume that the findings of the paper will wholly apply for the Pacific front, other branches of the military, different ethnicities or socioeconomic classes, and for other states.

[4] Names changed for privacy reasons.

The "Greatest Generation" paradigm does not do justice to the complexities faced by relationships and the solutions developed to combat those complexities.[5] The answer lies not in debunking the "Greatest Generation," but in the realization of the problems inherent in generalizing an entire generation into a singular, homogenous category. Despite the popular conceptions about the "Greatest Generation," the romantic experiences between Wisconsin soldiers and the women they loved did not fit a singular mold; rather each relationship varied significantly from case to case, each with their own unique trials, tribulations, and human experiences.

The majority of scholarship written about World War II focuses on prominent figures, both military and political; the battles, skirmishes, conflicts, and rising casualty rates; and the geography of the European and Pacific Theatres. Later, scholarship focused on the home front. The earliest contributions in the field concerning the home front focused on collaboration and sacrifices of social groups and communities and not upon the individual. Scholarship of the same era focused on the experience of soldiers overseas. Scholarship upheld that soldiers bravely accepted their duty to fight for their country; that honor and love of country dictated the actions of many soldiers. However, both on the home front and overseas, focus was placed on the positive aspects of war but a continued search for the experience of the individual provided historians with other avenues to study.[6] Eventually, scholars embarked on a search for significance and

[5] The term "Greatest Generation" was first used by journalist Tom Brokaw in his 1998 book, *The Greatest Generation*, where he used the term to describe the generation that grew up during the Great Depression and was called into service during World War II.

[6] For further information concerning the portrayal of soldiers as noble and duty-centered, please see: Richard Polenberg's *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), where the author upheld the bravery of soldiers, "The media portrayed the GI as courageous yet antimilitaristic, a killer in combat yet essentially kind at heart, devoted to the principle yet wanting nothing as much as the simple comforts of home." (p. 134); Lee Kennett's G.I.: *The American Soldier in World War II* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).

meaning behind the stated factual evidence. This search for a deeper meaning and impact caused changes in the focus and concentration of scholarship over time. Results of these searches focused on the study of personal experiences to allow historians to truly understand how the individual experienced the war. This scholarship seeks new ways of examining previously established "truths" and the possible existence of multiple truths.

One of the "truths" examined was the emphasis upon the validity of the moniker attributed to the World War II era: "The Greatest Generation." Although the "Greatest Generation" sacrificed a great deal—from the loss of lives in war to suffering through rationing—historians in the past ten years have explored the truths behind the myth of the Greatest Generation. Authors Kenneth D. Rose, in *Myth and the Greatest Generation: A Social History of Americans in World War II,* and Edward Wood Jr., in *Worshipping the Myths of World War II: Reflections on America's Dedication to War*, for example, have delved deep into the realities behind the stereotypes of "Patriotic Soldier" and "Doting Wife" who were willing to sacrifice all for the sake of the outcome of the war. To simply argue the points that stereotypes support would merely conceal the fact that the generation had problems and faced difficult choices because it minimizes the individual in the search to define the whole.

## A Statistical Evaluation of Relationships during the Great Depression

It is important to attempt to study where the state of relationships came from in order to see their impact during World War II. Following World War I, America experienced significant recovery in nearly all areas of society, soldiers returning home allowed for the growth of families, and the economy rode the wave of growth caused by

the continuation of war industry and returning workers. The "Roaring Twenties" were snuffed out suddenly and cataclysmically by the Great Depression.

**Table 2. Estimated Marriage and Divorce Rates: United States, 1920-60**

TABLE 1.—*Estimated marriage and divorce rates: United States, 1920–60*

[Rates are events per 1,000 population]

| Year | Marriage rate | Divorce rate | Year | Marriage rate | Divorce rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1960 | 8.5 | 2.2 | 1940 | 12.1 | 2.0 |
| 1959 | 8.5 | 2.2 | 1939 | 10.7 | 1.9 |
| 1958 | 8.4 | 2.1 | 1938 | 10.3 | 1.9 |
| 1957 | 8.9 | 2.2 | 1937 | 11.3 | 1.9 |
| 1956 | 9.5 | 2.3 | 1936 | 10.7 | 1.8 |
| 1955 | 9.3 | 2.3 | 1935 | 10.4 | 1.7 |
| 1954 | 9.2 | 2.4 | 1934 | 10.3 | 1.6 |
| 1953 | 9.8 | 2.5 | 1933 | 8.7 | 1.3 |
| 1952 | 9.9 | 2.5 | 1932 | 7.9 | 1.3 |
| 1951 | 10.4 | 2.5 | 1931 | 8.6 | 1.5 |
| 1950 | 11.1 | 2.6 | 1930 | 9.2 | 1.6 |
| 1949 | 10.6 | 2.7 | 1929 | 10.1 | 1.7 |
| 1948 | 12.4 | 2.8 | 1928 | 9.8 | 1.7 |
| 1947 | 13.9 | 3.4 | 1927 | 10.1 | 1.6 |
| 1946 | 16.4 | 4.3 | 1926 | 10.2 | 1.6 |
| 1945 | 12.2 | 3.5 | 1925 | 10.3 | 1.5 |
| 1944 | 10.9 | 2.9 | 1924 | 10.4 | 1.5 |
| 1943 | 11.7 | 2.6 | 1923 | 11.0 | 1.5 |
| 1942 | 13.2 | 2.4 | 1922 | 10.3 | 1.4 |
| 1941 | 12.7 | 2.2 | 1921 | 10.7 | 1.5 |
| | | | 1920 | 12.0 | 1.6 |

*Source*: Data from Robert D. Grove and Alice M. Hetzel and United States, *Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1940-1960*, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service Publication No. 1677 (Washington D.C.: National Center for Health Statistics, 1968), 102.

In the decade that followed, the mighty American economy that grew so much during the 1920s seemed to collapse. Unemployment soared as high as twenty-five percent and many people found it hard to provide their families with basic necessities. Relationships also suffered. The marriage rate declined from 10.40 events per 1,000 population during the 1920s to 9.81 events per 1,000 population during the 1930s.[7] In his dissertation, entitled, The Effects of the Depression on Wisconsin's Marriage and Divorce Rates, Douglas Wallace Oberdorfer argues that the marriage rate in Wisconsin

[7] Robert D. Grove and Alice M. Hetzel and United States, *Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1940-1960*, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service Publication No. 1677 (Washington D.C.: National Center for Health Statistics, 1968), 102.

during the time period of 1920 to 1935 resembled the national average. Although overall, his findings suggest a high correlation between the two sets of data, Oberdorfer also found, "… that the loss of marriages during the depression years was relatively greater in Wisconsin than in the country as a whole."[8]

Across the country, including Wisconsin, the Depression shifted attention away from sexual and social issues and replaced marital issues with issues of mere survival. Oberdorfer speculated that the declining marriage rate in Wisconsin, and the rest of the United States, would not have occurred if the country had been experiencing more prosperous economic conditions. Statistically, Oberdorfer discovered that there was a rise in the number of marriages when the country experienced economic recovery in 1933. Despite a resurgence in marriages, Wisconsin and the United States did not return to pre-depression rates until after 1935.

Similarly, Oberdorfer studied the divorce rate and discovered some interesting Wisconsin trends. According again to Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1940-1960, the divorce rates of the 1920s was 1.56 events per 1,000 population and rose to 1.65 events per 1,000 population during the 1930s.[9] The increase does not seem significant between the two decades; however, when broken down further, one can discover that economic prosperity is highly correlated with divorce rates. From 1930 to 1933, the divorce rates averaged only 1.425 events per 1,000 population, which suggests that during economic hardships, married couples are less likely to proceed with an expensive divorce. According the author Stephanie Coontz in *Marriage, a History*, notes

[8] Douglas Wallace Oberdorfer, "The Effects of the Depression on Wisconsin's Marriage and Divorce Rates" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1941), 34, 38.
[9] U.S Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. *Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1940-1960*, by the Public Health Service. "Estimated Marriage and Divorce Rates: United States, 1920-60," Public Health Service Publication No. 1677, (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Health Statistics, 1968), 102.

that although divorce rates were down, the rate of separated spouses increased. Coontz summarized that fact effectively when she wrote that many couples who hoped to divorce simply could not afford to set up separate households. "By 1940 more than 1.5 million wives in the United States were living apart from their husbands."[10] As Oberdorfer suggested earlier, the United States experienced a slight economic recovery in 1933. This could have been a contributing factor for the growth of the divorce rate during the 1930s following 1933, which rose to 1.8 events per 1,000 population.[11]

The Great Depression was a significant obstacle for many relationships. It is important to investigate the Great Depression to see the extent of the hardships faced by relationships during economic strain, and to compare and contrast statistics and problems faced with those encountered during World War II, as mentioned below.[12]

## Courtship, Dating and Marriage during the Great Depression

During the 1930s, dating trends show that singles regarded each other as commodities. This style, described by sociologist Willard Waller as "Rating and Dating," consisted of eligible daters ranking each other based on "looks, charm, clothing, conversational acumen and dancing skills" to determine who was worthy of attention of the opposite sex. The priority of a single man or woman was to present themselves in the most socially acceptable and attractive means possible. The popular advice book, *How To Get Your Man and Hold Him*, written by M.G. in 1936, is a whimsical guide to etiquette

[10] Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage*, (New York: Viking, 2005), 218.

[11] Robert D. Grove and Alice M. Hetzel and United States, *Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1940-1960*, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, "Estimated Marriage and Divorce Rates: United States, 1920-60," Public Health Service Publication No. 1677 (Washington D.C.: National Center for Health Statistics, 1968), 102.

[12] For further statistics and expansion on the ideas of Douglas Wallace Oberdorfer, please see: James Donald Tarver's PhD Dissertation from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, entitled, "Marriage and Divorce Trends in Wisconsin, 1915-1945." Tarver's dissertation, written in 1948, expands analysis to include World War II, but he draws many of the same conclusions as Oberdorfer.

and attitudes of the 1930s. One particular passage tells of the tactics women could employ to showcase themselves as better potential dates than other women:

> Now everybody knows that you have to believe in a product before you can sell it successfully. The product you have to sell is YOU. And, for the most part, you have to be your own press agent.[13]

Popularity played a large role in the "Rating and Dating" scheme. Although the financial markets were struggling, in the social scene, marketing ones desirability was important. Singles used different methods to increase their desirability. Some students used polls to determine their own "standings" in the eyes of others and the desirability of potential dates.[14] Many singles attempted to use frequent dates and dating members of the opposite sex "rated" higher than themselves to maximize his or her own standing. However, although the amounts of dates were increasing, both men and women were conscious of not being taken advantage of by the opposite sex. Some men were apprehensive whether or not a woman was interested in him only for his money; and some women were hesitant to accept the compliments and acts of love or infatuation at full value, for fear that she was being "taken." The lack of material wealth during the Great Depression could have shifted focus towards the creation of a romantic marketplace, where the commodities promoted were themselves.[15]

Marriages, as shown by Table 1, struggled during the Great Depression. However, many young people hoped that the opportunity to marry would bring renewed prosperity.

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[13] M.G., *How To Get Your Man and Hold Him*, (New York: A.L. Taylor, 1936), 44, in Twentieth Century Advice Literature, http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com/tinyurl/tinyurl.resolver.aspx?tinyurl=2I9V (accessed November 10, 2009).

