



ArchivesSpace

## **Bender, Violet and Irwin F.; Papers**

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M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Violet and Irwin F. Bender, Sr. Papers
<b>ID:</b>	apap342
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1941-2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	.4 cubic ft.
<b>Physical Location:</b>	The materials are located onsite in the department.
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .
<b>Mixed Materials [Collection]:</b>	X
<b>Abstract:</b>	The Violet and Irwin F. Bender, Sr. Papers document the Pennsylvania couple's shortwave radio monitoring and subsequent correspondence about prisoners of war during World War II. The papers also contain correspondence about Axis Sally, an American radio broadcaster who was working for the Third Reich during the war and was later tried and convicted of treason in the United States.

### Preferred Citation

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

Identification of specific item, series, box, folder, Violet and Irwin F. Bender, Sr. Papers, 1941-2012, M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York (hereafter referred to as the Bender Papers).

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## Historical Note

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During World War II many citizens in the United States monitored shortwave radio transmissions for information and news updates. It was often possible to hear updates about prisoners of war during these broadcasts. Irwin (born June 7, 1899-death unknown) and Violet Bender (born February 27, 1906-death unknown) of Oberlin and Harrisburg, Pa. were active in shortwave radio monitoring during this time.

Irwin worked as a milkman at the Philadelphia Dairy and Violet was a homemaker. After receiving a message about a prisoner of war, the Benders attempted to contact the respective prisoner's family to give them updates about where the prisoner was being held. The FBI investigated Irwin because of his shortwave monitoring and asked him to cease and desist which he did, but Violet kept monitoring.

It was through these radio transmissions that Irwin and Violet were introduced to a woman named Mildred Gillars (November 29, 1900-June 25, 1988), known as Axis Sally. Axis Sally was a radio broadcaster and propagandist for Germany during World War II. After the war she was returned to the United States, convicted of treason on March 10, 1949, served 12 years in prison, and then released on June 10, 1961. Violet and Irwin maintained that Axis Sally was innocent of her charges and worked tirelessly on behalf of her defense, writing letters to lawyers, politicians, and past POWs and their families in hopes of freeing her. During this time, Irwin and Violet corresponded frequently with Axis Sally's sister, Edna Gillars Herrick, which began a friendship that lasted throughout Axis Sally's incarceration.

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## Scope and Contents

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The Violet and Irwin F. Bender, Sr. Papers was donated by Irwin F. Bender Jr. The collection has been kept in the order implemented by Irwin F. Bender, Jr. The collection contains correspondence between Violet and Irwin Bender, Sr. and family members of prisoners of war during World War II with the bulk of letters dated 1943 to 1945. There is also correspondence relating to shortwave radio monitoring during World War II of Berlin and Tokyo and corresponding newspaper clippings of that and prisoners of war.

The collection also contains correspondence pertaining to Axis Sally (Mildred Gillars) and a manuscript written by Edna Gillars Herrick about her sister Axis Sally. The correspondence relates to Axis Sally's trial with letters from the Benders to politicians, lawyers, Edna Gillars Herrick, and other possible supporters of their cause to get the charges brought against Axis Sally dropped. The bulk of correspondence pertaining to the trial are from 1947 to 1950 with addition materials from 1952, 1959, and 1964.

The archivist elected to retain explanatory notes from the son of Irwin F. and Violet Bender that were donated with the collection in select folders.

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## Arrangement of the Collection

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The collection is arranged chronologically. There are no series.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

### Revision Description

Collection-level record encoded in EAD by Brian Keough. 2016 December 26

### Processing Information

Processed in 2018 by Melissa McHugh.

### Access

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### Acquisition Information

All items in this collection were donated to the University Libraries, M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives in 2013 by Irwin F. Bender, Jr.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Military and Armed Conflict
- World War, 1939-1945--Prisoners and prisons, American
- Shortwave radio
- Bender, Irwin F., Sr (Shortwave radio monitor)
- Bender, Violet (Shortwave radio monitor)
- Gillars, Mildred, 1900-1988
- Correspondence
- News Clippings

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## Collection Inventory

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Title/Description	Instances	
Papers, Letters, Notes Relating to World War II and Correspondence from Shirley Spence to Irwin Bender, Sr. and Jr., 19411943194519962012	Box 1	Folder 1
Correspondence about Shortwave Radio and World War II POWs, 1943	Box 1	Folder 2
Correspondence about Shortwave Radio and World War II POWs, 1944	Box 1	Folder 3
Revised List of 106th Division Men Who Have Been Reported Missing, Pittsburgh, PA, 1945 February 21	Box 1	Folder 4
Correspondence about Shortwave Radio and World War II POWs, 1945	Box 1	Folder 5
Correspondence about "Axis Sally's" Trial, 1947-1950195219591964 <a href="#">Digital Object: Online Object Uploaded through Hyrax UI</a>	Box 1	Folder 6
Letters and Carbon Copies to Mrs. Herrick and Mrs. Herrick's Letters to Me (Irwin Bender), M-G's Letters to Me (Irwin Bender), 1948-19521954	Box 1	Folder 7
Newspaper Clippings on "Case", 19481988Undated	Box 1	Folder 8
Alphabetical List of Names of Soldiers with Addresses and Numbers, April and May, Undated	Box 1	Folder 9
Alphabetical List of Names of Soldiers with Addresses and Numbers, August, Undated	Box 1	Folder 10

*Axis Sally is My Sister*, Undated

Box 1

Folder 11