

PRITZKER MILITARY MUSEUM & LIBRARY

104 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603

archives@pritzkermilitary.org

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Charlie and Mildred Slezak Collection

Creator:	Charles "Charlie" (1922-1995) and Mildred "Millie" Slezak
Dates:	1942-1995
Quantity:	0.1 linear feet, 1 box
Acquisition:	Donated by Mildred Slezak, 2007; Accretion by Judy Baar Topinka, June 2008
Identification:	PMML Item # 330100, Call # PAPERS 011
Citation:	[Document Title]. The Charlie and Mildred Slezak Collection, [Box #, Folder #], Pritzker Military Museum & Library, Chicago, IL.
Language:	English
Finding Aid:	Written by Rebecca Redinger, June, 2008; Updated by Andrea Martinez, 2018

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Biographical Note

Charles "Charlie" John Slezak was born in Berwyn, Illinois on June 7, 1922. His father, Jerry Slezak, an immigrant from Czechoslovakia, came to the United States in 1912. In 1914, Jerry Slezak married Frances, a native of Chicago. Charlie Slezak was the youngest of three children. He attended grade school in Berwyn, Illinois and high school in Cicero, Illinois. On November 26, 1942, Slezak enlisted in the U.S. Navy. He attended Naval School at the University of Kansas, and then Machinist Mate School and Packard Marine Engine School in Detroit, Michigan.

In the summer of 1944, Slezak landed with the Navy in Saipan, an island in the North Marianas, and served with the 4th Marine Division. On August 22, 1944, he was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for their participation in this invasion.

On January 22, 1946 Slezak was honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy with the rank of 1st Class Machinist Mate. In February of that year he returned to Chicago and

began working for the Continental Can Company where he had served as an apprentice before the war.

Slezak married his childhood friend, Mildred Hurt on June 8, 1946. From 1946 until 1959 he worked in various positions with the Continental Can Company. In 1959 he purchased the Manor True Value Hardware store in Cicero. He and his wife continued to operate the store until 1979, successfully doubling and tripling the size of the business in 20 years. In addition to being a profitable business, the hardware store initiated a career of community and political involvement for both Slezak and his wife.

Beginning in the mid-1970's Slezak served as the Berwyn Township Republican Committeeman. He served as the Campaign Chairman for Citizens to Elect Judy Baar Topinka State Representative, 7th District in 1979 and again as her aide in 1981. His wife Mildred was a longtime employee and friend of State Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka.

Slezak was reappointed as Berwyn Township Republican Committeeman in 1981, and also worked with the Illinois Secretary of State in 1983.

In addition to his political involvement, Slezak chaired many community associations and committees in and around Berwyn. In 1978 he returned to Saipan to visit the island where he served during most of the war. Each year he organized reunions for his navy buddies in various locations across the country.

Charles Slezak died on September 20, 1995 in Berwyn, IL.

Scope and Content of the Collection

The collection contains documents and photographs gathered by Charles Slezak while he served in Saipan with the U.S. Navy, as well as material collected during a return trip to the island in the 1970s. The collection spans over sixty years, however the bulk of the collection concerns the years between 1942 and 1946.

The collection includes a note from Mildred "Millie" Slezak (2007), which accompanied the donation of these items. In this same folder is a copy of the program from Slezak's Memorial service in 1995.

The collection contains two sets of black-and-white photographs taken by Slezak during his time in Saipan. One depicts the war damages inflicted on the island of Saipan, and the other set are scenes from the U.S. Naval base on the island. The collection also includes a set of blank postcards from Hawaii and Saipan, as well as a copy of the *Saipan Post Dispatch* (8/6/1944).

Additionally, there is a folder of newspaper clippings from the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Daily Times* and *New York Times*. Each article concerns the U.S. Military's involvement in Saipan.

