

# BIRMINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY ARCHIVES DEPARTMENT

## VAN DER VEER, JOHN STEWART

### Papers, 1909-1966

**Source:** Van der Veer Family

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**Size:** 1 linear foot (3 boxes)

**Guide Prepared by:** Mike Ross (February 2001)

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#### Biography/Background

John "Stewart" Van der Veer was born in Frankfort, Kentucky on June 27, 1893. He was raised in Kentucky and attended the University of Kentucky until his family moved to New Orleans, Louisiana. Once in New Orleans, Van der Veer worked at an oil company while pursuing his dream of becoming an opera singer, which he never realized. In 1916, Van der Veer joined the Washington Artillery of New Orleans in order to participate in the Pershing Expedition into Mexico. When the United States entered World War I, Van der Veer was anxious to participate. He joined the American Red Cross and went to the Italian Front as an ambulance driver. While serving in Italy, he received the Italian War Cross and a promotion to Lieutenant. He wrote about his experiences in correspondence with his family during the war and later in his autobiography *Walk in My Moccasins*. In his letters, Van der Veer mentioned taking a member of his squad to a hospital in Milan. In *Walk in My Moccasins*, he related an encounter with this man and identified him as Ernest Hemingway.

Upon his return from the war, he began working at a newspaper in New Orleans, *The Time-Picayune*. He wrote and edited for several newspapers in various parts of the country before establishing his own advertising agency in Birmingham, Alabama in the fall of 1924. After residing in Birmingham several years, Van der Veer began to cultivate a desire to write fiction. He began by writing short stories and having them published in pulp magazines. Then in 1939 he published his first novel, *Death For the Lady*. He went on to have two more novels published, *Remembered April* and *Interlude at Pelican Bend*. Van der Veer was forced to give up fiction "for economic reasons" and returned to

advertising and newspapers. His latter years were spent tending to his ranch, The Lazy V, outside of Birmingham. He also undertook one last writing endeavor, a narrative based on his life entitled *Walk in My Moccasins*, but he was unable to get it published. John Stewart Van der Veer died on December 27, 1966.

### Scope and Content

This collection contains documents connected to the life of James Stewart Van der Veer, including some of his correspondence and writings, newspaper articles written about him, and photographs. The bulk of the correspondence consists of two sets, one of which is made up of letters Van der Veer wrote while serving as a ambulance driver in Italy during World War I. The other correspondence file pertains to Van der Veer's efforts to have his autobiography, *Walk in My Moccasins*, published. The collection contains that manuscript, a copy of one of his published books, *Interlude at Pelican's Bend*, and one of his short stories. The newspaper articles focus on his writing career and The Lazy V Ranch. Photographs range from ones taken during World War I to pictures of Van der Veer in retirement. The scrapbook contains newspaper clippings, primarily relating to the publication of the mystery novel *Death for the Lady*.

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File Number	Description
357.1.1	Biographical Sketch of John Stewart Van der Veer; written after <i>Death For The Lady</i> was published, circa 1940.
357.1.2	Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to his mother, New York City, February 3, 1917.
357.1.3	Letter from J.M. Van der Veer to Stewart Van der Veer, New Orleans, February 11, 1918.
357.1.4	Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to J.M. Van der Veer, New York City, May 26, 1918.
357.1.5	Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to Van der Veer family, New Orleans, June 14, 1918.
357.1.6	Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to J.M. Van der Veer, Milan, Italy, June 23 1918.
357.1.7	Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to Van der Veer family, Italian front, June 26, 1918.

- 357.1.8 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to J.M Van der Veer, Italian Front, June 28, 1918.
- 357.1.9 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to Van der Veer family, Italian Front, July 3, 1918.
- 357.1.10 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to Van der Veer family, Venice, Italy, July 5, 1918.
- 357.1.11 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to J.M. Van der Veer, Venice, Italy, July 8, 1918.
- 357.1.12 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to J.M. Van der Veer, Milan, Italy, July 12 1918. This letter discusses the event of Stewart taking a man to the hospital. The man is thought to have been Ernest Hemingway.
- 357.1.13 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to Rosalie Van der Veer, Fangolo, Italy, July 30, 1918.
- 357.1.14 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to his mother, Bearle, Italy, August 2, 1918.
- 357.1.15 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to J.M. Van der Veer, Italian Front, August 10, 1918.
- 357.1.16 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to his mother, Italian Front, August 10, 1918.
- 357.1.17 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to Elizabeth Van der Veer, Italian Front, August 13, 1918.
- 357.1.18 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to J.M. Van der Veer, Italian Front, August 13, 1918.
- 357.1.19 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to J.M. Van der Veer, Italian Front, August 15, 1918.
- 357.1.20 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to J.M. Van der Veer, Italian Front, 25, 1918.
- 357.1.21 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to his mother, Italian Front, August 25, 1918.

