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Fleenor, Kenneth Raymond, 1929-2010 (MSS 444)

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Descriptive Inventory

MSS 444 FLEENOR, Kenneth Raymond, 1929-2010

2 boxes. 23 folders. 394 items. 1947-2010. Originals, photocopies, photographs, videocassette tapes, and digital video discs.

SC2012.116.1

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Kenneth Raymond Fleenor was born on 2 October 1929 to Nelson Beverly Fleenor (1895-1977) and Alberta Catherine (Burch) Fleenor (1890-1962) in Bowling Green, Kentucky. He attended St. Joseph Catholic School from first through ninth grades and then matriculated at College High School at WKU. He graduated from Western Kentucky University with a bachelor's degree in biology and agriculture in January 1952 and was immediately commissioned in the United States Air Force as a Second Lieutenant. He received his wings in May 1953. During his nearly twenty-nine years in the military he served in supervisory positions of Flight Commander, Squadron Commander, Director of Flight Operations, Base Commander Wing Commander, and Director of all Flight Operations for the U.S. Air Force Training Command. He retired from the Air Force in August 1980 with the rank of Brigadier General.

While flying on his 108th combat mission on 17 December 1967 in Vietnam, Fleenor's fighter plane was shot down and he was captured near Hanoi. He was transported to the "Hanoi Hilton" where he was repeatedly tortured. He eventually was moved to another POW compound referred to as the "Zoo" and suffered another round of severe beatings after an escape attempt failed. During his over five years of imprisonment, Fleenor suffered many physical, emotional and mental torments. He was released in March 1973. He returned to the United States a hero and several re-unions and commemorative celebrations were held to honor him including a "Ken Fleenor Day" at Western Kentucky University on 15 April 1973.

Before retiring in 1980, Fleenor logged more than 6,000 flying hours in jet fighters and trainers, including 184 combat hours. He was a highly decorated flier. His decorations included the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star, Legion of Merit with one oak leaf cluster, Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak leaf cluster and V devise, Air Medal with seven oak leaf clusters, Air Force Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster, Purple Heart with one oak leaf cluster and Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with V devise and five oak leaf clusters.

After his retirement from the military, Fleenor served as General Manager of the Stock Show and Rodeo at the Joe and Harry Freeman Coliseum in San Antonio, where he oversaw the reconstruction of the concessions area and made wise investments that put the facility on a strong financial basis. He then went into the home-building business in 1982 and later opened

Duke's Party Barn in association with his son-in-law in 1985. Fleenor served on a number of civic boards, including a three-year term on the Selma, Texas City Council and a seven-year period as mayor of Selma.

Fleenor, a Catholic, married Anne Elizabeth Read of Scottsville in June 1951; they had five children: Katherine, John, Patricia, Kerry, and Kay. Fleenor died on 10 December 2010 and was interred at Holy Cross Cemetery (16075 North Evans Road) in San Antonio. Anne died on 19 February 2012.