[14] During the Great Depression, informational polls and surveys began to be used to describe and shape popular opinion. In 1935, George Gallup created the American Institute of Public Opinion and the Gallup Poll, which brought polling to the general public.

[15] Mary C. McComb, *Great Depression and the Middle Class: Experts, Collegiate Youth and Business Ideology, 1929-1941* (Studies in American Popular History and Culture), ed. Jerome Nadelhaft, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 85-112.

Women, in particular, during the 1930s desired marriage and described the institution of marriage in different ways; some included a vocation, a default option and an option worth pursuing. Although times were difficult, marriages were desired. This fact was highlighted in Dorothy Dix's 1940 book, *How to Win and Hold a Husband*:

> Every normal girl, every normal woman, wants a husband. That desire for a mate and marriage is a vital part of her being. It is a fundamental craving, as natural as eating, breathing and wishing to live.[16]

Marriages following the slight economic upswing in 1935 reestablished and reasserted gender roles by emphasizing that a wife be supportive of her husband emotionally, rather than assisting financially. This way of thinking was in direct contrast to the early 1930s, where women were forced, out of economic necessity, to find a job in order to support themselves or their families. As the decade passed, marriage began to become a more feasible option and began to be presented as such in popular literature of the time. Most of the literature presented the benefits of women pursuing marriage over careers. For example, the book *Sex and Marriage* by Richard J. Lambert, M.D., written in 1932 exemplifies the thinking patterns of the early 1930's. Lambert argued that matters of sexuality and "sex hygiene" were best taught to children by their parents in the home, but admitted that some people may have acquired "distorted" information. The book begins as an opinionated social commentary on the morality of society and continues towards a discussion of female and male anatomy. Eventually, the author discusses 'Love and Courtship' and mentions that "petting," or sexual behavior, should not be engaged in

[16] Dorothy Dix, *How to Win and Hold a Husband* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1939); Dorothy Dix was the pseudonym for advice columnist Elizabeth Meriwether Gilmer. Gilmer's column advised on life, love, and marriage and was carried by many newspapers across the country. The columnist took from her own experiences and struggles to provide recommendations. Despite the emphatic response towards "every normal woman" desiring to be married, Gilmer married due to family pressure, even though she did not love her husband, who was later institutionalized after suffering nervous breakdowns. She refused to divorce her husband, stating that a wife could and should be able to become an individual, distinct from her husband, and develop her own interests.

and "… is liable to be carried so far that the girl finds that she is to be a mother, or either she or the young man has contracted a disease which the other one has contracted during a previous petting party."[17] Lambert argued that marriage and the knowledge of human anatomy was the solution to decreasing unmoral sexual behavior. In consideration of marriage, Lambert wrote, "All young men should marry… for marriage prevents sin."[18] The author cited delaying marriage as a means of increasing temptation, but also acknowledged the troubled economic times.

Strangely enough, although temptation and infidelity are discussed thoroughly, the concept of love, even in a chapter entitled, "Love and Marriage," is only mentioned in a short three paragraph subsection located at the end of the chapter oddly entitled "The Pitfalls of Marriage." Overall, marriage was presented as a moral duty in order to decrease sexual immorality and highlight the sensibilities of 1930s family values.

*Into Their Company: A Book for a Modern Girl on Love and Marriage* written by "A Medical Woman, A Girl and A Wife" in 1931 was similarly written with aspects of morality in mind. Specifically written for a Catholic audience, the eighty seven page book discussed sexual instincts, practicing self control, Christian marriage and divorce, children, vocations, and dealing with repressed instincts. The chapter titled "Christian Marriage and Divorce" began with a statement very similar to that of *How to Win and Hold a Husband,* even though it was written nearly a decade after *Into Their Company*:

[17] Richard J. Lambert, *Sex and Marriage* (Chicago: Bernard S. Rogin, 1932), 45, in Twentieth Century Advice Literature, http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com/tinyurl/tinyurl.resolver.aspx?tinyurl=2I9U (accessed November 7, 2009).
[18] Ibid., 63.

> We saw in the first chapter that at the bottom of the heart of nearly every normal girl is the fundamental longing for a husband and a home of her own, and also, in many cases, for babies of her own to love and care for.[19]

However, the book described that in daily life, even the best intentions, instincts, and desires can be overshadowed by other aspects of life or become an unhealthy goal or desire. The solution presented in the book to balancing the desires of relationships and marriage as the reliance on faith and the teachings of the church, specifically the Catholic Church:

> And if she is wise, she will realise (sic) that what she is needing is what the Catholic Church sets forth in her teaching as the normal happy arrangement for the lives of most of her children, namely Christian Marriage.[20]

Another interesting statement that the book recognized was that although the Church frowns upon divorce, birth control, and couples living together unmarried, the authors recognized that love and the major goal of the institution of marriage was to transform two separate lives into one. Later in the book, the religious connotations of marriage describe marriage as a sacrament; thus, marriage is a gift from God and ultimately, the celebration of the love and union is for the greater glory of God.

The book also discussed divorce and the fact that the Catholic Church opposed the dissolving of marriages. However, the author wrote about difficult cases, that the church would allow the separation of spouses, under the stipulation that the two would not remarry. Overall, the source used Catholic doctrine to express that sex and marriage are an essential part of living a Christian life. As the author wrote in the "Explanatory" of the book:

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[19] A Medical Woman, A Girl and A Wife, *Into Their Company: A Book for a Modern Girl on Love and Marriage* (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1931), 40, in Twentieth Century Advice Literature, http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com/tinyurl/tinyurl.resolver.aspx?tinyurl=2I9Y (accessed November 9, 2009).
[20] Ibid., 40.

> The purpose of this book is to help to clear your mind, so that, knowing both the normal instincts of the human body in sex-matters, and the wisdom of the Church's moral law, you may govern yourself according to the dignity of your position as a spiritual and immortal personality.[21]

The book *How to Get Your Man and Hold Him* was written in 1936 by an "M.G.," after the economy began to recover slightly. From the initial page, the book is different from the two previously mentioned books because interspersed within the text are illustrations and drawings of women, highlighting ideas and suggestions prescribed by the book. Also, the tone of the book is drastically different from the two works of the early 1930s because the morality argument is not the focus of the source. The "off the cuff" writing style the author used discussed topics in chapters titled: Blind Dates, Shall I Call Him Up?, Building Up for Romance, and How to Hold Your Man.

The author delved into personal appearance and how creating an external beauty can attract more men; quite the opposite from *Into Their Company*, where the recommendation was to celebrate the beauty and body God created for you. External markers included a clear complexion, makeup usage, and clothing; each section containing multiple suggestions, interlaced with primarily male responses and magazine beauty poll results.

The book also discussed flattering a man; interestingly enough, the major suggestion to create a conversation and further a connection through daily reading of the Sports page of the newspaper. Next, the author focuses on a trend more prevalent during the late 1930s: blind dates. Similar to today, a blind date can be successful or could potentially disastrous. The author suggested that although first impressions may not lead to love, on the chance that the meeting expands into a relationship, it is important not to

[21] Ibid., xx.

compare the current date with past dates. This suggestion directly goes against the "Rating and Dating" philosophy highlighted by Mary C. McComb's *Great Depression and the Middle Class: Experts, Collegiate Youth and Business Ideology, 1929-1941*, where the entire point of the philosophy was to compare dates with past dates to create the aura of popularity and desirability with the opposite sex.

In the chapter 'Always a Bridesmaid, Never a Bride,' the author wrote the if a woman finds a relationship difficult to establish and maintain, the problem is not a perceived lack of sex appeal or a lack of personality, but lack of confidence. Perhaps a woman assumed she did not measure up with other women, perhaps based on past experiences. The author stressed each woman finding her strengths and recognizing her weaknesses and portraying the best attributes to the world.

The author argued that once women found a relationship which suited them, they should not "relax" but maintain working towards the creation of a stable, solid relationship. As the author wrote:

> A marriage certificate, unfortunately, carries no guarantee of everlasting love. Love is something that has to be earned, and continually earned. And holding your man is like holding you job. You have to work to do it.[22]

Despite the amount of work needed to create a successful relationship, the author argued that all the work could be for naught if one is overly suspicious. There is only one way to insure a relationship will last, when the author argued, "The best matrimonial insurance you can have is mutual trust and confidence."[23] The author also argued that when it came

[22] M. G., *How to Get Your Man and Hold Him* (Hammond, IN: A. L. Taylor, 1936), 84, in Twentieth Century Advice Literature, http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com/tinyurl/tinyurl.resolver.aspx?tinyurl=2I9V (accessed November 10, 2009).
[23] Ibid., 85.

to marriage one should, "Put into marriage as much as you expect to take out of it—and a little more."[24]

While marriages during the Great Depression were decreased significantly by economic factors, the two halves of the 1930s were considerably different. Prior to 1935, advice literature of the time, specifically *Sex and Marriage* by Richard J. Lambert and *Into Their Company: A Book for a Modern Girl on Love and Marriage* by "A Medical Woman, A Girl and A Wife" discuss the moral aspects of marriage. The sources uphold the concept of women's subordination, especially to their husbands. Both books were written in with a sense of bias, specifically because one source highlighted the Catholic perspective of the institution of marriage and the glorification of God through the relationship, while the other source was written by a doctor whose argument was focused as a social commentary on the morality of society.

The second half of the 1930s showcased relationships under slightly more prosperous economic times. While improving financial opportunities sparked the hope for better days, so did a new dating method. The "Rating and Dating" scheme allowed for eligible daters to portray themselves and the opposite sex as desired commodities. Other advice literature of the time, namely *How to Get Your Man and Hold Him* and *How to Win and Hold a Husband,* focused not on morality, but creating the most attractive individual to attract the opposite sex. Overall, the entire decade was marked by a progression from marriage as an unrealistic option during difficult economic times to a symbolic action to attempt to return to a pre-Depression life. But relationships would encounter a significant obstacle, drastically different than the economic struggles of the Great Depression, early in the 1940s in the form of World War II.

[24] Ibid., 88.

