

# **Ahrend H. Turban Collection**

## **Mss.02648**

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September 01, 2015

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## Table of Contents

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<u>Summary Information</u> .....	3
<u>Historical note</u> .....	4
<u>Biographical note</u> .....	4
<u>Scope and Contents note</u> .....	5
<u>Administrative Information</u> .....	5
<u>Related Materials</u> .....	5
<u>Controlled Access Headings</u> .....	6
<u>Accession number</u> .....	7
<u>Collection Inventory</u> .....	8
<u>Ahrend "Ben" H. Turban</u> .....	8
<u>Eris "Jerry" Turban</u> .....	10
<u>Audiotape cassettes: Dictation of Diary</u> .....	11

## Summary Information

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**Repository** History Colorado. Stephen H. Hart Research Center

**Title** Ahrend H. Turban Collection

**Date** 1911-1984

**Extent** 0.75 Linear feet

**Language** English

**Archival Material [Linear-  
Feet]** .75 lf

**Abstract** Ahrend "Ben" H. Turban (1911-1982) grew up an orphan in Colorado and fought in the Asian Pacific campaign of World War II, serving in notable battles such as Guadalcanal and Saipan. Turban served as a civil engineer and surveyor for the Marine Corps. Upon returning to the United States, Turban worked for the Colorado Highway Department from 1949 to 1974. This collection includes Turban's military documents, including his honorable discharge documents; financial documents; documents related to Turban's funeral and that of his wife Eris "Jerry" Duncan; correspondence; and, most notably, Turban's original diary kept while fighting in Asia, as well as transcripts and audiocassette dictations of Turban's diary. The collection is significant on account of Turban's diary, which details the day-to-day activities of a soldier during a significant WWII battle.

### Preferred Citation note

Cite as: Ahrend H. Turban Collection, Mss.02648 (accession 2015.47) History Colorado.

## Historical note

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The Pacific War began in December 1941 when Japan invaded Thailand and attacked United States military bases in Hawaii and the Philippines. The Battle of Guadalcanal took place between 1942 and 1943. An American reconnaissance mission mapped the construction of a Japanese airfield on the north coast of Guadalcanal, which threatened Australia. The United States conducted the first amphibious landing during World War II on August 7, 1942 and were victorious in gaining control of the airfield. Taking control of the airfield stopped Japanese expansion, and the United States evacuated Guadalcanal in February 1943.

A year after the Battle of Guadalcanal, the Battle of Saipan was a major engagement for the Allied forces' Pacific campaign. Allied forces left Pearl Harbor on June 5, 1944 for the Mariana Islands, located southeast of Japan. The Allies' surprise attack caused Japanese forces at Saipan to lose resupply connections. Japanese forces began to hide during the day and attack at night. The United States retaliated by using flamethrowers to clear the caves where the Japanese were hiding. On July 9, 1944, Saipan was secured by the Allies. At the end of the Battle of Saipan, many civilian Japanese had committed suicide at the bequest of their government in hopes of being in a higher caste in the afterlife. Along with civilian suicides, several high ranking Japanese commanders committed suicide as well. The Battle of Saipan was one of the costliest battles of World War II, killing 2,949 Americans and wounding 10,464 more. The Battle of Saipan is considered to be the turning point in the Asian Pacific campaign for Allied forces.

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## Biographical note

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Ahrend "Ben" Henry Turban was born July 13, 1911 in Denver, Colorado to Jacob Turban and Johanna Badenhop. During his childhood, Turban spent time at the Denver Orphans Home, St. Vincent's Home, and the Byers Home for Boys. He graduated from South High School and attended Colorado School of Mines. He joined the United States Marine Corps on June 17, 1938 and served as a civil engineer and surveyor. Turban served on board the USS Quincy from September 2, 1938 to September 25, 1938.

Upon returning to Colorado, Turban married Eris "Jerry" Duncan (1909-1983) on May 9, 1942. The day after their wedding, Turban was deployed to join Allied forces fighting in the Pacific. Turban served in the battles of Guadalcanal, Saipan, and Okinawa. Turban was honorably discharged on June 16, 1942 and reenlisted on June 17, 1942. He continued serving in the Asian Pacific theatre until his discharge in 1945. While in the Marine Corps, Turban was awarded the Good Conduct Medal.

After World War II, Turban returned to Colorado and worked for the highway department from 1949 to 1974. He was a member of the Schiller Masonic Lodge No. 41 AF&AM. On August 13, 1946 he was initiated as an Entered Apprentice and passed to the Fellowcraft degree on September 10, 1946. On

September 24, 1946 Ben was raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason. Turban was an avid coin collector and became respected in the field as an authority on coin values and collecting.