COLLECTION NOTE

This collection contains information related to the military career of Kenneth Raymond Fleenor and particularly the time he spent as a prisoner of war (POW) in Vietnam, 1969-1973. The highlight of the collection is Fleenor's POW correspondence found in Folder 3. These letters do not detail his imprisonment; instead they are short, reassuring and hopeful letters written to his family. Folder 4 contains information about the torture Fleenor suffered as a POW. Folder 5 includes letters written to Anne Fleenor from military officials regarding Fleenor's POW experience. Folder 6 contains Fleenor's post-POW correspondence. Folders 7 & 8 contains news clippings about Fleenor's POW experience, his military career, and his subsequent work and civic engagement. Folder 9 contains invitations, place cards, and a video from a POW dinner held at the White House on 24 May 1973. Folder 10 contains miscellaneous correspondence, chiefly military related. Folder 11 contains photographs documenting Fleenor's return to the United States and subsequent celebrations. Folder 12 contains Fleenor's obituaries, memorials, funeral program, as well as two DVDs: one containing photographs shown at Fleenor's funeral service and one done of the memorial service held at the Aviation Heritage Park in Bowling Green on 14 December 2010. Folder 13 contains the Summer 1973 (vol. 42, no. 5) issue of *Western Alumnus* which contained information about Ken Fleenor Day at WKU, 15 April 1973. Folder 14 contains pamphlets, government reports and documents about the Vietnam POW experience, two photos of a POW jail cell in Hanoi, Vietnam, a sheet of uncut POW/MIA postage six cents stamps, and a partial POW/MIA bumper sticker. Folder 15 contains commemorative programs in which Fleenor participated, included Ken Fleenor Day at WKU. Folder 16 contains a short biography of Fleenor compiled by this daughter Kathy (Fleenor) Thomas in 2009 titled *The Long Wait: A Vietnam POW's Experience in Captivity*. Folders 17-19 are videocassettes and/or DVDs of "POW and MIA: The Fullest Possible Accounting" in videocassette tape and DVD; "Vietnam Revisited: Colonel (Retired) Ben Purcell, USA and Joy Purcell" in videocassette tape only; and a videocassette tape and DVD of the film used when Fleenor was inducted into WKU's Hall of Distinguished Alumni on 31 October 1997.

Box 2 contains a scrapbook titled "Ken Fleenor Day, April 15, 1973" which documents a special welcome home ceremony held at Western Kentucky University. The scrapbook was compiled by Irene Love and contains the signatures of the committee members; it consists chiefly of news clippings and photos. Folder 2 contains a series of x-rays of Fleenor's bones done as part of a routine check up for prisoners of war; this set was done in 2006. Folder 3 contains a presentation or exhibit placard providing brief biographical information about Fleenor as well as a sketch of him done in 1979. Folder 4 includes certificates of honor given to Fleenor by various locales when he visited as a POW, and his commission as a lieutenant in 1956. Folder 5 houses a VHS video titled: "Tomorrow's Air Force: Reshaping the Future."

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	Kenneth Raymond Fleenor	1947-2010	356 items
Folder 1	Inventory and biographical information		4 items
Folder 2	Pre-POW items	1947-1967	4 items
Folder 3	Correspondence while a prisoner of war in North Vietnam	1969-1973	69 items
Folder 4	Documentation about torture while a prisoner of war in North Vietnam	1973-2008	4 items
Folder 5	Letters sent to Ann Fleenor	1967-1969	11 items
Folder 6	Post prisoner of war correspondence	1973-2005	46 items
Folder 7	News clippings	1967-1984	36 items
Folder 8	News clippings	1988-2010	54 items
Folder 9	Invitations, place cards, video, etc. related to a POW dinner held at the White House.	1973	13 items
Folder 10	Correspondence – Miscellaneous	1969-1973	10 items
Folder 11	Photos	1973	70 items
Folder 12	Obituaries, memorials and funeral items	2010	7 items
Folder 13	Ken Fleenor Day article from WKU	1973	1 item
Folder 14	General information about POW's and MIA's	1969-1989	16 items
Folder 15	Event programs where Ken Fleenor was involved	1973-2009	5 items
Folder 16	"The long wait; A Vietnam POW's experience in captivity" by Fleenor	n.d.	1 item
Folder 17	"POW and MIA The fullest possible accounting" VHS and CD	n.d.	2 items

Folder 18	“Vietnam Revisited” by Col Ben Purcell and Joy Purcell VHS	n.d.	1 item
Folder 19	1997 Hall of Distinguished Alumni Ceremony VHS and DVD	1997	2 items
BOX 2			
Folder 1	Scrapbook titled “Ken Fleenor Day, April 15, 1973” documenting welcome home ceremonies at Western Kentucky University	1973	1 item
Folder 2	Certificates of honor for Kenneth Fleenor and military commission	1956-1973	5 items
Folder 3	Presentation placard with sketch of Kenneth Fleenor	1979	1 item
Folder 4	X-rays from Kenneth Fleenor to document health of P.O.W.’s	2006	30 items
Folder 5	VHS tape titled “Tomorrow’s Air Force: Reshaping the Future	n.d.	1 item