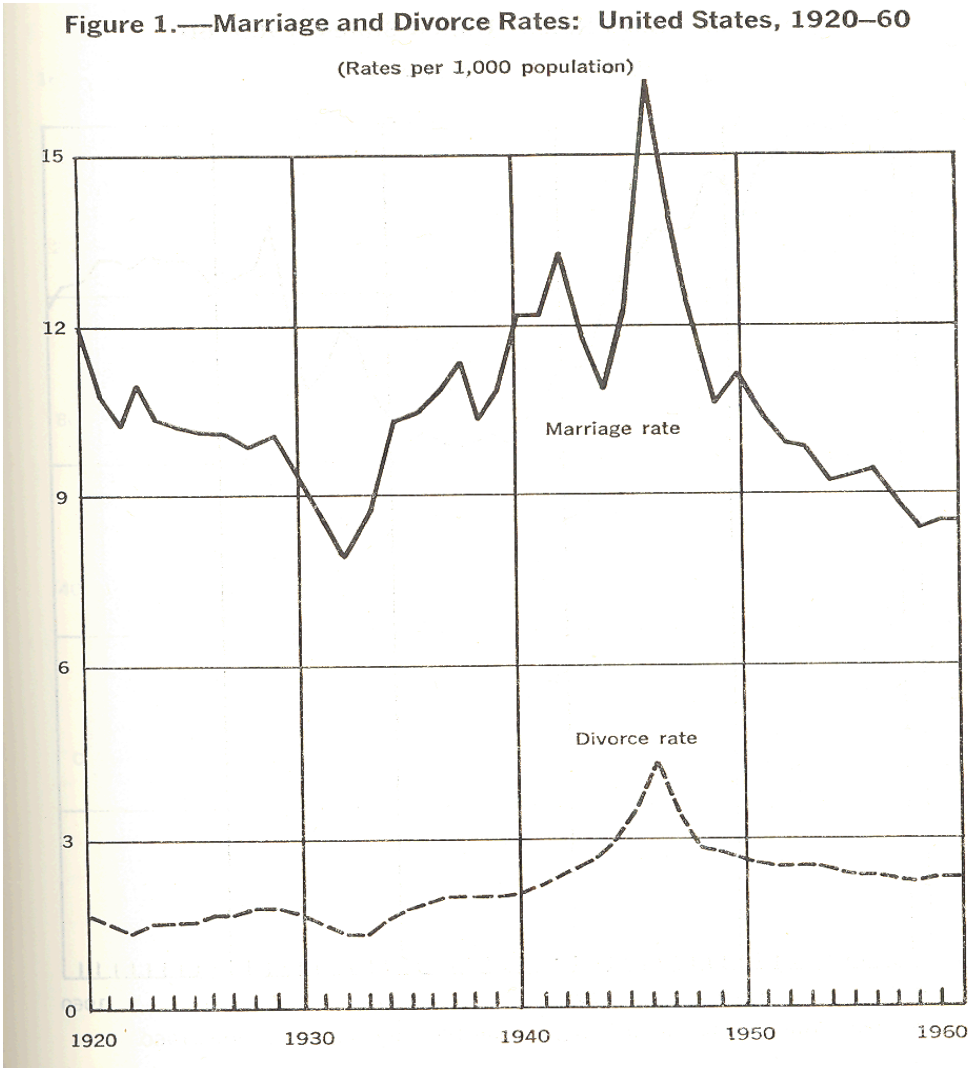


**Figure 2. Marriage and Divorce Rates: United States, 1920-60. Data from Robert D. Grove and Alice M. Hetzel and United States, *Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1940-1960*, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service Publication No. 1677 (Washington D.C.: National Center for Health Statistics, 1968), 59.**

## Relationships during World War II

The onset of World War II reversed many of the Depression-era trends in marriage. Actually, the initial event attributed to sparking the acceleration of many relationships occurred as early as 1940. The event, the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, also known as the Burke-Wadsworth Act, was passed by Congress and signed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on September 16, 1940. The Act became the first

time in the history of the United States that a peacetime conscription was instituted. The Act was planned to draft upwards of 900,000 and authorized the registration of all men age 21 to 35.[25]

The prospect of separation helped spark a rise in marriages. Early in the draft, being married kept a man on the home front. Similarly, fathers were also initially protected from the draft with the classification III-A. With the introduction of the III-A classification, designating those who have monetary dependents, the draft board was forced to increase the age range from 18 to 45 after Pearl Harbor in an attempt to ensure a non-married, childless military and to meet the need for troops. By the end of 1943, class III-A was discontinued and the first to be drafted were fathers with children conceived after Pearl Harbor. Previous to the suspension of class III-A, marriages grew at a rate unlike anything seen in the preceding decade. As shown by Figure 1 on page 17, a significant increase in the marriage rate from 1939 to 1942. In 1939, the marriage rate stood at 10.7 events per 1,000 population. This number rose to 12.1 events per 1,000 population in 1940. The marriage rate continued to rise significantly to 12.7 in 1941 and 13.2 in 1942. According to author John W. Jefferies, between 1939 and 1942, the marriage rate rose twenty five percent. Author Ronald H. Bailey specifically reviewed marriages following Pearl Harbor and found that in the first five months after the catastrophic event which brought the United States into the war, an estimated 1,000 women a day married servicemen. Similarly, the birth rate rose nearly twenty percent during the same time period. The increase in birth rate stemmed from "goodbye babies" conceived on the eve of a soldier's departure. There are multiple noticeable spikes in the

[25] Robert Heide and John Gilman, *Home Front America: Popular Culture of the World War II Era* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995), 49-52.

birth rate, specifically nine months after the Selective Service Act and about ten months after Pearl Harbor.[26]

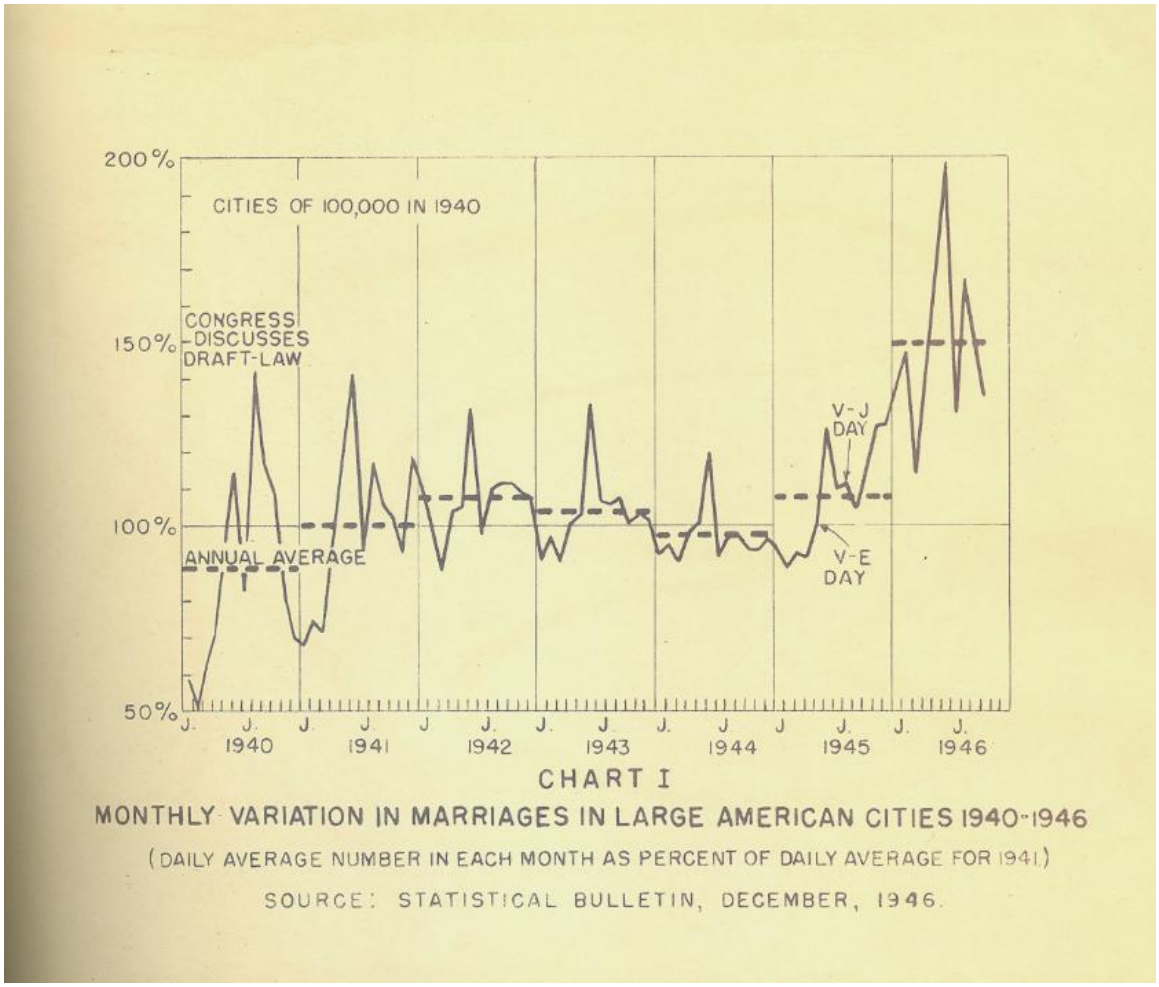


**Figure 3. Monthly Variations in Marriages in Large American Cities, 1940-1946. Data from Arnold Phillip Sundal, "Marriage and Mate Selection with Special Reference to Marriages in the Madison Community in Peacetime and Wartime" (PhD. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison. 1948), 96a.**

Arnold Phillip Sundal argued in his Ph.D. dissertation entitled, Marriage and Mate Selection with Special Reference to Marriages in the Madison Community in Peacetime and Wartime that even as early as 1948, when the dissertation was written, there had been much has been written about the tremendous increase in the marriage rate which began in August of 1940. The author determined that there was no sudden surge of prosperity able

[26] John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front*, American Ways Series (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Inc., 1996), 87-89.

to account for the marriage rate growth but the author attributed a surge in 1940 coincided with the period in which the Draft Law was being discussed and put into operation. Also, the marriage rate was very high during the year after Pearl Harbor, as shown by Figure 2. No matter what the latent motives of the young men and women who rushed into marriages, the evident fact is that these young people, and to a considerable extent their parents and the community, found it possible to rationalize the behavior in terms of available, competing value systems.[27]

As the famous Proverb states, "Desperate times call for desperate measures."[28] Such a quote is relatable to the state of marriages and relationships during World War II. The uncertain times caused a shift away from former ways of thinking concerning love relationships, especially conceptions of class, family consent, and lengthy courtships. The changing times accelerated the plans of some couples who had been dating before the war but were worried about the impending uncertainty of the future. Unfortunately for many relationships, the increased freedoms were exploited by some in society.

Some people, primarily women, took advantage of this situation by profiting from one or more relationships; collecting the allotment of money given to wives while the husband was away. The whole development was closely tied in with the government's program for payments to wives, with an extra sum for children. Author Mike Wright portrayed a woman who would marry a serviceman for the $50 monthly allotment and when the new husband was deployed overseas, the woman would find another military

[27]Arnold Phillip Sundal, "Marriage and Mate Selection with Special Reference to Marriages in the Madison Community in Peacetime and Wartime" (PhD. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison. 1948), 97-98.
[28] The author of the Proverb is unknown.

husband.[29] "Allotment Annies," as the women became known, seemed to be more concerned with the check from the government than with the serviceman. The long distances and the search for companionship allowed many soldiers to make these marriage proposals before leaving the country. In some cases parents fought against the quickly entered into marriages. In the same section, Wright illustrated the story of one mother forcefully not wanting her son to marry a girl he had just met because she did not consider it right that some girl he had known for only a few weeks should get the government payments and get his insurance if he were killed.[30]

Another aspect of society flourished as well—prostitution. According to Mike Wright, some cities attempted to severely restrict and rid the area of prostitution by setting aside specific districts in order to control the prevalence of it. The government, at this time, issued many different pamphlets and produced posters stressing vigilance and the use of protection in order to prevent sexually transmitted disease.[31] World War II became a significant era in the treatment of such diseases. In many cases, however, servicemen would use prophylactic stations to attempt to wash off and receive treatment for any diseases they might have contracted and brought back to camp.

