



Special Collections and University Archives

**Manuscript Group 128
Beulah Johns Brennen**

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Beulah Johns Brennen, Manuscript Group 128
Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Special Collections and University Archives
2 boxes, 2 linear feet

Biographical Note

Beulah “Boots” Mabel Johns Brennen (May 27, 1906 – June 22, 2004) was born in Washington Township in Armstrong County, Pennsylvania. Her parents were Lee Philip Johns (1882-1963) and Rosie Belle Adams Johns (1885-1960). In 1933, Beulah Johns graduated from the Butler Memorial School of Nursing (Butler Memorial Hospital) and became a registered nurse. She dedicated her life to helping others, serving as a registered nurse for more than 45 years until her retirement in 1979.

She started to attend the University of Pittsburgh to earn her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). But all of that changed on December 7, 1941, when the United States entered World War II. Right after hearing of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, even before the draft was enabled, Beulah Johns volunteered to be a nurse in the United States Army. Because of her RN training and education, upon enlisting during World War II, Beulah Johns was commissioned a Second Lieutenant, and she was later promoted to First Lieutenant in the United States Army Nurse Corps.

Her first assignment was in the jungles of New Guinea, where she began work in evacuation hospitals for the injured Americans. Shortly after, she was transferred to Sukarnapura (modern-day Jayapura, the largest city in the Indonesian province of Papua), where she took care of as many as 40 patients at a time. After serving in Japan, she was transferred to the Philippines, where she was assigned to help establish a hospital. Shortly afterwards, the Empire of Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, and her unit was discharged in November 1945. After returning home, Beulah Johns joined the Pittsburgh Chapter of Overseas Service League, where she received a medal for her services in World War II. First Lieutenant Beulah Johns Brennen received an Honorable Discharge from the United States Army Nurse Corps, USAR, on January 5, 1962, after 20 years of service. In 2001, she was honored by the *Leader Times* as one of the oldest surviving veterans of World War II.

In Pittsburgh, on October 11, 1943, Beulah Johns married James Harold Brennen (1897-1967), who was also a veteran of World War II. Shortly after getting married, Beulah Johns Brennen decided to return to the University of Pittsburgh and finish her BSN. In 1957, she graduated with her Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Up until 1979, when she retired, Beulah Johns Brennen worked as a registered nurse for the Butler Memorial Hospital, where she received her initial training as a registered nurse in 1933. She worked as a registered nurse in the Butler office of Dr. John Shadle. An active member of the Brush Valley Brethren Church in Adrian, Pennsylvania, she and her husband are buried in the Butler County Memorial Park.

Content Note

The items in Manuscript Group 128 pertain to the life of Beulah Johns Brennen (1906-2004) with special emphasis on her nursing career and overseas military service during World War II.

Restrictions

None, this collection is open for research. Property rights reside with Indiana University of Pennsylvania, University Archives and Special Collections. Literary rights are retained by the creators of the records and their heirs. For permissions to reproduce or publish, please contact the coordinator of the IUP University Archives and Special Collections.

Provenance

This collection was donated by Beulah Johns Brennen.

Administrative Information

This collection was updated and re-housed by the IUP Special Collections and University Archives in 2025.

Content List**Box 1 Beulah Johns Brennen (25 folders)**

1. Family Genealogy
2. Beulah Johns Brennen (1906-2004) and James H. Brennen (1897-1967)
 - a. Life Records: Birth Certificate, Death Certificates, Census Information, Baptism Record
 - b. Military Documents
3. Personal Records, 1906-1966
 - a. Birth Certificate, May 27, 1906
 - b. Baptism Card, August 16, 1920
 - c. Marriage Certificate (copy), October 11, 1943
 - d. Record of Church Attendance, October 2, 1960
 - e. Letter from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census
 - i. 1910 Census Record for Beulah Johns (Age 3), August 17, 1966 (2 copies)
4. Work Record, 1922-1957
5. College Transcripts and Grades, 1933-1957
 - a. Butler County Memorial Hospital, Student Final Record, August 31, 1933
 - b. Butler High School, List of Classes Taken, 1937-1938
 - c. Memorandum of Secondary School and College Credit, August 18, 1938
 - d. University of Pittsburgh Transcripts (3), 1939-1940
 - e. Letter to University of Pittsburgh verifying Beulah John's Pre-Professional Examinations Scores, March 12, 1940
 - f. Letter to University of Pittsburgh certify credits earned through pre-professional examinations by Beulah Johns, August 1, 1950
 - g. Letter to the University of Sydney (Australia) from Beulah Johns Brennen requesting verification of credits taken, August 28, 1950
 - h. Airmail letter from the University of Sydney (Australia) to Beulah Johns Brennen, September 19, 1950