The remainder of the collection is from Slezak's return visit to the island of Saipan in 1978. Included are copies of two Saipan newspapers, *The Free Press* (12/31/1977) and the *Marianas Variety* (1/10/1978). Also included is a ceremony program from the Inauguration of the first governor of the North Mariana Islands and one-page biographies of the event speakers.

Two folders were received by accretion in 2008. The first contains correspondence concerning Slezak's return trip to Saipan. Of note is a letter to President Jimmy Carter. The next folder includes various ephemera and informational items about the island. Separate from the collection is a book entitled *Saipan: Then and Now* by Glenn McClure. This is located on the main floor of the library.

Also located separately are a collection of D-Day news articles from the *Chicago Daily News*, *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Chicago Sun*. These can be found in the flat files.

Arrangement

The collection arrived with no discernable arrangement and was rearranged in a more efficient working order by PMML staff. The collection is contained within one archival box.

Rights

Several items in this collection are copyrighted by the original creators. Users assume responsibility for following copyright laws as established by US Code Title 17.

Separations

Located in the flat files are a collection of D-Day news articles from the *Chicago Daily News*, *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Chicago Sun*.

Saipan: then and now (1975) by McClure, Glenn E
D767.99 .S3 .M32 1975 (Main floor of library)

Key Subjects

This collection is indexed under the following headings in the Library's online catalog. Researchers interested in materials about related topics, persons, or places should search the catalog using these subject headings.

Names

Slezak, Charles J. (Charlie)

Slezak, Mildred (Millie)

Camacho, Carlos S.

Ada, Francisco C.

Pangelinan, Edward DLG

High Commissioner Adrian P. Winkel

Director Ruth G. Van Cleave—Office of Territorial Affairs

Senator Charles H. Percy

President Jimmy Carter

Adjutant General Julian Dickenson—Veterans of Foreign Wars

Adjutant General William F. Hauck—American Legion

Subjects

World War, 1939-1945 -- United States

World War, 1939-1945 -- Campaigns -- Pacific Ocean

World War, 1939-1945 -- Campaigns -- Northern Mariana Islands --Saipan

United States-- Marine Corps -- History--World War, 1939-1945

Saipan-- Battle of, Northern Mariana Islands-- 1944

Detailed Description of the Collection

Folder One

Memorial

Note from Millie Slezak—2007

Memorial programs for Charles Slezak—1995

Folder Two

Photographs

Wallet-size photographs—1944—depicts war damage (8)

3"x 4.5" photographs --1944-45—naval base in Saipan (9)

Folder Three

Newspapers and Postcards

Postcards—blank—c.1960s-1980s—Hawaii and Saipan (9)

Saipan Post Dispatch (photocopy)—8/6/1944—Saipan historical introduction

The Free Press—Saipan—12/31/1977

Marianas Variety—Saipan—1/10/1978—Government inauguration coverage

Folder Four

Miscellaneous

Ceremony program—1/9/1978—Inauguration of the first Governor of the North Marianna Islands

Biographies (one page each)—1977-78

Carlos s. Camacho

Francisco C. Ada

Edward DLG Pangelinan

Folder Five

Newspaper clippings

Various clippings from *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Daily Times* and *New York Times* concerning the U.S. Military invasion of Saipan—1944

Folder Six

Correspondence

1978

Letter from Ruth G. Van Cleave to Charles Slezak—February 15,

1978

Letter from Charles Slezak to President Jimmy Carter—January 20,

Letter from Senator Charles H. Percy to High Commissioner Adrian P. Winkel—December 8, 1978

Folder Seven

Ephemera and bulletins

1974

Fact Sheet— United States Department of Interior, Office of Territorial Affairs—Northern Mariana Islands—February 1, 1978
File folder facts on Micronesia—Pacific Travel News—September

On the Go. Saipan Overnight: A visitor's guide to the island—
Micronesian Reporter—1971

Saipan Mariana Island picture card folder

World War II Memorial brochure—Washington, D.C.