

**The New York Public Library
Humanities and Social Sciences Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

**Dorothee Gore
Papers, 1904-1982**

**Compiled by Maurita Baldock
December 1999**

Summary

- Main Entry:** Dorothee Gore, 1908-1982
- Title:** Dorothee Gore Papers, 1904-1982 (1930-1960 bulk)
- Size:** 4.6 lin. feet (6 AB, 4 FB, 1 RC)
- Source:** Gift of Irene Anne Jillson
- Biographical Note:** Dorothee Gore was a lesbian who lived in New York City in the 1930's and became a member of the Women's Army Corp (WAC) during World War II. After leaving the military, Gore settled in Hartford, Connecticut and worked for the Department of Motor Vehicles.
- Description:** The collection includes personal letters and notes, scrapbooks, photographs, and memorabilia documenting her personal life and her life in the women's military in World War II.
- Special Formats:** Photographs, scrapbooks, oversize cardboard doll
- Restrictions:** None, but scrapbooks are fragile and must be handled with care.

Biographical Note

Dorothee “Sarge” Elizabeth Gore was born on Sept 26, 1908, in San Francisco. Her obituary lists her as the daughter of George F. Gore and Florrella Willis Gore and the sister to Kathryn Sinclair Jillson. However, an article in her scrapbook states that Gore was searching for her real mother, actress Le Ola Winifred Kenney. Gore was a lesbian who was not open about her homosexuality with most of her family. She only revealed her homosexuality to her grown niece, Irene. Although her religious beliefs sharply conflicted with her relationships with other women, she remained a devout Catholic until the end of her life.

Gore lived in Greenwich Village in New York City in the 1930’s, but went to live with her sister Kathryn and her family in Washington D.C shortly before the start of World War II. She joined the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in February 1943.¹ Gore left the service in August of 1943, and moved back to Washington D.C. for a short time. She joined the Army again in 1944 and served until 1945. While in the Army, Gore was stationed at Fort Sill in Oklahoma, Patterson Field in Ohio, Fort Oglethorpe in Georgia, San Francisco, and in Dutch New Guinea. In 1944 at Fort Oglethorpe, the U.S. government began an investigation of lesbians within the military. Although it does not appear that Gore was stationed there during that time, her friend Marge “Smitty” Smith was there and subtly mentions the investigation in her letters to Gore.

After leaving the Army, Gore moved back to New York City for a short time. She later moved to Philadelphia and to Muncie, Indiana. She eventually settled in Hartford, Connecticut where she worked for a number of years at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Gore was a published poet and a friend to animals, especially cats. She considered her own cats, Timmy, Bobby, Ticky, and Small One, as her children. Some of her other interests included traveling and following the entertainment industry, particularly the life of Greta Garbo.

Gore died in Hartford on December 22, 1982 and was buried with full military honors.

¹ The first women’s branch of the Army was the WAAC (Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps) established on May 15, 1942. This designation gave women only partial military status. However, on July 1, 1943 the WAAC was abolished and the WAC (Women’s Army Corps) was established. This gave women full military status with the same rank, pay, and titles as men.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Dorothee Sinclair Gore contain items such as incoming correspondence, photographs, writings, scrapbooks, and various ephemera. The materials chiefly document her personal life and her service as a member of the Women's Army Corp (WAC) during World War II. Although some of the material documents the earlier and later periods of her life, the collection mainly includes the 1930's-1950's with particular emphasis on the second World War.

The material reveals much about her life as a Catholic and as a closeted lesbian. It contains information on her friendships and relationships with other women, as well as her feelings of differentness. Letters and cards from friends and family often urge her to cheer up and promise that things will get better. Her personal conflicts over her sexuality are also reflected in the writings and the material she saved. Her writings include published and unpublished poetry and personal reflections. Some of her memorabilia contains material such as an astrological reading in which she underscores sections which point to her unhappiness, and includes a mail order form for a book entitled, *The Treatment of Sexual Dysfunction*. The cryptic nature of much of her correspondence appears to reveal ways in which homosexuals at this time secretly communicated or expressed their feelings.

Another strength of the collection is its documentation of WAC life, which appears in several different series. Because many of the women she corresponded with during World War II were also in the military, letters detail camp life and women's general reactions to the service. Some letters also subtly refer to the investigation of lesbians in the military that took place at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia in 1944. Her time in the military is also documented through photographs, an autograph book, her patches, and her discharge papers.

Other than her time as a WAC, the collection does not include much information on her working life. Her papers also include documentation of her personal interests such as information on Hollywood stars such as Greta Garbo, travel ephemera, religious ephemera, cocktail napkins, newspaper clippings, and animal stories.

Series Descriptions

SERIES I. CORRESPONDENCE, 1925-1987, (BULK 1940-1960) BOXES 1-2

Almost all of the correspondence is personal and incoming. It address events in Gore's life and documents her close friendships and relationships. The personal correspondence is often vague and only subtly reveals the nature of her relationships with other women. Her professional life is only documented in the letters from the 1940's discussing her life as a WAC. These letters reveal information on the work and living conditions in the women's Army, as well as women's relationships to each other within the military setting. Some letters allude to the 1944 investigation of lesbians in the military at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

The different formats of correspondence include letters, cards, V-Mail, telegrams, and handwritten notes. Empty envelopes and clippings of postage stamps are also included. All formats of correspondence which are dated are organized chronologically. The undated correspondence is separated by format, such as cards, letter, and notes. The folder titled "Notes from 'Jan'" only includes the short, undated notes that she received from her friend, Jan Lorenz. Other correspondence from Jan Lorenz can be found within the dated correspondence and cards. Many more letters and cards are located in her scrapbooks.