There is overwhelming evidence that the war crisis caused broad sections of the public to redefine the conditions under which a marriage might be properly contracted. Advice literature, with titles like: *How to Meet Men and Marry*, *How to Get Along with Boys,* and *The Army Wife* discuss popularly requested information during wartime. In

[29] The woman that Wright described evidently married six men by utilizing an allotment profiteering scheme.
[30] Mike Wright, *What They Didn't Teach You About World War II* (New York: Presidio Press, 1998), 24.
[31] For more information about efforts by the government and the medical field to combat venereal diseases and inform both soldiers and the public, please see: Justina Hamilton Hill, *Silent Enemies: The Story of Diseases of War and Their Control* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970); Allan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease since 1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985)

Nancy B. Shea's *The Army Wife*, written in 1941, the author discussed a newly needed niche of information pertaining to the women who married into the military. Some topics focused on were military weddings, what was expected on military families and children, military base etiquette, and what to do in the event of illness or death. The source is written in a very formal, military-like way—to the point, without whimsical anecdotes. *How to Get Along with Boys,* written by W. S. Keating in 1945, is a "how to" book that focused on bettering the self for the average woman in order to attract her ideal man. The chapter titles ranged from "Understanding the Modern Man" and "How to Get Him to Date You" to "How to Get Him to Propose" and almost every imaginable topic relating to relationships in between. *How to Meet Men and Marry*, written by Juliet Farnham in 1943, suggested that women take their search for marriage into their own hands. This conversational piece talked about the practice of promising oneself, portraying a "nice" character, possessing common sense, and continued the trend of suggesting how to construct letters to soldiers. All three advice books contain different information and were written in different styles, but simultaneously come together to provide specific advice to the public in the attempts to better relationships during World War II.

The effects of the war on relationships even entered the mainstream, popular press. In dramatized accounts, newsmagazines attempted to portray the solemn, sad departure for war for soldiers and their loved ones to a country at war. An article in the February 14, 1944 issue of *Life* magazine read,

> Each goodbye is a drama complete in itself. Sometimes the girl stands with arms around the boy's waist, hands tightly clasped behind. Another fits her head into the curve of his cheek while tears fall onto his coat. Now and then the boy will take her face between his hands and speak reassuringly. Or if the wait is long they may just stand quietly, not saying anything. The common denominator of all these

> goodbyes is sadness and tenderness, and complete oblivion for the moment to anything but their own individual heartaches.

Despite the portrayal in the mainstream media, the most powerful accounts of the war are the personal stories in the forms of letters, especially those from husbands to wives, boyfriends to girlfriends, and letters sent between fiancés.

As mentioned previously, the letters sent to soldiers provided a significant relief from the hardships of war. For some soldiers, reliance upon letters and packages from home became an unhealthy obsession. Army psychiatrists were trained to observe those who allowed mail, either in excessive amounts or were distraught due to the lack of mail, to control their lives. Letters also could also bring about negative connotations. In some cases, families and loved ones received mail from a soldier listed as deceased, which caused mixed feeling. In some cases the military made a mistake, but there was the distinct possibility that the delay in mail, described below, inspired false hopes. Some mail was unwanted; some soldiers had the misfortune of receiving "Dear John" letters, which explained to a husband or boyfriend that a relationship was over, usually because the author, a wife or girlfriend, has found another man to be romantically involved.[32]

Letter writing was an important way to inform the home front of day to day occurrences but the letters themselves could cause stress.[33] Censorship of letters designated by an "Opened by Censor" stamp, thus limited some aspects of freedom of speech.[34] Letters were the primary means of communication during the war. According to

[32] Robynn Clairday and Matt Clairday, *Postcards from World War II: Sights & Sentiments from the Last Century* (Garden City Park, NY: Square One Publishers, 2002), 77.

[33] Similarly, letters from the home front allowed soldiers to know what was occurring while they were away. Many times, letters sent overseas were not saved due to space restrictions for soldiers. For a glimpse at some of these saved letters that were sent overseas by wives and girlfriends, please see: Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, eds., *Since You Went Away: World War II Letters From American Women on the Home Front* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[34] Of the three letter collections, each one was censored at least once. In the cases of the correspondences, censorship occurred when the soldier was stationed overseas and wrote about troop locations, movements,

authors Robynn Clairday and Matt Clairday, "In 1943, the average American soldier received 14 pieces of mail a week…"[35] However, the flow of letters was not consistent. In the correspondence of "Mr. Smith," on February 16, 1944, he acknowledged to his wife that he had received twenty seven total letters from December 13, 1943 to January 29, 1944 and fourteen letters were from his wife. In the seven weeks, "Mr. Smith" averaged almost four pieces of mail per week; although he received a lower than average amount, there were still quite a few letters, especially when one considers that the letters "Mr. Smith" received from his wife were at least three pages long.[36] On a separate occasion, August 4, 1944, "Mr. Smith" wrote that he had not received any mail for eight days. While in some cases, a lack of mail can be attributed to not having a person writing to a soldier, a more feasible explanation is that the mail service was overloaded. The volume of mail led to the creation of "V-Mail" or "Victory Mail" by the government in 1942 in order to save weight and space for transportation. After being censored, the letters were photographed and the resulting film was printed on smaller 4 by 5.5 inch cards. The creation of V-Mail allowed letters originally weighing over 2,500 pounds could be reduced to almost fifty pounds.[37]

Letter writing also entered the advice literature of the time. In Walter S. Keating's *How to Write Love Letters*, written in 1943, the author presented a "how to" guide to write interesting letters that elicit a desired response. The chapter entitled, "How to Assure Him or Her of Your Faithfulness" proved very striking. The author offered

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and tactics to a loved one back home. On June 25, 1943, Joseph Myrechuck wrote that he thought that letters written to soldiers from the United States were not censored at all.

[35] Robynn Clairday and Matt Clairday, *Postcards from World War II*, 3.

[36] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," February 16, 1944. 1944, Folder 1. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).

[37] Robynn Clairday and Matt Clairday, *Postcards from World War II*, 77.

suggestions for what to do if fidelity is called into question, by using directness, "…answer it specifically, explaining the circumstances and thus setting suspicion at rest." The author continued, "This method is not infallible for jealousy cannot always be met with logic. Once aroused, the green eyed monster is difficult to destroy."[38] Keating proceeded to include a template for writing such a letter and provided a letter from a real person. In the chapter titled, "How to Reproach Your Love," the author tried to explain that each relationship faces their ups and downs, but it is sometimes necessary to reproach a loved one. The author argued three points, the first is that the written word is easily misunderstood, the second was to not write anything when angry, attempt to calm down before expressing feelings, and third, no matter what happened, the couple still desires to be in love. Similarly, and in every other chapter, the author provided a template to construct different letters and provided a real world example.

In *How to Write Interesting Letters To Your Men in the Service: A Practical Handbook for Every Man and Woman*, by Dorothy Sara, written in 1943, the author focused on creating a positive experience with a letter, providing the reader with ideas to construct letters, what to write and what not to write, and examples of letters written by men and women. In the chapter entitled, "What Not to Do When Writing to a Man in the Service," the author argued that jealousy had no place in a letter, especially when written to a loved one. If a serviceman was to bring up another person in a letter, the author suggested that the recipient ignored and did not press the situation further. The author wrote:

[38] Walter S. Keating, *How to Write Love Letters* (New York: Stravon, 1943), 48. in Twentieth Century Advice Literature, http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com/tinyurl/tinyurl.resolver.aspx?tinyurl=2KE2 (accessed November 18, 2009).

> Many women make the mistake of imagining that when a man enters his particular branch of service, the charming girls are lying in wait to take him away forever…. It is quite probable that he is meeting others at canteens and Red Cross centers; certainly these women are doing a wonderful job in helping your husband or fiancé or son from being depressed and lonely.[39]

The author specifically stated that a woman should not, under any circumstances, attempt to make her man jealous.

Despite an understandable desire not to want to cause further stress for servicemen by bringing up topics relating to conversations and interactions with other women, the author suggested that wives come forward with their interactions and showed a double standard. Wives and girlfriends were expected to refrain from jealousy and not write spiteful letters, no matter what their husbands, fiancés, or boyfriends wrote. The advice literature illustrated an underlying concern that the fear of the unknown brought to relationships—the fear of infidelity. Regardless of the potential for added stress for relationships based on infidelity, letters were still a powerful means of expressing a wish to reunite with loved ones. "Mr. Smith" summed up that mentality in a May 22, 1944 letter, where he wrote, "… I wish I could hide myself in a letter comming (sic) home to you to but any way my heart and soul is in each letter honey."[40]

## The Letters of Joseph Charles Myrechuck

"Thank you for taking a chance."[41]

Joseph Charles Myrechuck was originally from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Myrechuck was writing to a Miss Loretta Marie Pitsch of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. The

[39] Dorothy Sara, *How to Write Interesting Letters To Your Men in the Service: A Practical Handbook for Every Man and Woman* (New York: Herald Publishing, 1943), 96 in Twentieth Century Advice Literature, http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com/tinyurl/tinyurl.resolver.aspx?tinyurl=2KKA (accessed November 18, 2009).
[40] Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," May 22, 1944. 1944, Folder 4. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[41] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, undated, Box 1, Folder 1. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).

letters begin on roughly September 21, 1942 and continue until September 11, 1945. [42] Joseph and Loretta were clearly courting by mail, without having met in person and the evolution of their relationship can be traced through the letters. The relationship was sparked by a mutual friend; Bob Winke, who also fought during the war, suggested they begin to correspond. The war placed a significant amount of stress on this relationship, specifically due to the fact that the letters contain heartfelt longing and the fear of falling in love with an idea instead of a real person.

Joseph Myrechuck was drafted into the 226th Signal Operations Company as a radio operator. The letters track his journey in the military, from training in San Francisco through duty in North Africa, Italy, and France. Initially in the correspondence, Loretta Pitsch worked as a machinist. Joseph marveled at the changing gender roles, when he commented about the city of San Francisco, where he was first stationed for training, "I guess the women sure are taking over the men's jobs. Some are fare collectors on street-cars and I met one at a dance who is a welder."[43]

In terms of their relationship, each letter provides more insight into Joseph Myrechuck's military life and experience of love. Myrechuck seems to be very romantic, yet has a sense of humor which appears throughout the letters. One of the problems for the researchers is that the text is one-sided; none of Loretta's letters are saved. It seems, however, that she experienced nearly the same emotions towards him. They faced their first significant challenge nearly four months into the correspondence when there is a month without any letters due to the fact that Myrechuck is sent overseas to North Africa. This may have been a crossroads for the relationship, but in his second letter written

[42] The first letter of the collection is undated.
[43] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, undated, Box 1, Folder 1. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).

overseas, written on January 12, 1943, he signs a letter for the first time "Love, Joe." The relationship continues to develop, but there seems to be some uncertainty based on the fact that their only contact is through letters. The letters begin to show a deeper connection forming and on May 19, 1943, Myrechuck wrote:

> Whether your face was red or not, I sincerely feel the same as you do. Maybe I was, at that time, sticking my neck out. As time has marched on, I still am in that opinion toward you. To clutter up this sheet to (sic) much, with thoughts, opinions and plain chatter, I could possibly keep you in suspense. Which I won't. You may still think "He loves me." Which, maybe I am crazy, is true. The first part of your letter made my heart sink, it was gradually raised as I read on. Thanks. Hope I keep your little heart aflutter. I also hope that you understand the mess that I have made, amateur typist, that's me.[44]

Before May 19, 1943, Myrechuck's letters focus on connecting with home and learning about Loretta. He devoted nearly an entire letter to explain how much he desired a beer. On March 19, 1943, Joseph expressed how much he missed the cold Wisconsin winter weather, spoke about Loretta's income tax worries and popular songs of the day, especially one entitled, "Dearly Beloved," which Joseph liked even more because the title reminded him of Loretta.[45] He sends Loretta a birthday card, even though he wrote the wrong date on her card, and pictures of him, which became Loretta's first opportunity to see what Joseph looked like.