Turban passed away on January 15, 1982. His wife Jerry passed away on December 26, 1983. They were not survived by any children or family.

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## Scope and Contents note

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The collection includes correspondence, military papers, audio cassettes, medical documents, financial documents, birth and death certificates, materials related to funeral arrangements, and, most notably, diaries from Ben Turban during his service in the Asian Pacific theatre of World War II. The diaries and transcripts detail his daily activities in Saipan. Turban's purpose in keeping the diaries was to give his wife an idea of his day-to-day wartime activities.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

History Colorado. Stephen H. Hart Research Center

### Provenance

The material in the collection was inherited by Jerry Turban's close friends, Tom and Gladys Gallagher, after Jerry passed away in 1983. After the death of the Gallaghers, the collection was inherited by their niece, Carmen Milbury. Milbury donated the collection to History Colorado on behalf of the Gallaghers in June 2014.

### Processing Information note

Processed by Haley Suby, July 2015.

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## Related Materials

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## Related Materials note

The Ahrend H. Turban Collection is part of a larger donation of material (2015.47) that includes artifacts. Contact the Research Center staff for more information.

See also: History Colorado's Colorado Subject Collection: Biographical files: Turban, Ahrend for a transcription of Turban's 1942 diary kept during the Guadalcanal Campaign.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### Family Name(s)

- Gallagher family

### Genre(s)

- Audiotapes.
- Birth Certificates.
- Correspondence.
- Death certificates
- Diaries.
- Marriage certificates
- Newspaper clippings.
- Obituaries.
- Transcription
- Wallet
- Yearbooks.

### Personal Name(s)

- Milbury, Carmen
- Turban, Ahrend Henry, 1911-1982
- Turban, Eris, 1909-1983

### Subject(s)

- Banking and finance.
- Guadalcanal, Battle of, Solomon Islands, 1942-1943.
- Military service
- Saipan, Battle of, Northern Mariana Islands, 1944.
- World War II, 1939-1945.
- World War, 1939-1945--Campaigns--Japan--Okinawa Island.

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## **Accession number**

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2015.47

## Collection Inventory

### Ahrend "Ben" H. Turban 1911-1982

FF1 Diary June 12, 1944-Jan. 16, 1945

#### Scope and Contents note

Diary is dated as beginning on July 12, 1944. Ben Turban corrects himself entering the date as June in the following entry.

FF2 Transcribed Diary May 9-Nov. 24, 1942

FF3 Transcribed Diary June-Sept. 10, 1944

FF4 *South American Cruise* 1939

#### Scope and Contents note

Original photographs included at back of yearbook.

FF5 Promotions and Military Appointments Sept. 1939, Feb. 1940, 1942, Feb. 1944

FF6 Honorable Discharge June 1938, April 1946

FF7 Veterans Administration Nov. 1946 and Feb., Nov. 1949



Ahrend "Ben" H. Turban

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FF8 Military Cards [1938-1945]

FF9 Birth Registration July 13, 1911

FF10 Retirement Association March 1974

FF11 Wallet 1977-1981

FF12 *In Memoriam* Jan. 15, 1982

FF13 Poem and Marriage Certificate Envelope [May 9, 1942]

**Scope and Contents note**

Removed from *In Memoriam*, FF12

FF14 Death Certificate Jan. 15, 1982

**Scope and Contents note**

Removed from *In Memoriam*, FF12

FF15 Obituaries Jan. 15, 1982

**Scope and Contents note**

Removed from *In Memoriam*, FF12

FF16 Fort Logan National Cemetery Map Feb. 26, 1982

Eris "Jerry" Turban

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**Scope and Contents note**

Removed from *In Memoriam*, FF12

FF17 Obituaries and Death Certificate Jan. 1982

FF18 Correspondence to Eris "Jerry" Turban Sept. 11, 1942

FF19 Christmas Cards Undated

FF20 Newspaper Clippings [1945]

**Eris "Jerry" Turban 1931-1984**

FF21 Marriage Certificate and Affidavit to Glenn Williams Feb. 1931, Jan. 1976

FF22 Lakeside National Bank Trust April 1981, Jan. 1982, Jan, 1983-July 1984

FF23 Ancient Coin Correspondence March, May 1982

FF24 Medical Documents and Records 1983

FF25 Neusteter's Personal Fur Policy June 5, 1984

FF26 *In Memoriam* Dec. 29, 1983

FF27 In Remembrance and Obituaries Dec. 29, 1983

**Scope and Contents note**

**Audiotape cassettes: Dictation of Diary**

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Removed from *In Memoriam*, FF26

