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H01-1410. Cunningham, Earl (1895-1936).
Papers, 1910-2013. 0.50 linear ft.

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H01-1410. Cunningham, Earl (1895-1936).
Papers, 1910-2013. 0.50 linear ft.

Abstract

Earl Cunningham was born on December 16, 1895, in Kinde, Huron County, Michigan. He spent his childhood on the family farm in Afton, Michigan. In 1918, Cunningham enlisted in the Army's American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) and saw action in Europe during WWI. Back out of the service in 1919, he worked at the Campbell Stone Company and soon married. Cunningham and his wife, Helen Teatro Cunningham, were to have three sons (1925, 1929, 1930). Cunningham joined the Coast Guard in 1928 and worked on Lake Huron. In 1935, Cunningham was sent to work on Lake Michigan at Charlevoix, Michigan. In 1936, an ice-fishing accident claimed the lives of Cunningham and Claude Beardsley, and affected countless more. Cunningham was honored as a hero for giving his life to save others, like Clayton Brown, and was awarded the Gold Life Saving Medal. This collection consists of clippings from Governor's Island, New York, where an apartment building dedicated to Cunningham once resided and was demolished in 2013, photographs, movie footage of the recovery of his body (DVD), slides, legal papers, and remembrances of Earl Cunningham and his fateful day on Lake Michigan. Includes information on his home in Afton, Michigan, his career in the Coast Guard, and a paper written about him entitled "Ordeal on the Ice," by Geoffrey Reynolds in 2002.

Accession No: H01-1410
Provenance: Penny Cunningham Helmer
Donor: Penny Cunningham Helmer
Photographs: 165 images
Processed by: Michael Douma, January 2003

Biography

Earl Cunningham was born on December 16, 1895, in Kinde, Huron County, Michigan. He spent his childhood on the family farm in Afton, Michigan. In 1918, Cunningham enlisted in the Army's American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) and saw action in Europe during WWI. Back out of the service in 1919, he worked at the Campbell Stone Company and soon married. Cunningham and his wife, Helen Teatro Cunningham, were to have three sons (1925, 1929, 1930). Cunningham joined the Coast Guard in 1928 and worked on Lake Huron. In 1935, Cunningham was sent to work on Lake Michigan at Charlevoix, Michigan. In 1936, an ice-fishing accident claimed the lives of Cunningham and Claude Beardsley, and affected countless more. Cunningham was honored as a hero for giving his life to save others, like Clayton Brown, and was awarded the Gold Life Saving Medal.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of photographs, slides, legal papers, and remembrances of Earl Cunningham and his fateful day on Lake Michigan. Includes information on his home in Afton, Michigan, his career in the Coast Guard, and a paper written about him entitled "Ordeal on the Ice," by Geoffrey Reynolds in 2002.

Container List

Afton, Michigan, Home, 1934-1936
Clippings from Governor's Island, New York, 2013
Coast Guard Career, 1928-1936
Correspondence, 2001 (1 image)
Death and Aftermath, 1936-1940
Legal Documents
 1921-1968
 Herbert, Richard, 1940, 1944
Movie Footage of Bodies Being Recovered, 1936 (DVD)
Paper, "Ordeal on the Ice," Geoffrey Reynolds, 2002 (bio info)
Photographs, 1910-1936 (includes 2 on a CD of John Lesinski Jr. and Sr.) (85 images)
Scrapbook, ca. 1898-ca. 1960 (images are in the Photographs folder)
Slides, n.d. (8 images)
Slideshow, n.d. (73 images)
Research Folder, 2001-2002