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## Browning, James Clarence, 1914-1942 (MSS 556)

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*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 556      BROWNING, James Clarence, 1914-1942**

1½ boxes. 14 folders. 294 items. 1939-1965. Originals.

2002.112.1

***BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE***

James Clarence "J. C." Browning, the son of Henry Rice Browning and Leona (Wysong) Browning, was born 10 April 1914 in Edmonson County, Kentucky. A graduate of Brownsville High School, he was a teacher in both Edmonson and Warren counties. He attended Western Kentucky State Teachers College (now WKU) from 1935 to 1941 but did not obtain a degree. On 29 September 1940, Browning married Lila Louise Hardcastle, the daughter of Anderson Hardcastle and Mayme (Butler) Hardcastle. Their daughter, Ramona Gale "Mona Gale" Browning, was born on 26 July 1941.

A member of the ROTC while at WKU, Browning was commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserve, then entered active service with the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Infantry, 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division at Fort Knox in August 1941. Browning trained in Northern Ireland before embarking for North Africa. On 8 November 1942, he was killed when the H.M.S. *Walney*, a former Coast Guard cutter on which he was stationed, was shelled and sunk in Oran harbor off the North African coast during Operation Reservist, a part of Operation Torch.

Lila, who graduated from WKU in 1943 and was a teacher and business owner, remarried on 14 February 1948. She and her husband, Edward E. Greene, Jr., resided in Bowling Green, Kentucky and were the parents of a daughter, Jacalyn Sue.

***COLLECTION NOTE***

This collection consists principally of letters written to Lila (Hardcastle) Browning by her husband J. C. Browning during his World War II military service, but includes letters written before their marriage as well as papers relating to his military service. Also included are letters written by Lila to her husband that were returned after his death, letters of condolence to her, and a few letters of her daughter Ramona Gale Browning. An inventory and clippings relating to Browning's service and death are in Box 1, Folder 1.

Box 1 contains J. C.'s letters to Lila and those written by her that were returned after his death. J. C.'s letters before their marriage (Folder 2) are written to Lila mostly from Nick (Edmonson County), Kentucky, where he is teaching school while she attends WKU. He writes of his school work, his church attendance and devout Christian beliefs, and of arrangements to

see her on weekends; he often expresses his affection for her, and comments on his mother's recent acceptance of their relationship. J. C.'s letters to Lila (now his wife) in mid-1941 (Folder 3) are written during his military training at Fort Knox, Kentucky and Camp Robinson, Arkansas. While at Fort Knox, he encloses a few issues of the ROTC paper, *The Guidon*. He describes his military training exercises, including convoy travel and participation in war games in Louisiana, and considers giving up teaching for a military career in order to improve their finances. He also comments on the behavior of fellow soldiers, but declares his love for Lila and assures her that he is sexually faithful and abstaining from alcohol and tobacco. J. C.'s letters to Lila in late 1941 (Folder 4) are written from Camp Robinson, Arkansas, Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and Fort Knox. He describes his military duties, which include extensive training maneuvers through the Gulf states; he also discusses personal matters such as their finances, his dream of buying a "farm home," birth control methods available to them after she suffers childbirth-related health problems, finding an apartment for them near Fort Knox, and his love for her, which is tinged with some jealousy dating back to their courtship. (Throughout his correspondence, he betrays anxiety over the effects of their separation on her fidelity.) He also discusses her move from the Alvaton home of Ruby and Titus Bridgwater, where she has been boarding, after a falling-out over money. After the attack on Pearl Harbor and U.S. entry into the war, he assures Lila that while he may be assigned to duty on the west coast, he will be "one of the last to actually engage in battle on the front line." However, J. C.'s letters to Lila in early 1942 (Folder 5) find him leaving Fort Knox for Fort Dix, New Jersey prior to embarkation overseas. He writes of a trip to New York City, of their affairs in the event that one of them dies, of arranging a visit from Lila before he leaves the country, and of wartime censorship of their letters. He expresses concern about their daughter's health, continues to seek comfort in his Christian faith, and urges Lila to join him in prayer and Bible-reading. J. C.'s letters to Lila in mid-1942 (Folder 6) are written mostly from his training venue in Northern Ireland. He describes Irish life and customs, the allocation of his salary to their expenses, his churchgoing, his duties as an officer, and his devotion to her and their daughter. He also writes approvingly of Lila's resumption of her studies at WKU, though he worries about the attentions of "college boys." His optimism about the war's early end is tempered by his understanding that the Allies must necessarily open another front. J. C.'s letters to Lila from Northern Ireland in summer 1942 (Folder 7) find him becoming more familiar with the country and its people during his work as a motor officer. He discusses finances and saving for his longed-for country home, their daughter's health and development, his and Lila's spiritual lives, and his responsibilities toward his men, which include encouraging them to save money and avoid alcohol and sexually transmitted diseases. He supports Lila's efforts to finish college and find work as a teacher or librarian, but also expresses concern for their daughter, who is often in the care of Lila's mother. He notes that the war "is getting more serious" and that U.S. involvement is rapidly increasing. J. C.'s last letters to Lila in October 1942 (Folder 8) continue to discuss their savings for a home and lament the war and their separation. He indicates that he is on the move and may not have time to write to her as frequently. Lila's returned letters to J. C., written from September-November 1942 (Folder 9), report on their savings, her household work, the activities of their daughter, the introduction of gasoline rationing, and the near-completion of her studies. She does not know his exact whereabouts (his mother suspects he is in Africa), but hopes that he is not among the casualties in the current theatre of war.