- 357.1.22 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to his mother, Italian Front, August 31, 1918.
- 357.1.23 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to his mother, Italian Front, September 2, 1918.
- 357.1.24 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to J.M. Van der Veer, Italian Front, September 2, 1918.
- 357.1.25 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to his mother, Italian Front, September 7, 1918.
- 357.1.26 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to J.M. Van der Veer, Italian Front, September 8, 1918.
- 357.1.27 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to his mother, Italian Front, October 14, 1918.
- 357.1.28 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to his mother, Italian Front, October 25, 1918.
- 357.1.29 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to J.M. Van der Veer, Italian Front, October 26, 1918.
- 357.1.30 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to his mother, Italian Front, October 26, 1918.
- 357.1.31 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to J.M. Van der Veer, Italian Front, October 27-29, 1918.
- 357.1.32 Letter from Stewart Van der Veer to Van der Veer family, Italian Front, November 8, 1918.
- 357.1.33 Travel Orders, Headquarters American Expeditionary Forces, Paris, France, December 23, 1918.
- 357.1.34 "Latest Bulletins from Section 5 Piave River Italy" undated.
- 357.1.35 Letter from J.W. Blackburn to John McClelland Van der Veer, American Canal Zone, November 13, 1918.
- 357.1.36 Letter from Sylvester Labrot to John McClelland Van der Veer, Paris, France, December 15, 1918.

- 357.1.37 Telegram from R.H. Whitney to K.N. Van der Veer,  
February 3, 1919.
- 357.1.38 Several Items of correspondence related to the Stewart Van  
der Veer's works, March 31, 1937- June 24, 1943.
- 357.1.39 Letter to Stewart Van der Veer from Ellene Winn and his  
response, September 1965.
- 357.1.40 Correspondence with Crown n Publishers in regard to  
Stewart Van der Veer's autobiography *Walk in My  
Moccasins*, January 26, 1962 - September 18, 1963.
- 357.1.41 Correspondence related to *Walk in My Moccasins*,  
November 4, 1963 - August 3, 1966.
- 357.1.42 Correspondence of Elizabeth Van der Veer on behalf of her  
deceased brother, Stewart Van der Veer, concerning  
*Walk in My Moccasins*.
- 357.1.43 Newspaper article (photocopy) about Stewart Van der Veer  
winning the Middle State championship in pole  
vaulting, circa 1909.
- 357.1.44 Newspaper article announcing Stewart Van der Veer return  
from the Italian Front at the conclusion of World  
War I, February 9, 1919.
- 357.1.45 Newspaper articles related to Stewart Van der Veers first  
two novels and his experience as an aspiring author.
- 357.1.46 Article from the Birmingham News Magazine concerning  
Stewart Van der Veer's ranch, the Lazy V,  
September 13, 1953.
- 357.1.47 Photograph of Stewart Van der Veer when he was a  
member of the Pershing Expedition, circa 1916.
- 357.1.48 Photographs of the American Red Cross on the Italian  
Front during World War I (photocopies).
- 357.1.49 Map of the Piave River area.
- 357.1.50 World War I photographs.

- 357.1.51 Photographs that were to be included in *Walk in My Moccasins*.
- 357.1.52 Portrait of Stewart Van der Veer.
- 357.1.53 Photograph of Stewart Van der Veer at the Lazy V Ranch.
- 357.2.1 August 9, 1939 issue of Grit containing the story "Arizona Cyclone" by Stewart Van der Veer.
- 357.2.2 Two Copies of the Prologue to *Walk in My Moccasins*, Stewart Van der Veer's autobiography.
- 357.2.3 Manuscript of *Walk in My Moccasins*, pages 1 - 7. This autobiographical text discusses many aspects of Stewart Van der Veer's life, such as his childhood in Kentucky, his days in New Orleans, his experiences as an ambulance driver in Italy during World War I, and his life as an aspiring fiction writer.
- 357.2.4 *Walk in My Moccasins*, pages 8 - 50.
- 357.2.5 *Walk in My Moccasins*, pages 51-100.
- 357.2.6 *Walk in My Moccasins*, pages 101-150. In the latter pages of this section Van der Veer writes that he knew Ernest Hemingway and drove him to a hospital in Milan when Hemingway was wounded during World War I.
- 357.2.7 *Walk in My Moccasins*, pages 151-200.
- 357.2.8 *Walk in My Moccasins*, pages 201-250.
- 357.2.9 *Walk in My Moccasins*, pages 251-300.
- 357.2.10 *Walk in My Moccasins*, pages 301-350.
- 357.2.11 *Walk in My Moccasins*, pages 351-379.
- 357.2.12 Certificate for the Italian War Cross, 1918.
- 357.3.1 *Interlude at Pelican Bend*, a novel by Stewart Van der Veer, New York: Phoenix Press, 1947.

357.4.1

Scrapbook, February 3, 1939 to June 15, 1939.