However, following May 19, 1943, the content of Joseph's letters changes. At that point, Joseph was infatuated with Loretta to the point where the only future he saw was with her. Although still committed to his duty, Joseph felt that the war could not end soon enough in order for him to return home, when he wrote: "I hope that soon we all may be home in familiar surroundings. I am anxious to spend some time with you. Still I can

[44] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, May 19, 1943, Box 1, Folder 2. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).
[45] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, March 19, 1943, Box 1, Folder 2. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).

dream."[46] As time went on, Joseph and Loretta believed they had found something special:

> Yes my dear, I do hope it is more then (sic) mere friends. It has been quite a long time that I have been thinking about that as you probably could have noticed in my letters of the past. Than (sic) again I am not in the habit of writting (sic) mushey (sic) letters. I have a pretty high opinion of you… I hope you and I will always get along together. That will have to hold for the future to tell.[47]

Although Joseph felt they had known each other for "quite a long time," Loretta and Joseph had only been corresponding for a little over a year and had still never met face to face. Although Joseph felt that he did not make a "habit of writting mushey letters," the continuation of the last letter, dated September 21, 1943, Joseph lets his emotions dictate what he wrote: "We may think that we know each other very well---- I can't go on. Wish you were here or I there. Truthfully, at present, I am falling hard. Maybe I am crazy but that's how it stands."[48] Joseph's next later on September 26, 1943, continued the same sentimentality: "I don't know what you think of my last letter but I meant every word of it. Maybe I am a little crazy. Crazy over you. It seems to me that I've known you for ages instead of a short time."[49]

Even though Joseph wrote in a very love-struck and sentimental manner, the relationship did not escape questions of infidelity. In two separate letters, Joseph felt the need to explain Loretta's questions whether or not he had spoken to or seen any other women. His answer was surprising—yes. But Joseph explained on October 4, 1943, "I'll admit there are some nice ones [girls] here in this country but somehow it seems that I

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[46] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, May 24, 1943, Box 1, Folder 2. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).
[47] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, September 21, 1943, Box 1, Folder 2. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).
[48] Ibid
[49] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, September 26, 1943, Box 1, Folder 2. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).

have lost interest in them. Might be that I think of you considerably."[50] Nearly three months later, on February 16, 1944, Joseph discussed the same topic:

> Now the female situation comes to light and to be honest, here 'tis. I do write to other girls but not anything like I write you. Two of these girls happen to be married [and were old friends of Joseph] and the other two single [one was his uncle's wife's sister, who was infatuated with his brother, and the other was a friend from Milwaukee.][51]

After admitting to corresponding to other women who were friends of Joseph's before the war, Joseph felt compelled to write in the same letter, "Regardless of everything said, you are my main interest…. I still think I'm stuck with you; for good I hope."[52] Joseph believed that Loretta was his "main interest," but Joseph was receiving interest abroad in the form of French girls teasing and flirting with him; however, Joseph could not understand the language and thus, their advances were for naught.

In a July 25, 1944, letter, Joseph acknowledged that Loretta moved from Fond du Lac to Milwaukee to work. Joseph's writing reflected jealousy at the thought of her in the big city with potential "distractions" of other men. Joseph also was unprepared for the changing roles of women in American society, especially those that filled occupations that were considered "male" professions. On June 7, 1945, he wrote, "Very sorry to hear you have all your fingers wrapped up. Must be a male doctor shortage when you wrote, "she." I'd probably be nervous as all hell if I had to see a female doctor."[53] As portrayed in the previous letter, Loretta worked diligently to the point where she was forced to consult a doctor about her hand pain. Still, she loved her work and Joseph marveled, "All

[50] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, October 4, 1943, Box 1, Folder 2. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).
[51] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, February 16, 1943, Box 1, Folder 3. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).
[52] Ibid.
[53] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, June 7, 1945, Box 1, Folder 5. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin)

you write about is shop and me. You must love both."[54] Although Joseph, felt Loretta's passion about her work, he felt that as the war was drawing to a close, American society would shift back to embrace pre-World War II norms. On August 16, 1945, he wrote, "I was very glad to know that you still are working and for being better than the other girls. But, I suppose now, V-J Day, you are probably all finished and washed up with the job."[55]

Still, the relationship appeared very healthy, but Joseph was beginning to depend on hearing from Loretta to improve his mood: "Gosh. I don't know what I would do if you didn't write to me. Maybe I should call you my little morale Booster."[56] He wrote in a very grateful manner to Loretta writing to him, even if it meant she was to sacrifice her own free time to do so. Still, Joseph wanted more, in his ever joking style, he wrote: "I still would like to have you write to me. Maybe I should have put a period after the word "you," in that last sentence. That would still be much better."[57] Myrechuck's thoughts turned toward home and his desire to see Loretta was showcased in an eloquently penned letter on Christmas Day, 1944:

> I also do wish I could see you soon. Between you and me on how things will turn out, well, I hope for the best and if not; I want to know why so it might be posibably (sic) corrected. Hope you got what I mean. I'm slightly muddled up but gosh, I love you. Guess that accounts for the muddle. I feel sentimental, lovesick or something. Guess the Christmass (sic) spirit has got me today.[58]

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[54] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, August 18, 1945, Box 1, Folder 5. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin)
[55] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, August 16, 1945, Box 1, Folder 5. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin)
[56] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, May 21, 1944, Box 1, Folder 4. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).
[57] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, April 27, 1944, Box 1, Folder 4. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).
[58] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, December 25, 1944, Box 1, Folder 5. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).

Although Joseph began writing the sentimental, "mushey" letters he never intended to write in the beginning of their relationship, letters at the end of his service display a dramatic, stressful delay to complete his journey home. The army utilized a point system in order to discharge men in even, calculated amounts. Points were distributed under different criteria, like: time in months in uniform, time in months spent overseas, campaigns participated in, wounds and children at home. At the time of V-E Day (Victory over Europe), Joseph had accumulated 106 points.[59] After V-E Day, soldiers needed 85 points to return home. Unfortunately for Joseph, he explained that soldiers with higher point totals than he had were able to leave his camp and then were replaced by other soldiers who still accumulated higher point totals than Joseph, so he was forced to remain behind. At the point when Joseph's number finally came up nearly three months later, a mistaken classification halted his return. He was crossed off a departure list and re-designated as "essential" to the post-war effort. The problem appeared in Joseph's paperwork; he was "a high speed operator but was listed as radio maintenance."[60] Once the paperwork was corrected, Joseph was delayed again; this time the delay came due to a full flight. Finally, on September 11, 1945, Joseph wrote to Loretta for the last time overseas in a brief and to the point letter: "This time, this is my last letter to you from over here."[61]

Joseph returned to the United States and was honorably discharged on October 2, 1945. Throughout his time in the military, Joseph had taken pictures of his fellow

[59] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, May 13, 1945, Box 1, Folder 5. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).
[60] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, August 27, 1945, Box 1, Folder 5. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).
[61] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, September 11, 1945, Box 1, Folder 5. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).

soldiers, famous landmarks, like the Eiffel Tower, and he also included his service record, a list of many awards he had received and a small Nazi flag, which were compiled into a large scrapbook. Joseph returned and met Loretta for the first time, face to face. Although, the author does not have documents pertaining to the actual meeting, Joseph and Loretta's relationship must have survived the war, because they were married on February 16, 1946 in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.[62] Joseph Charles Myrechuck died on April 9, 1991, at the age of 74. Loretta Marie (Pitsch) Myrechuck died on February 26, 2006, at the age of 84.[63]

## The Letters of "Mr. Smith"

"…I shouldn't have cheated on you in the first place when you were gone to California and on top of that I shouldn't have done anything with you…"[64]

The collection consists of 196 letters written by a Milwaukee native and private (later corporal) in the United States Army during World War II. The letters are addressed to his wife, the soldier's correspondence begins on May 13, 1943 during his basic training, continues through his deployment to Great Britain and removal to military hospital in New York. The correspondence concludes on December 3, 1944 with a letter from an Iowan medical facility, where he was reunited with his wife. The letters describe army life and conditions, the soldier's longing for his wife and home, the wife's activities in Milwaukee, and the husband's venereal disease.

Two months into the correspondence, "Mrs. Smith" already missed her husband enough to ask permission to visit his training facility, Camp Sibert, Alabama. "Mr.

[62] St John Nepomucene School, "St John Nepomucene School Family Tree Project: Families with Connections to Little Chute, Wisconsin," Little Chute Historical Society, http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=littlechute&id=I156691 (accessed 11/3/09).
[63] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "U.S. Social Security Death Index: Myrechuck," http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/ancestorsearchresults.asp?last_name=Myrechuck (accessed 11/3/09).
[64] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," August 23, 1943. 1943, Folder 2. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).

Smith" warned his wife that a visit to the camp would not be a good idea because he argued that the camp had the highest disease record from almost every camp. Later in the same letter, he stated quite plainly "…this state especially near this camp has the biggest disease record almost from all camps."[65] Continuing further into the letter, a striking sign of trouble in the relationship was exposed, "…as for girls I had enough trouble with my penis already and no (sic) enough to lay my hands off besides that they don't bother me in the least because your (sic) the only one I want…"[66]

For the couple, August 15, 1943, was a joyous day because Mr. and Mrs. Smith saw each other for the first time since Mr. Smith left for training. However, the delight was short-lived. One week later, Mr. Smith's letter began, "Well dearest don't get mad…" Apparently, he found a "sore on [his] private" that was diagnosed as Gonorrhea.[67] Over the course of September 1943, Mr. Smith went to the hospital three separate, extended times. He feared a rumor spreading around the camp that in some venereal disease cases, the army would cut the pay of the afflicted soldiers while they were still in the hospital.