- i. University of Pittsburgh Grade Reports (15), Fall 1950 to Spring 1957
 - j. University of Pittsburgh Grade Report, Fall 1953 to Summer 1955
 - k. Letter to Mrs. Beulah M. Johns Brennen and copy to University of Pittsburgh regarding credits earned, August 7, 1956
 - l. Memorandum of Secondary School Credit, August 30, 1956
 - m. University of Pittsburgh Grade Report, certified by Registrar to verify degree received, Fall 1939 to Fall 1956
- 6. *My Sunday Missal* (1938) and *Song and Service Book for Ship and Field* (1941), 1938-1941
- 7. War Souvenirs and Service during World War II
 - a. Shell Necklace from the Coral Sea (1943) and Japanese airplane metal made into a bracelet, New Guinea (1943)
 - b. Dog Tags and American Flag Patch from Uniform
 - c. Medals and Military Service during World War II, 1941-1945
 - i. American Campaign, 1941-1945 (2)
 - ii. Asiatic Pacific Campaign, 1941-1945
 - iii. World War II Medals (2)
 - iv. World War Stripes (1)
- 8. Military Assignments, 1942-1950
- 9. Christmas (booklet), Fort Lewis, Washington, Station Hospital, 1942
- 10. Beulah Johns, *My Life in the Service*, diary, 1942-1943 and Sketch Book with Photographs from New Guinea, 1942-1944
- 11. World War II documents, 1943-1944
 - a. United States of America, War Department, Medical Department, Red Cross Identification Card, 1943
 - b. Domain of Neptunus Rex Card (Crossed Equator), January 12, 1944
- 12. Holiday Cards and *Medic Echoes*, 1943-1944
 - a. These items were removed from the sketch book
- 13. *In the Jungles of New Guinea* by Unknown Soldier, given to Beulah Johns, circa 1944
- 14. Medical Records, 1944-1945
 - a. Immunization Register, circa World War II
 - b. Nurse's Evaluation Form, June 25, 1945
 - c. Deshon General Hospital, Butler, Pennsylvania, Accident Report – August 7, 1945
- 15. U.S. Army Military Records and Discharge/Separation Papers, 1942-1962
 - a. Commission as Second Lieutenant on July 3, 1942 (on the back of this document is her service record throughout World War II)
 - b. Commission as First Lieutenant on March 13, 1945
 - c. Army Separation Qualification Record, November 8, 1945
 - d. Commission as First Lieutenant, Army Nurse Corps, October 17, 1949
 - e. Department of Army, Change of Name from Beulah M. Johns to Beulah Mabel Brennen, November 8, 1949
 - f. Military Record and Report of Separation Certificate of Service, November 30, 1949
 - g. Supplemental Data for Medical Service Officers, December 23, 1957

- h. Honorable Discharge from the Armed Forces of the United States of America, Beulah Mabel Johns Brennen, First Lieutenant, Army Nurse Corps, USAR, January 5, 1962
- 16. Newspaper Articles, circa World War II and 2001
 - a. "Army Nurse", "110 Nurses Ready for Army Duty", "Answering the Pearl Harbor Call" and "A Passion for Nursing Leads Brennen into Action"
- 17. Post Chapel Program, Fort Lewis, Washington, circa World War II
- 18. *The Beautiful Illawarra* (booklet), South Coast of New South Wales, Australia, circa World War II
- 19. *Illustrated Guide to Taronga Park Zoo and Aquarium*, Sydney, N.S.W., circa World War II
- 20. Street Map of Sydney, Australia, circa World War II
- 21. Retirement Records, Military Service, 1950-1962
- 22. Certificate of Honor, First Lieutenant, U.S. Army, February 6, 1953
- 23. Miscellaneous World War II Related Materials, 1992-1997
 - a. 50th Anniversary of 27th General Hospital Reunion Newsletter and related material, July 11, 1992 to November 30, 1992
 - b. "Things You Never Forget" by Carolyn McManus Schneider, September 1997
- 24. U.S. Constitution Day in Butler, Pennsylvania, September 1987
 - a. "Salute to Butler" (*Pittsburgh Press*, January 8, 1939)
 - i. Note: Located in Box 2
 - b. Proclamation, *A Celebration of Citizenship Day* by Richard J. Schontz, Mayor of Butler, Pennsylvania, September 3, 1987
 - c. Proclamation, *U.S. Constitution Day* by Richard J. Schontz, Mayor of Butler, Pennsylvania, September 17, 1987
 - d. The Story of the Pledge of Allegiance
- 25. Scholarly Article written about Beulah Johns (2017):
 - a. Heflin, Tanya. (Summer 2017). "Some Job! The Private Diary of World War II Combat Nurse Beulah Johns," *Women's History* (8), pp. 30-35.

Box 2 (3 items)

- 1. Beulah Johns: "Salute to Butler" (*Pittsburgh Press*, January 8, 1939) see Box 1 Folder 24
- 2. Beulah Johns: World War II Scrapbook
- 3. Beulah Johns: University of Pittsburgh Diploma, B.S. Nursing – June 12, 1957
 - a. Note: Diploma is one of 1660 individually designed for each member of graduating class of June 1957. It is hand-lettered and lithographed on sheep-skin parchment. The University seal is stamped in gold leaf.