

C Mixer Family, Papers, 1935-1959  
3989 .2 linear feet, oversize

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## INTRODUCTION

The Mixer family papers consist of correspondence, photographs, pamphlets, certificates, and military insignias relating to Tech. Sgt. John J. Mixer's military service in World War II, his death in Germany and burial in the Netherlands in 1945, and the subsequent adoption of his grave by a Dutch family.

## DONOR INFORMATION

The Mixer family papers were donated to the University of Missouri on 9 December 2002 by Patricia A. Hoehle (Accession no. 5961). The papers were discovered in the attic of a home purchased by the donor's family.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John J. Mixer was born on 12 September 1919 in Kansas. His parents were Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Mixer and he had one brother, Thomas Jr. (Bud), and a sister, Margaret. In 1937, he graduated from Turner High School in Kansas, where he had played on the basketball team.

In 1941, Mixer was a private in the Army, in Troop C, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry, Camp Funston, Kansas, but by 1944 Sgt. John Mixer was training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, in the 271<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 69<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. In late 1944, the "Fighting 69<sup>th</sup>" shipped overseas to England and in January of 1945, began their advance through France into Germany. Although there were skirmishes and battles along the way, the worst of the fighting for the 271<sup>st</sup> took place in mid-April 1945. Mixer was one of the many casualties of that offensive that helped end the war in Europe. He died on April 16, 1945.

Along with many other American soldiers who died in Europe during the war, Mixer's body was interred in the American military cemetery in Margraten, in the southern section of the Netherlands. Mixer was married at the time of his death, but his wife, Mary, remarried a short time later. She transferred her "next of kin" rights to her ex-father-in-law, Thomas E. Mixer. Thus, it was with Sgt. Mixer's parents that the U.S. Government corresponded about the possibility of either disinterring John's body and returning it to the United States, or leaving it in Margraten. The Mixers decided not to move their son.

After World War II, the Dutch were so grateful to their American liberators that many decided to "adopt" the grave of a U.S. soldier. They visited the grave, brought flowers, and many tried to contact the next of kin. The Dutch citizen who adopted Mixer's grave was Jan Vos, a young man who lived in Kerkrade, a town that was only one-half mile from the German border that had been occupied by the Nazis throughout most of the war. He wrote to Mary Mixer, who put him in touch with John's parents in 1946. Thus began a correspondence of many years, during which the families developed a special relationship, learning about each other's families and cultures and sending gifts and mementos back and forth across the ocean along with their letters.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers consist of correspondence, photographs, pamphlets, certificates, and insignias relating to Tech. Sgt. John J. Mixer's military service in World War II, his death in Germany and burial in the Netherlands in 1945, and the subsequent adoption of his grave by a Dutch family. The collection does not give a full picture of the life of John Mixer or his family, but it does provide some insight into what was involved in making arrangements for the remembrance of U.S. soldiers who were killed overseas in World War II and the feelings of indebtedness by the strangers for whom they died.

The first two folders, arranged chronologically from 1944 to 1959, consist primarily of letters from military authorities to Mixer's wife and parents about his death and burial, but also include a pre-printed note from John to his mother when he was stationed at Camp Shelby, Mississippi in 1944; a returned letter written by Mrs. Mixer to her son on May 1, 1945, before she was notified of his death; and a couple of notes from John's wife, Mary, to her in-laws.

The third folder consists of letters written by Jan Vos of Kerkrade, Holland (Netherlands) to Sgt. Mixer's parents. These letters, averaging two or three a year from 1946 to 1954, are the strength of this collection. In them, Vos provides insight into his life in post-war Europe, some Dutch holiday customs, the gratitude of his family to the American soldiers who liberated them from German occupation, and detailed descriptions of the ceremonies at the military cemetery in Margraten, where John Mixer is buried. Allusions in the letters to gifts being exchanged and inquiries about other family members make it obvious that both families gained comfort from the correspondence.

Folder four contains several photographs of John Mixer and one of a young woman—probably his wife Mary. There is a photograph of the 1935 Turner (Kansas) High School basketball team; two formal portraits of John as an adult; a large photo of the members of Troop C, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry, Camp Funston, Kansas, 1941; and several snapshots of Mixer and his buddies with various military vehicles at a military camp—probably Camp Shelby, Mississippi, in 1944.

The final folder consists of Mixer's 1937 diploma from Turner High School, his Purple Heart commendation, a memorial certificate of honor from President Harry Truman, and four military insignia patches that presumably belonged to John Mixer.

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