Apparently, over the period of their meeting in late August, Mr. Smith infected Mrs. Smith with Gonorrhea and a month later, on September 23, 1943, Mr. Smith sounded apologetic when he wrote, "…you must have gotten it from me that's what I get for doing it with you before the doctor said I should well I know this much when I get over this I'll never cheat on you again… but what makes me feel low is that I infected

[65] "Mr. Smith" does not explain "disease record" further. It is the author's opinion that "Mr. Smith" was referring to venereal diseases because later, when describing the hospital conditions, he referred to the ward of the hospital he resided in as containing many patients afflicted with different venereal diseases.
[66] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," August 1, 1943. 1943, Folder 1. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[67] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," August 22, 1943. 1943, Folder 2. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).

you the one I love the most that shows you are true blue by sticking with after that…"[68] On September 24, 1943, Mr. Smith complained about the army doctors saying, "…they say the best doctors are in the army but I fail to see them because this hospital is full of Clap cases and they can't seem to cure them…" But if the doctors are able to cure him, he said, "…but boy if I am over it I sure won't look at a girl again except my honey…"[69]

Mr. and Mrs. Smith had been married for ten years and the issue of venereal disease had occurred earlier in their relationship. On October 1, 1943, Mr. Smith wrote:

> And honey did you think I gave you something right after we were first married that you say Syphilles (sic) 10 years ago… still I don't know (sic) where that first dose come from remember when you and I did it right after we were first married and you and I went to ------- and he said I had it but you didn't.[70]

At some point between October 10 and October 23, Mr. Smith returned home to Milwaukee before he was reassigned to the East Coast. The next major letter was sent January 10, 1944. At this time, Mr. Smith was stationed for the first time overseas in England. Still, however, the question of fidelity was evident in this first overseas letter, but he wanted to let her know he was thinking of her. He wrote, "Well dear you must be thinking of me pretty hard because now you got me dreaming of you once a week at least and I haven't cheated on you or went out with any girls."[71] On June 5, 1944, Mr. Smith accompanied a Staff Sergeant and his wife and they allowed Mr. Smith to stay the night. He later wrote, "…so you see dear I had a nice time and still didnt (sic) have anything to

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[68] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," September 23, 1943. 1943, Folder 3. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[69] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," September 24, 1943. 1943, Folder 3. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[70] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," October 1, 1943. 1943, Folder 3. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee); name censored from collection.
[71] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," January 10, 1944. 1944, Folder 1. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).

do with girls…"[72] The line which appears the most in Mr. Smith's letters was featured in a May 30, 1944 letter: "For I am holding my promise like I told you I would and I expect the same."[73]

While Mr. Smith had admitted to past infidelity to his wife, he was not afraid to attempt to control the actions and decisions of his wife. Mr. Smith makes many suggestions to his wife, but the "suggestions" are more similar to orders. For instance, Mr. Smith told his wife to stay away from alcohol and soda water while she was being treated for Gonorrhea. Also, Mr. Smith told his wife, "…don't go and overdo it and then get sick…"[74] Mr. Smith, on many occasions, reminded his wife about paying bills and taxes and general money issues for the couple and the effects of rationing. On March 21, 1944, Mr. Smith wrote a questionable, yet cryptic line to his wife, "I dont (sic) think you touched any of the stuff in the desk because its (sic) not in your way…"[75] Despite his past infidelity, Mr. Smith believed his wife should be conscious of her interactions, even with other women, "Honey I wouldnt (sic) be going out to (sic) much with other gals for they are single and might want to go places were (sic) I would not like."[76]

Another theme of the letters is Mr. Smith's jealousy towards the actions of his wife. On September 7, 1943, he was upset that his wife admitted that she had been asked to ride in a car with a man and four other people. On another occasion, he wrote, "I wouldnt (sic) get too friendly with ---------- because he is liable to take you up on it but I

[72] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," June 5, 1944. 1944, Folder 5. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[73] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," May 30, 1944. 1944, Folder 4. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[74] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," February 27, 1944. 1944, Folder 1. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[75] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," March 21, 1944. 1944, Folder 2. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[76] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," May 8, 1944. 1944, Folder 4. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).

know Its all in fun ha ha I am getting more jealous of my dear every day."[77] In one significant letter, Mr. Smith showed some frustration, as well as jealousy. Although his infidelity led to the contraction of Gonorrhea, when his wife admitted in a letter that she kissed another man, Mr. Smith had much to say about the event:

> Regardless what I have done before and how wild I use to get there is one thing I want you to get straight and that is I made a promise to you and it sticks. I am not mad because you kissed that boy but I even havent (sic) done that and dont (sic) think you should either its things like that that start fires that cant (sic) be put out and I am holding my own leaving well enough alone and I mean it. I am saving everything for you and its (sic) eating my heart out being away from you. I havent (sic) been in the service a long time but still long enough to know that soldiers as well as sailors If they can do one thing with a woman they think they can get farther…. Now mind you what I said dear I am not mad but God help me I am holding my promise to you…[78]

Mr. Smith also sends home cards for holidays. Included in the collection are an Easter card and a birthday card for his wife. A very important event in their relationship was their anniversary. In an August 13th letter, Mr. Smith established that their anniversary was August 12. In the letter, Mr. Smith wrote that he cried himself to sleep because he missed his wife so much. In a letter dated June 16, 1944, recognized that the couple had been married in 1934 when he wrote:

> Gee, just think a few more months and it will be 10 yrs. married for us and the way it looks I wont be home to celebrate with you so will (sic) just have to wait untill (sic) I do get there which I hope aint (sic) to (sic) long. I hope my honey dont (sic) tired of waiting for me…[79]

Another interesting series of events which occurred during the course of the letters was Mr. Smith receiving letters from a teenage girl from Watertown. The girl was

[77] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," May 24, 1944. 1944, Folder 4. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[78] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," September 26, 1944. 1944, Folder 8. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[79] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," June 16, 1944. 1944, Folder 5. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).

a high school Junior, whose father worked for Motor Transport (where Mr. Smith worked before the war).[80] She did not know him but wrote to him because she noticed "… in that booklet rolling along that you didn't receive enough mail so I thought I would write."[81] Mr. Smith sent this letter home to his wife, so that she could read it. Later, in a clipping from a Motor Transport newsletter, which explains the status of all it's workers during the war, it read that he was receiving mail from "… a strange girl in Watertown."[82] The girl wrote again on June 21, 1944, and on September 14, 1944, he received another letter from her as well as a picture of her and her brother. The content of the letters does not contain anything scandalous, but still, it seems interesting that her letters were saved.

Mr. Smith's military service ended in as similar fashion as it began, in the hospital. On October 18, 1944, he was admitted to the hospital for what he accounted was his nerves. At the same time, he was being treated to gain weight. At that point, he only weighed 140 pounds.[83] Even during this time, he wrote in a way that seemed to accuse his wife of infidelity. On October 22, 1944, he wrote, "I better not hear any reports when I do get back…" but he recognized that he may spend upwards of two months in the hospital.[84] He apologized for his comments but blamed them on a combination of his nerves and the military in his next letter, saying, "Honey my nerves are shot and maybe I said things I wasnt (sic) suppose to… I hope I am forgiven for I think this army life is

[80] The Motor Transport Company was the trucking subsidiary of The Milwaukee Electric Railway & Light Company. The Milwaukee Electric Railway & Light Company was formed in 1896 to establish electric railways and utilities outside the city of Milwaukee.
[81] Unknown Girl to "Mr. Smith," February 29, 1944. 1944, Folder 1. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[82] Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," Undated. 1944, Folder 4. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[83] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," October 20, 1944. 1944, Folder 9. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[84] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," October 22, 1944. 1944, Folder 8. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).

getting to me."[85] The next event in Mr. Smith's hospital endeavor was being transferred back to the United States, to a hospital in New York on November 28, 1944. From the New York hospital, Mr. Smith was able to call his wife and hear her voice for the first time in nearly a year. The final letter of the collection is written on December 3, 1944, from the Schick General Hospital in Clinton, Iowa.[86] In the letter, Mr. Smith voiced his desire to see his wife. He told her that visiting hours lasted from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm everyday. It is unknown how long Mr. Smith resided at Schick General Hospital for his "nerves" and how the state of the "Smith's" relationship faired after the war.

## The Letters of Clarence Konopacki

"We haven't seen nor heard of each other for 5 years. All this time though there had been a little spark just waiting to blow up into a big flame."[87]

The collection contains transcribed letters from Clarence Konopacki, of Manitowoc, Wisconsin, to Marianne Kruzicki, of Rosholt, Wisconsin. The letters begin on December 29, 1942, while Konopacki was undergoing training at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas and follow his military career through being stationed in Britain and France, and fighting in Germany in Company D of the 377th Infantry Regiment of the 95th Infantry Division. Although the letters are primarily love letters, they do give a broad picture of the life of an Army infantryman, as well as a glimpse of life on the home front. The letters end on December 27, 1944.

The first letter from Marianne to Clarence was a pleasant surprise to Clarence because they had not seen or spoken to each other for nearly half a decade. It seems as if

[85] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," October 25, 1944. 1944, Folder 9. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[86] Although the author was not able to do further research due to the censored nature of the letters, it is safe to assume that the couple faced many challenges in their relationship, especially in dealing with the aftereffects of infidelity and the effects of war. The author does not know the fate of this couple.
[87] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, June 5, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).

Marianne initiated the letter writing because Clarence responded, "It was good to hear from you after so many years."[88] The first letter established that Marianne was working in a war defense plant and Clarence was an acting sergeant, training at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. There was an obvious attraction from the beginning, but it had been so long that Clarence asked for a picture of her. Marianne sent him a valentine less than two months after they started corresponding. Marianne also sent cookies and started dousing her letters in perfume.

Clarence's letters express much loneliness. After returning to Fort Sam Houston after a six day furlough spent at home, Clarence felt a greater connection to his home state and sadly wrote, "I hate to admit it but since I left home I've been so lonesome it seems funny. If only I could enjoy some more company from Wisconsin. The people down south aren't as hospitable as the old saying goes."[89] Even the dating scene was different, "I had a date with a couple of these Southern Belles and I'll tell you they're nothing to brag about. Give me a girl from Wisconsin any day (Milwaukee, Wis)."[90]

Clarence was quite smitten with Marianne. Her letters were important to him and he had no qualms about telling her about it, "Now I will place your letter on my pillow and let that beautiful perfume carry me off to dreamland where I can be with a certain someone who has me doing handsprings."[91] Similarly, when Marianne sent Clarence a picture of her, his response was similar to a love-struck teenager, "Oh! Marion (sic) you're beautiful! … I thought maybe some movie star made a mistake or something and

[88] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, December 29, 1942. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[89] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, April 4, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[90] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, April 28, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[91] Ibid.

sent me her pictures." He continued, hopefully, "You are the sweetheart of Company D. I only wish you were the Sweetheart of one certain Sgt. of that Company. Is there a chance for him? or is there a one and only?"[92]

Although there was a chance, both Marianne and Clarence had their admirers. On May 29, 1943, Clarence wrote, "Hey Sweets, what do you mean you think of me whenever somebody kisses you…. Save some of those kisses for me will you huh?"[93] In the same letter, Clarence described a situation that he had. He was at a bar and a private in his Company handed him a note from a girl that read, "Sgt. I believe you are just my type." The situations were joked about later, and it seemed that neither Clarence nor Marianne was too upset by the actions of the other.

The relationship grew but it left Clarence a bit distraught:

> It seems funny but everything good happens to me at the wrong time. Take you and me now. We haven't seen nor heard of each other for 5 years. All this time though there had been a little spark just waiting to blow up into a big flame. Well, by me it did and now I'm too far away for it to do any good.[94]

However, it really was the right time for Clarence and Marianne. Clarence was moved to Shreveport, Louisiana, but that was not the only major change in their relationship. A small, but significant sentence appears in a letter from June 20, 1943, "Our engagement will be the best news they've [his parents] received in months."[95] Nearly a month later, on July 23, 1943, their engagement was featured in the Manitowoc newspaper.

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[92] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, May 2, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[93] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, May 29, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[94] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, June 5, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[95] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, June 20, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).