FF28 Death Certificate Dec. 26, 1983

FF29 Funeral Floral Cards Dec. 29, 1983

FF30 Obituary and Memorium Dec. 1983

FF31 Correspondence and Sympathy Cards Aug. 1983, Jan. 1984

FF32 Contact List Undated

FF33 Birth Certificate for Elizabeth Duncan May 7, 1942

FF34 In Remembrance, Prayer Cards, and Obituaries of Friends Nov. 1950, Jan. 1958, Oct. 19 62, Sept. 1965

**FF35 Audiotape cassettes: Dictation of Diary Undated**

**Scope and Contents note**

The tapes consist of Mabel, a friend of Eris "Jerry" Turban, dictating the diaries Ahrend "Ben" H. Turban wrote while fighting in the Asia Pacific campaign of WWII. The quality of the tapes is poor, the reader turns on and off the recording device between most diary entries, and the listener may have a challenging time understanding the reader through static. Most tapes run about 30 minutes, but the final tape is only 5 minutes long.

The diary entries begin when Turban is stationed in Saipan after fighting in Guadalcanal. In his entries, Turban's topics cover all information that he believes his wife Jerry will be interested in knowing upon his return to the United States after his tour. The topics he covers are as follows: living conditions,

Audiotape cassettes: Dictation of Diary

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mental and physical health, surveying and map making, receiving mail, prisoners of war, interactions with locals, and air raid sirens.

The diary entries dictated at the beginning of the tapes discuss Turban's living conditions, as much of his time is spent in making a new trench to live in. His trench was a small hole he dug in the mud with a canopy pitched above him to help keep the rain out. Turban mentions that his new "home" is nothing nice but will keep him safe. He notes that several other men who made more substantial homes were woken to bullet holes through their walls.

Turban recounts that he has been stationed in the Pacific for an extended period of time, reenlisting at each opportunity. At the time he moves to Saipan, he begins to feel the stress of the war take a toll on his mental and physical health. Turban never had to be removed from his post, but begins to mention the challenges he may face once returning to the United States. He asks for Jerry's patience if he continues to sleep with his boots on after his return. He explains that soldiers in combat zones sleep with their shoes on, since this detail of preparation helps them to feel secure. Turban is sure he can break this habit, but asks for patience from Jerry as he makes the transition back to civilian life. By the time Turban reaches Saipan, his physical health is not as bad as other soldiers in his squad. He has had malaria from the mosquitos in Guadalcanal, but not since arriving in Saipan. In Saipan, Turban struggles with fevers and episodes of dysentery.

Throughout his diaries, Turban discusses what keeps him busy during the day. In addition to repairing his campsite, he works on surveying and mapping the area as a civil engineer. During the evenings he teaches math classes to fellow soldiers to help them when they return to the United States.

Another topic that is found in the majority of his diary entries is receiving mail. Turban discusses the boost in morale he enjoys from receiving mail, and notes that every time he gets a letter from Jerry, things do not seem so bad. He asks Jerry to send him more letters to give him a taste of home.

On Saipan, Turban reports becoming more involved with the locals of the area and prisoners of war. Turban has a hard time understanding how the Japanese can be both respectful and scared of the Allied soldiers. Regarding the local Japanese population, he cannot understand how the women, children, and elderly have been able to survive. He mentions that the Japanese prisoners are surprised to be working alongside United States soldiers rather than being worked as slaves.

His final topics in his diaries focus on air raid sirens. Near the end of his journals, the Allies had begun to bomb Tokyo, which led to an increase in sirens. The sirens begin going off most nights, even when there are not enemies approaching. The constant sirens affect Turban by causing him to worry

**Audiotape cassettes: Dictation of Diary**

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continually and lose sleep. Eventually he becomes accustomed to the sirens and is once more able to sleep through the night.

**Accession number**

2015.47.6.1; 2015.47.6.2

**Existence and Location of Copies note**

Tapes were transferred to digital files on 7.31.2015. Please contact Research Center staff to access use files; USE.1.2015.47.6.1 and USE.1.2015.47.6.2.

FF35 Tape 1 Side 1 July (June) 12-July 26, 1944

FF35 Tape 1 Side 2 July 27-Sept. 13, 1944

FF35 Tape 2 Side 3 Sept. 14-Nov. 26, 1945

FF35 Tape 2 Side 4 Nov. 27, 1944-Jan. 16, 1945