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS FLEENOR, Kenneth Raymond, 1947-2010
444 1929-2010

Correspondence and documentation related to the military career of Kenneth Raymond Fleenor, a native of Bowling Green, Kentucky, whose plane was shot down near Hanoi, Vietnam in 1967. A prisoner of war (POW) for over five years, Fleenor served part of that time at the “Hanoi Hilton.” Collection contains letters written while a POW and subsequent documentation about his POW experience. Also includes photos of celebratory events held after his release in March 1973 and miscellaneous material related to POWs and MIAs (Missing in Action).

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SUBJECT ANALYTICS

Bolt, J. E. B1,F5
 Burns, John J. B1,F5,10
 Certificates B2,F2
 Christmas cards B1,F3
 Downing, Dero Goodman, 1921-2010 – Correspondence B1,F6,10
 Downing, Thomas Nelms, 1919-2001 B1,F6
 Fleenor, Anne Elizabeth (Read), 1931-2012 – Correspondence B1,F3,5,10
 Fleenor, Francis Joseph, 1932-1988 – Correspondence B1,F3,10
 Fleenor, Katherine Anne, b. 1953? – Correspondence B1,F3
 Fleenor, Kay Read, b. 1959 – Letter to B1,F3
 Fleenor, Kenneth Raymond, 1929-2010 – Drawing of B2,F3
 Fleenor, Kerry Lynn, b. 1958 – Letter to B1,F3
 Fleenor, Nelson Beverly, 1895-1977 – Correspondence B1,F3,10
 Fleenor, Patricia Jane, b. 1957 – Letter to B1,F3
 Hollinger, Jimmie, 1903-1984 B1,F3,10
 Holton, A. Linwood, Jr., b. 1923 B1,F6
 Invitations, 1973 B1,F9
 Locke, Don B1,F6
 Luther, J. G. B1,F5,10
 Maloy, Robert W., 1924-1995 B1,F6
 McCord, George E. B1,F5
 Menus B1,F9
 Momyer, William Wallace, 1916-2012 B1,F5
 Miller, Alfred M., 1928-2008 B1,F5
 Nixon, Richard Milhous, 1913-1994 B1,F6,9
 Payne, Joel T. B1,F6
 Pearce, Ida Clay, d. 2012 B1,F10
 Postage stamps – Prisoners of War B1,F14
 Prisoners of war
 Ransdell, Gary Alan, b. 1951 – Correspondence B1,F6
 Richardson, Elliot Lee, 1920-1999 B1,F6
 Ruff, Edward C. – Correspondence B1,F2-3,10
 Ruff, Joanne B1,F3
 Ryan, John Dale, 1915-1983 B1,F6
 Seamans, Robert Channing, Jr., 1918-2008 B1,F6
 Selden, Armistead Inge, Jr., 1921-1985 B1,F10
 Smith, Foster Lee, d. 2005 B1,F5
 Thompson, Edwin Kelly, 1909-1993 B1,F6
 U.S. Air Force – Relating to
 Vietnam War, 1961-1975 – Missing in action – Relating to B1,F7-8,14
 Vietnam War, 1961-1975 – Prisoners and prisons
 Vietnam War, 1961-1975 – Relating to
 Watts, George O. B1,F5
 Western Kentucky University – Alumni

Westmoreland, William Childs, 1914-2005 B1,F6
X-rays B2,F4
Zacharias, Donald Wayne, 1935-2013 – Correspondence B1,F6

SEE or SEE ALSO

Morland, Ida Clay (Pearce), d. 2012
See also:
 Pearce, Ida Clay, d. 2012

Jeffrey 02/18/2013