Although the couple was engaged, Clarence was adamant that Marianne continue to live her life. On August 6, 1943, he wrote:

> Darling I don't see any reason why you shouldn't go to dances and other places. I know if I was in your place I wouldn't want to stay at home all the time either. I know you like to go out and dance and stuff so go ahead and enjoy yourself. I want you to (sic) but save the kisses for me will you?[96]

Clarence seemed to place his full trust in Marianne and he hoped she would do the same:

> Darling, you don't have to worry about my old flames. You are the only one for me now and there will never be another that could take your place…. You are everything I ever wanted in a girl and there isn't another on earth that could compare…. Darling, I won't worry about your old flame [be]cause I know you can handle such people. I can and will trust you always.[97]

In late August, Clarence had an interesting situation with an ex-girlfriend. They liked each other quite a bit, but Clarence maintained that he never loved her. They had grown apart, but she wrote to him to let him know that she was marrying a sailor.

Clarence and Marianne trusted one another, but Clarence had some hesitations. He did not want to hurt Marianne. His parents had already given her his class ring, in case something was to happen to him. He was conflicted when he wrote:

> It will be best to wait until this thing is over with. That way we'll be able to get a lot of things that we'll need in the future. Anyway, I hate to think of you being a bride for a week and then being away from me for Lord knows how long. I know I can't spend all my army life training and there will come a day when we'll be going across. No one knows what will happen there and I'd feel happier to know that I haven't tied you down completely.[98]

Despite Clarence's noble letter, other letters showcased some jealousy. After Marianne wrote about an encounter with a man, he wrote, "…just tell him to keep his

[96] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, August 6, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[97] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, August 11, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[98] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, August 18, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).

nose in his own business and on the other side of the fence or I'll knock him so low he'll have to unlace his shoes to blow it!!!"[99] In his November 4th letter, Clarence was quite harsh with Marianne. It seemed that Clarence was ashamed of what he wrote, because he apologized on November 7th, November 13th, and December 2nd.

Clarence's war experience was different from other soldiers. After mid-October 1943, he was re-stationed near Los Angeles. He was able to visit Hollywood on October 26th. On November 12th, he wrote that he was going to be in a war department film that would be released by the first of the year. On November 19th, he wrote that he was taking lessons in Ju-Jitsu, a form of martial arts. On December 11th, Clarence was able to play tennis; hardly the activity that many soldiers in the United States army had the opportunity to participate in. Clarence talked about his luck compared to some of the soldiers already fighting overseas, "Gosh, I feel kinda lucky, in a way, being here on the desert out there someplace the boys are dodging bullets and praying they won't stop any."[100] Over the next week, Clarence was hurt and spent sixteen days in the hospital. The incident did not involve a training exercise, but a pick-up football game.

After he was released from the hospital, Clarence and his unit were transferred to Indiantown Gap Military Residence in Pennsylvania. At the site, he was able to call home to talk with his parents. He attempted to call Marianne, but she must have been busy because he said he was unsuccessful in talking to her. A few weeks later, however, he was able to hear her voice and he wrote about the experience like he was an enamored

[99] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, October 30, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[100] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, December 29, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).

teenager. He reiterated a point that he made on the phone in a March 27th letter, "Friends are good to have but I want you to be more than my friend."[101]

Clarence and Marianne must have agreed that they wanted to be more than friends. The letters paused for a little over a month, from April 12 to June 14. In that time, the couple was married on April 29, 1944.[102]

Clarence mentioned in an earlier letter that he knew that he could not train forever. On August 18, 1944, he acknowledged that he had landed overseas and was stationed in Britain. Still, Clarence attempted to stay close to Marianne and to find ways to keep her always on his mind. On August 24th, he received a picture of her for his wallet, so that she could always be close to him. Also, he named a jeep in his squad after her.

When Clarence was re-stationed to somewhere in France, his letters became much deeper and pensive. On October 26, 1944, he wrote:

> Our generation happened to be unfortunate to suffer a war, the most horrible means by which to separate any two people. Being together we can have our cake and eat it but separated, the piece is too big for one to handle.[103]

Despite the heartache which is brought about by being separated, Clarence still trusted Marianne and wrote in the same letter, "Go ahead Darling, the light is green, I know I can depend on you."[104]

Despite the fear of the unknown, Clarence still remained optimistic, "The harder we hit, the more we endure, the sooner we'll be able to be with our loved ones."[105] As

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[101] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, March 27, 1944. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[102] Obitz.us, "Clarence A Konopacki," http://obitz.us/bp/WI-i.htm (accessed 11/7/09).
[103] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, October 26, 1944. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[104] Ibid.

Clarence continued through France, his Company assisted in liberating the Nazi Concentration Camp at Metz on November 28, 1944.[106]

The letters end with Clarence still stationed abroad. The letters do not highlight the end of the war for Clarence and Marianne. However another source credited Clarence with significant acts of bravery. During the battle to liberate Metz, and under a barrage of enemy fire, Clarence ferried injured soldiers to safety across the Moselle River. For his heroism, he was awarded the Bronze Star. [107] Also, Clarence's letters were interspersed with terrific drawings, primarily of what appears to be him and Marianne. After a stint in the Korean War, Clarence was able to put his artistic talents to use as a career. Clarence Konopacki died September 9, 2009, at the age of 87, after a courageous battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Marianne, and two sisters, one brother, two daughters and two sons, and ten grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.[108]

## Synopsis

The three collections of letters are striking examples of real relationships during World War II. Each journey was marked by some significant differences. "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" had been married for seven years before the war officially began. Joseph Myrechuck and Loretta Pitsch did not know each other before the war and only met each other through the suggestion of a mutual friend and their subsequent letters. The couple married in February of 1946, only five months after Joseph was discharged from the military. Clarence Konopacki and Marianne Kruzicki met five years before the war and

[105] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, November 5, 1944. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[106] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, November 28, 1944. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[107] Obitz.us, "Clarence A Konopacki," http://obitz.us/bp/WI-i.htm (accessed 11/7/09).
[108] Ibid.

reunited through letter writing and were married in April of 1944, before Clarence was deployed overseas.

In addition to differences in the timelines of each relationship, the content of the letters highlight a desire to maintain a connection with home. None of the three men write about explicit military actions, although such content would most likely be censored, and it is unknown if any of the three saw combat on the front lines. Each man was deployed in the European Theatre but trained in different areas of the United States and subsequently moved differently once overseas. "Mr. Smith" began at Camp Sibert in Alabama and moved Camp Reynolds in Pennsylvania before being shipped to an army base near London where he was eventually promoted to Corporal. Joseph Myrechuck was drafted and initially promoted to Private First Class while training in San Francisco. He was promoted to Technician 5$^{th}$ Grade, or Corporal, before traveling cross-country and being deployed to North Africa. Myrechuck then moved to Italy and landed in Southern France on D plus 1 (June 7, 1944). Before returning home, Myrechuck moved to Germany. Clarence Konopacki trained at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio where he was an acting Sergeant. He moved to Camp Polk in Louisiana where he was promoted to Staff Sergeant. Later he moved to and was married at Indiantown Gap Military Residence in Pennsylvania. From there he was deployed, first to Britain, then France, and to Germany, where he assisted in liberating a Nazi concentration camp.

There were some similarities in the letters as well. All of the soldiers were from Wisconsin; "Mr. Smith" and Joseph Myrechuck were originally from Milwaukee, and Clarence Konopacki was from Manitowoc. Each man openly asked for pictures of their loved ones in order to have a memento small enough to carry with them; many letters

sent to the soldiers were not able to be saved due to lack of storage space for soldiers. Pictures were met with excitement on different levels. Clarence Konopacki exemplified a feeling of excitement when he exclaimed, "Oh! Marion you're beautiful!" and continued. "I thought maybe some movie star made a mistake or something and sent me her pictures."[109] Joseph Myrechuck had a different take; his humor continued to shine through when Loretta Pitsch sent him a winter themed picture, he jokingly responded, "… thanks for the picture of the snow."[110]

Each of the soldiers makes references to popular culture and news of the day. "Mr. Smith" talks about rationing and its effects on the army, especially cigarettes, chocolate bars, and razor blades. He also discussed his many visits with a British family, where he would stay overnight, which made him admit he was homesick. He also sent along a newspaper clipping about a dog that saved his master, a soldier, from an explosion. Joseph Myrechuck was an avid traveler who documented his tour of duty through photographs and discussed the romantic trysts of his younger brother and his many girlfriends. Clarence Konopacki talked of playing sports (and getting hurt) at his training facility and getting the opportunity to be in a war department movie.

Similarly, an element of all three correspondences is unexpected when considering scholarship arguing the integrity, morality, and duty-driven "Greatest Generation"—jealousy and the fear or presence of infidelity. In the letters of "Mr. Smith," the concept of infidelity is a central theme. The couple was married before the war, and while "Mrs. Smith" was vacationing in California, "Mr. Smith" cheated on his

[109] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, May 2, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[110] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, March 19, 1943, Box 1, Folder 2. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).

wife as mentioned by his August 23, 1943 letter, the first mentioning of the event in his letters. The infidelity resulted in "Mr. Smith's" contraction of gonorrhea and the infecting of his wife. The infidelity decreased the quality of life for both "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" because of the frequency attended and duration spent in the hospital. Despite "Mr. Smith" committing the act, "Mrs. Smith" was willing, although not formally expressed in a letter, to stay in the relationship. Even though he cheated, "Mr. Smith" acted in a very controlling manner towards his wife. It seemed as if "Mr. Smith" desired that his wife not continue to live her life outside of their home. When his wife admitted on different occasions that she went to events or socialized with men, "Mr. Smith" became extremely jealous. On one occurrence, "Mr. Smith" responded, "… you would have some guy on your neck."[111] He felt the need to constantly remind his wife that he was not fraternizing with women. He wrote, "… so you see dear I had a nice time and still didnt (sic) have anything to do with girls…"[112]

The letters of Joseph Myrechuck contained significantly fewer aspects of jealousy and infidelity because the couple had never met in real life. Although the relationship flourished quickly following the start of the letters and there was an emotional investment, since the couple had not met face to face, the expectation of complete devotion seemed to be not as strong as a married couple, like the "Smith's." However, there are aspects of jealousy that come across in some of Joseph's letters. On one occasion, Joseph wrote, not in anger but in fear of losing Loretta, "For awhile there my heart almost fell to my shoes when I read that you had a proposal, but when it was

[111] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," September 7, 1943. 1943, Folder 2. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[112] "Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," June 5, 1944. 1944, Folder 5. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).

explained and I feel much better."[113] When Loretta moved to Milwaukee to work, Joseph acted jealous that she would be in a large city with more men around that he would potentially need to compete with for her love. Unlike "Mr. Smith," Joseph does not seem to act in the same controlling manner; although he reminds Loretta frequently how much he loved her, he does not attempt to control her actions and who she interacted with.