Box 2 contains letters to Lila Browning as well as a few other family letters and papers. Military papers of J. C. Browning (Folder 1) include orders and instructions for ROTC training at

Fort Knox, the telegram reporting him as missing in action, a 1947 letter reporting on the possibility of identifying his remains, servicemen's recognition programs, and correspondence relating to insurance and Social Security benefits payable to Lila and her daughter. (Some of these documents state J. C.'s middle name as "Clearance" rather than Clarence.) Letters to Lila (Folder 2) are primarily notes and letters of sympathy to her written by family, friends, WKU colleagues, and other servicemen's wives after J. C. was reported missing in action in December 1942. Included is a February, 1943 letter from J. C.'s friend and fellow officer, Clyde Gilliam, with unofficial confirmation of J. C.'s death and the wounding of others in his company. A survivor of the attack, Jack M. Reeder, and another officer, William H. Turnage, and his wife also provide details of the circumstances of J. C.'s death. Elizabeth Lawrence, the mother of another soldier killed in the attack, replies to Lila's letter with information about her son George. A December, 1943 letter from the Secretary of War notifies Lila of a posthumous Purple Heart award to her husband. Miscellaneous family papers (Folder 3) include Lila's Alvaton High School commencement invitation, a letter of reference for J. C. to obtain summer employment at Mammoth Cave National Park, clippings regarding J. C. and Lila's marriage, and greeting cards relating to their wedding and baby. Letters of Ramona Gale Browning (Folder 4) are written to Lila and include details of a visit to her stepfather's family in Indianapolis, Indiana, and two letters from college, one of which announces the 18-year-old's decision to leave in order to live with her husband, Roger. Miscellaneous cards (Folder 5) are mostly Christmas cards from 1942, but include postcards sent by J. C. to Lila from Florida, Fort Dix and Ireland.

### ***SHELF LIST***

<b>BOX 1</b>	<b>James Clarence Browning</b>	<b>1939-1942</b>	<b>174 items</b>
Folder 1	Inventory and clippings		11 items
Folder 2	J. C. Browning – Letters to Lila Hardcastle	Jan. 1939 - Sept. 1940	27 items
Folder 3	J. C. Browning – Letters to Lila (Hardcastle) Browning	Jun. 1941 - Sept. 1941	25 items
Folder 4	J. C. Browning – Letters to Lila (Hardcastle) Browning	Oct. 1941 - Dec. 1941	29 items
Folder 5	J. C. Browning – Letters to Lila (Hardcastle) Browning	Jan. 1942 - Apr. 1942	17 items
Folder 6	J. C. Browning – Letters to Lila (Hardcastle) Browning	May 1942 - July 1942	30 items
Folder 7	J. C. Browning – Letters to Lila (Hardcastle) Browning	Aug. 1942 - Sept. 1942	22 items