SERIES II. WRITINGS, 1948-1977, Box 3

This series is divided into Gore's own personal writings and writings by other authors. Gore's own writings include poetry, stream of consciousness reflections, and a few course notes. When possible, they are arranged by date. They are candid and document feelings regarding her relationships, her religious beliefs, and sometimes a discontentment in her life. Some of her writings also mention a trouble with drinking. The writings by other authors include newspaper clippings and handwritten or typewritten copies of poetry. More writings by Gore, as well as by other authors, are included in her scrapbooks.

SERIES III. MEMORABILIA, 1904-1982, BOXES 3-5, 9

Gore's memorabilia contains items relating to her personal and professional life. The WAC material consists of administrative memorabilia such as her patches, passes, and discharge papers. Her personal life within the Army is documented in an autograph book that includes writings by her WAC friends. However, the folder regarding her work at the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles mainly includes standard forms and employee regulations.

Other memorabilia is ephemera relating to her personal interests. These include newspaper clippings, programs, travel information, a collection of early twentieth century travel postcards written in French, and various printed material. Some of these saved items may reflect her personal opinions of herself and should not be discounted because they are ephemera. For example, items include an astrological reading in which Gore marks the sections she believes to be pertinent to her personality and an order form for a book entitled, *The Treatment of Sexual Dysfunction*. The religious ephemera also

demonstrates her spiritual life and her devotion to the Catholic Church. A large amount of memorabilia is also contained within her scrapbooks.

SERIES IV. PHOTOGRAPHS, 1933-1954, BOX 6

The photographs in Series IV are arranged by subject or date, when possible. The bulk of the pictures are from the 1940's and depict Gore and her women friends in and out of the Army. The photos mainly consist of candid shots but also include formal pictures of WACs lining up. Many of the pictures are signed or identify the subject of the photograph. More pictures of WAC life are included in the scrapbook in Box 9.

SERIES V. SCRAPBOOKS, 1928-1977, BOXES 7-11

The scrapbooks contain a large number of items included in other series such as letters, cards, writings, photographs, and saved memorabilia. Along with personal items, the scrapbooks contain clippings of news accounts, animal stories, and information on entertainers such as Greta Garbo. The material within the scrapbooks is varied and generally does not appear in chronological order. Many of the volumes themselves are old ledger or music books that were pasted over with material. Some are in fragile condition and should be handled with care.

Container List

Box Folder Contents

I. Correspondence, 1925-1987

1	1	1920's
	2	1930's
	3	1940-August 1942
	4	September 1942-December 1942
	5	1943
	6	1944
	7	1945
	8	1948-1949
	9	1950-1953
	10	1954
	11	1955-1956
	12	1957-1959
	13	1960's
	14	1970's
	15	1980's
	16-18	Notes from "Jan" (Lorenz), undated
2	1	Letters, undated
	2	Cards, undated, with writing
	3-13	Cards, undated, signatures only

- 14 Envelopes, no date-1945
- 15 Envelopes, 1946-1949
- 16 Envelopes, 1950's-1960's
- 17 Postage Stamps

II. Writings, 1948-1977

A. Writings by Dorothee Gore

- 3 1 1948-1975
- 2-4 undated
- 5 Handwritten Notes, undated

B. Writings by Other Authors

- 3 6-8 Writings by Other Authors
- 9 Writings by Other Authors, Transcribed by Dorothee Gore

III. Memorabilia, 1904-1982

- 3 10-11 WAC Material
- 12 WAC Autograph Book
- 13 Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles
- 4 1 Biographical Material

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|---|-------|---------------------------------------|
| | 2-5 | Printed Material |
| | 6 | Printed Material, Cocktail Napkins |
| | 7 | Printed Material, Maps |
| | 8 | Printed Material, Menus |
| | 9 | Printed Material, Newsletters |
| | 10-13 | Printed Material, Newspaper Clippings |
| | 14-15 | Printed Material, Programs |
| 5 | 1 | Printed Material, Religious Ephemera |
| | 2-3 | Printed Material, Travel Ephemera |
| | 4 | Calendars, 1949, 1951, 1973 |
| | 5 | French Postcards, no dates-1904 |
| | 6 | French Postcards, 1905-1906 |
| | 7 | French Postcards, 1907-1914 |

IV. Photographs, 1933-1954

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|---|-----|---|
| 6 | 1-2 | Undated |
| | 3 | 1933, 1942 (bulk) |
| | 4 | 1943-1948 |
| | 5 | 1952, 1954 |
| | 6-7 | WAC Photographs |
| | 8 | Photographs Signed by "Dawn" |
| | 9 | Photographs Signed by "Jan" (Lorenz) |
| | 10 | Photocopies of Photographs From the Collection Which Were |

Used In NYPL Exhibit "Becoming Visible" (1994)

V. Scrapbooks and Artifacts 1928-1977

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| 7 | 1 | Loose pages of Scrapbook of Letters, Cards, Newspaper Clippings |
| | 2 | Scrapbook of Newspaper Clippings |
| | 3 | Scrapbook of Newspaper Clippings |
| 8 | | 3 Scrapbooks of Letters, Cards, Newspaper Clippings, and Memorabilia

Scrapbook of Newspaper Clippings, 1930's |
| 9 | | Scrapbook of WAC Photographs, and Other Lithographs, and Cards

Charlie McCarthy cardboard doll |
| 10 | | Scrapbook of Writings, Letters, Cards, Newspaper Clippings, Photographs and Memorabilia, 1930's and 1940's |
| 11 | | Scrapbook of Letters, Cards, Newspaper Clippings, and Memorabilia, (Oversize and Fragile) |