Early in the letters of Clarence Konopacki, the text contained a significant amount of honesty. Clarence admitted to Marianne that he had dated a few "Southern Belles" while stationed in San Antonio, but said that they did not compare to any women from Wisconsin. In a letter, Clarence wrote two interesting passages, the first recognizing Marianne's actions, "Hey, Sweets, what do you mean you think of me when someone kisses you…. Save some of those kisses for me will you huh?" and an experience he had, when he was at a bar and was given a note from a woman that read, "Sgt. I believe you are just my type."[114] Once the couple was engaged, the subject of past relationships came up. To this, Clarence wrote, "I can and will trust you always."[115] Trust highlights the rest of the letters, except for one instance when Clarence delivered almost a comical threat, "… just tell him to keep his nose in his own business and on the other side of the fence or I'll knock him so low he'll have to unlace his shoes to blow it!!!"[116]

[113] Joseph Charles Myrechuck to Loretta Marie Pitsch, March 31, 1944, Box 1, Folder 3. Joseph Charles Myrechuck Collection, 1942-1945, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin).
[114] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, May 29, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[115] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, August 11, 1943. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).
[116] Clarence Konopacki to Marianne Kruzicki, November 5, 1944. Clarence Konopacki Letters, 1943-1944, M94-320 (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society).

There is very little statistical information concerning infidelity in the pre-Kinsey era.[117] [118] However, there is potential to witness the fear of infidelity during the war in different ways. One way was through polls. Author Ronald Bailey explained a poll taken in 1943 found that nearly half of the female respondents believed that their husbands were being untrue. Another, administered by Gallup Poll, interviewed men and women from July 14 to 16, 1945 and published the results of August 4, 1945, as "Wartime Dating," survey #351-K, Question #3, asked, "Do you think a woman whose husband is overseas should accept dates with other men?" The overwhelming majority of men and women disagreed with 83% and 87%, respectively. However, a small percentage agreed with the statement by qualified the response with such answers as: "If the dates are in groups", "if the husband approves", and "if the man is a personal friend of the husband or a relative."[119]

Another way, although not entirely accurate for solely a study of infidelity, to study the effects of crises in relationships is to study the divorce rate. According to Table 1 on page 9, from the beginning of World War II in 1941 to the end of the war in 1945, the divorce rate grew from 2.2 events per 1,000 population to 3.5 events per 1,000 population, a growth of nearly 60 percent. In the two following years, 1946 and 1947, the divorce rate grew to 4.3 and 3.4, respectively. In comparison, from 1920 to 1940, the divorce rate averaged 1.63 events per 1,000 population and from 1948 to 1960, the divorce rate averaged 2.41 events per 1,000 population. The World War II years averaged

[117] Alfred Kinsey was an American biologist and professor of zoology and entomology, the scientific study of insects. In 1947 founded the Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and Reproduction at Indiana University. Kinsey's study of human sexuality influenced social and cultural values in the United States and many other countries.
[118] For an early 1950s interpretation of infidelity in relationships, please see: Frank S. Caprio, M.D., Marital Infidelity (New York: The Citadel Press, 1953).
[119] George Horace Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971* (New York: Random House, 1972), 518.

3.04 events per 1,000 population. A question asked may be: Why was the divorce rate so much higher during World War II, specifically the final years?

Perhaps one reason could be attributed to the beginning of the relationships. In many cases, once the threat of war became eminent many couples decided to marry and start families in order to be deferred by the draft board, as mentioned earlier. As shown by Figure 2 on page 21, there are drastic spikes in marriage rates when the Selective Service Act was passed and over a year later, following the Pearl Harbor attacks. A real fear swept through American society at the thought of facing the unknown future alone. The fear of a sudden, drastic demographic shift, highlighted by an untold number of men removed from the potential marriage and dating pool may have assisted in changing some of the long held ideals and traditions of marriage and relationships, like extended courtships, marrying someone of a similar class, and seeking the approval from parents.

This change was highlighted in the work of Arnold Philip Sundal. Specific to Madison, Wisconsin, he argued that the influx of men stationed in military establishments in the area provided additional opportunities for marriage. In primarily a sociological and statistical approach, Sundal argues that in 1943, nearly 350 women from the Madison area were married. Sundal explains that some women might not otherwise have been able to marry due to their age when he wrote, "About 50 [of the 350] were women in their thirties or forties, mostly single."[120] Overall, Sundal finds some potential characteristics of women who married military personnel. One such characteristic was women without parents in the area were more likely to marry a man in the military. Although the trend was not striking, the author discovered that nearly 42.4 percent of women who married

[120] Arnold Philip Sundal, "Marriage and Mate Selection with Special Reference to Marriages in the Madison Community in Peacetime and Wartime" (PhD. Diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison. 1948), 54.

men in the military had parents in the Madison area. Another characteristic was the age of the women marrying. Compared to all Madison brides in 1943, the brides of military trainees comprised a greater percentage then their counterparts not marrying men in the military of the under twenty years of age demographic (17.8% to 21.6%, respectively), 25 to 29 years of age (18.6% to 19.0%, respectively), and 30 to 34 years of age (7.2% to 8.2%, respectively).[121] The largest proportional spread encompassed the under 20 years of age demographic. A valid conclusion for the significant difference is that the ages of the men stationed in the area were younger than the general Madison population; therefore, it seems logical to think that younger men would marry young women. Although Sundal noted that the under 20 group was over represented in the study, he also clarified, "The idea should not be conveyed that the "bobby-soxer"–soldier combination was a strikingly prevalent one—of the 353 women, one bride was 15, five brides 16, and ten brides 17 years of age."[122]

The other possible solution encompassed what occurred at the end of the war. According to author John W. Jeffries, some married couples grew apart because of many factors; for some the long distance relationship was not healthy, the couples married quickly and had little in common, others experienced some sort of infidelity, and still others had the unfortunate event of receiving a telegram from the government telling that a husband or boyfriend was killed, a prisoner of war, or missing in action and moved on.[123] Author Edward W. Wood, Jr. served during World War II and discussed that many men, including Wood himself, returned home affected by what they had seen, done, or

[121] Ibid., 57, 59.
[122] Ibid., 60.
[123] John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front*, American Ways Series (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1996), 89.

heard. While the symptoms may have been disregarded as merely "exhaustion," in today's society the condition is referred to as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Although the incident that caused "Mr. Smith" to return to the hospital for the last two months he was in the service and eventually be shipped home is unknown, "Mr. Smith" attributed his need for hospitalization to his "nerves."[124] Some couples grew apart due to one of the most studied aspects of World War II—women, including wives and girlfriends, moving into the workplace. As men went off to war, many openings became available in factory and war industry jobs. Women answered the call and challenged many of the stereotypes that had reentered American society, as showcased by the advice literature presented earlier, after the economic resurgence in 1935.[125] Upon return of husbands or boyfriends, in some cases marriages became troubled as women sought to continue their newly gained roles and responsibilities outside of the home instead of returning to the role of wife and homemaker, while some returning husbands preferred to return to pre-World War II beliefs of society.

## Conclusion

Relationships can be very difficult to maintain during the best of times. Taking this into consideration, relationships during wars or economic hardships face an even greater challenge—succeeding with uncontrollable variables creating a bleak potential future. World War II and the Great Depression were certainly challenging times and ruined the mold of an ideal relationship. Although not all couples suffered during the

[124] Mr. Smith" to "Mrs. Smith," October 18, 1944. 1944, Folder 9. World War II Letters, 1943-1944, UWM Manuscript Collection 140 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).
[125] For more on the contributions of women during World War II, please see: Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II*, Contributions in Women's Studies, Number 20 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981); John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front*, American Ways Series (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1996); Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

1930s and 1940s, many relationships were severely tested, both mentally and emotionally. The compounding of stress is most visible in the institutions of marriage, courtship, and dating.

In the span of a decade, the institutions of marriage, courtship, and dating witnessed three different, and equally significant, changes. First, the onset of the Great Depression shifted attention away from sexual and social issues that thrived during the Post-World War I period and replaced marital issues with issues of mere survival. A resurgence of conservative ideals and morals, combined with a very limited fiscal forecast, sharply decreased the marriage rate nationally. While the marriage rate fell, the divorce rate remained somewhat constant, but separations increased, due to the high cost of a divorce. Second, following signs of an economic recovery in 1935, the marriage rate began to recover. The economic stimulation created a motivated desire to appear attractive to the opposite sex in order to find happiness in marriage. With this new development, a newly formed trend in the dating scene became "Rating and Dating," a scheme that allowed for eligible daters to portray themselves and the opposite sex as desired commodities, including a grading rubric for various attributes. The third change occurred as the discussion of the Selective Service Act began and subsequent beginning to World War II was eminent. Marriage rates skyrocketed early in the war in the belief that married men and fathers would be deferred by the draft board. Uncertain times called for drastic measures; traditional values of seeking parental approval, marrying inside one's own class, and long courtships were set aside to assuage fears of the unknown and potential loneliness. As the war dragged on, even the best relationships were strained. Some couples married without knowing each other well enough, others grew apart due to

the long distances and time spent apart, while others experienced infidelity, or even more prevalent, the assumption of an affair that created jealousy.

Scholarship during the time, in the form of advice literature, reflected the changing mentalities. The early 1930s saw books with the titles, *Into Their Company: A Book for a Modern Girl on Love and Marriage* and *Sex and Marriage,* which upheld morality and Catholic ideology to create a traditional marriage. Post-1935 books were more "how to" guides to getting a desired mate and titled, *How to Win and Hold a Husband,* and *How to Get Your Man and Hold Him.* Advice literature during World War II describe how to write letters to servicemen, *How to Write Interesting Letters To Your Men in the Service: A Practical Handbook for Every Man and Woman* and *How to Write Love Letters,* as well as relationship advice, in *How to Meet Men and Marry, How to Get Along with Boys* and *The Army Wife.*

Through the correspondences of Wisconsin soldiers and their loved ones, a reader can visibly see the importance of the relationship to the soldier writing the letters. Although there are many differences between the correspondences of "Mr. and Mrs. Smith," Joseph Myrechuck and Loretta Pitsch, and Clarence Konopacki and Marianne Kruzicki, there are many similarities as well. Aspects such as a desire to remain connected to the life they left and the home front and the thought of someone outside of battlefield wishing, praying, and even begging, for their wellbeing in the dangerous arena of war. Unfortunately, each of the three collections contains, to varying degrees, another similarity as well—the fear of infidelity and the emotion of jealousy toward their own wives.

Recently written sources about World War II, such as Edward W. Wood, Jr.'s *Worshipping the Myths of World War II: Reflections on America's Dedication to War* (2006), Michael C.C. Adams' *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (1994), Kenneth D. Rose's *Myth and the Greatest Generation: A Social History of Americans in World War II* (2008), and Jane Mersky Leder's *Thanks for the Memories: Love Sex, and World War II* (2006), do not attempt to blot the memory of a generation who so much was asked of by their country and government and experienced many hardships in the process. The sources do not forsake the sacrifices the generation made—economically, physically, mentally, and spiritually—but rather, the sources celebrate the generation for its complexities, not its homogeneity – its reality, not its mythology. While the memories of the generation and the acknowledgement of all of the accomplishments that are still felt today should be celebrated and honored, it is important that, we, as a society, realized that we did not have superheroes; we had people called upon to do extraordinary things. People who laughed and cried, loved and fought, and lived and died. Tom Brokaw's creation of the moniker, "The Greatest Generation," described as a collective who were willing to sacrifice all for the sake of the outcome of the war, may not be the most entirely accurate representation of such a complex and truly remarkable generation, with the scholarship of the past fifteen years and this study, the argument becomes redirected, from a generation historians wanted them to be, to a generation who actually existed and were human, flaws and all, but strove to live and love to the best of their ability, despite enormous odds.

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