Folder 8	J. C. Browning – Letters to Lila (Hardcastle) Browning	Oct. 1942, n.d.	9 items
Folder 9	Lila (Hardcastle) Browning – Letters to J. C. Browning	Sept. 1942 - Nov. 1942	4 items
<b>BOX 2</b>	<b>James Clarence Browning; Lila (Hardcastle) Browning Greene; Ramona Gale Browning</b>	<b>1941-1965</b>	<b>120 items</b>
Folder 1	J. C. Browning – Military documents	1941-1954	17 items
Folder 2	Lila (Hardcastle) Browning – Letters to	1941-1965	49 items
Folder 3	J. C. Browning, Lila (Hardcastle) Browning, Edward Greene – Miscellaneous papers	1940-1962	11 items
Folder 4	Ramona G. Browning – Letters	1953-1959	4 items
Folder 5	Postcards, greeting cards	1941-1944	39 items

### ***BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD***

MSS BROWNING, James Clarence, 1939-1965  
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Letters of U.S. Army officer J.C. Browning to his wife Lila (Hardcastle) Browning, written during his World War II military service. Browning was killed in North Africa on 8 November 1942. Includes letters of condolence to his wife, papers relating to his military service, and miscellaneous family cards and letters.

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### ***SUBJECT ANALYTICS***

Anniversary cards, 1941 B2,F5  
Arkansas – Travel and description, 1941 B1,F3  
Batchellor, Jemmie (Davis), 1918-2004 B2,F2  
Birth announcements, 1941-1942 B2,F3,5  
Birthday cards, 1952 B2,F2  
Bothe, Edna E., 1900-1981 – Comments about, 1943 B2,F2

Bothe, Edna E., 1900-1981 – Mentioned B1,F7,9  
 Bridgwater, Juanita B2,F2  
 Bridgwater, Rubye, 1896-1978 B2,F2  
 Bridgwater, Rubye, 1896-1978 – Relating to B1,F4; B2,F2  
 Browning, Arthur Lovin, 1908-1984 – Relating to B2,F2  
 Browning, James Clarence, 1914-1942 – Correspondence B1,F2-9; B2,F5  
 Browning, James Clarence, 1914-1942 – Relating to B2,F1-3  
 Browning, Leona (Wysong), 1881-1943 B2,F2,5  
 Browning, Madie Irene (Hudson), 1911-1994 B2,F2  
 Browning, Ramona Gale, 1941-1994 B2,F4  
 Browning, Ramona Gale, 1941-1994 – Relating to B1,F9; B2,F1,3  
 Carter, Dagmar I., d. 1968 B2,F2  
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 Contraception – Comments about, 1941 B1,F4  
 Courtship, 1939-1940 B1,F2  
 Dean, Kathleen (Fields), 1909-2003 B2,F2,5  
 Gilliam, Clyde S., 1916-1944 B2,F2  
 Greene, Edward Eugene, Jr., 1908-1980 – Relating to B2,F3  
 Greene, Florence E. (Vollmer), 1887-1977 B2,F2  
 Greene, Florence E. (Vollmer), 1887-1977 – Relating to B2,F4  
 Greene, Lila Louise (Hardcastle) Browning, 1919-2005 – Correspondence B1,F2-9;  
 B2,F1,2,4  
 Greene, Lila Louise (Hardcastle) Browning, 1919-2005 – Relating to B2,F3  
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 Hardcastle, James Renick, 1922-1995 – Mentioned B1,F4-7  
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 Lawrence, George Strother, Jr., 1919-1942 – Relating to B2,F2  
 Louisiana – Travel and description, 1941 B1,F3,4  
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 Mother's Day cards B2,F2,4,5  
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 Postcards – Ireland, 1942 B1,F6; B2,F5  
 Poteet, James H., 1896-1984 – Comments about, 1942 B1,F6  
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 ROTC – Fort Knox – Relating to, 1941 B1,F3; B2,F1  
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 Social Security – Relating to B2,F1  
 Stimson, Henry Lewis, 1867-1950 B2,F2  
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Tyler, Sara Elizabeth, 1910-2001 B2,F2,5  
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**SEE or SEE ALSO**

Browning, James Clarence, 1914-1942

See:

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Niedermeier/Jeffrey 06/25/2015