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**McCOMAS, EDWARD O.**  
**1943-1954**  
**LINEAR FT.: 1.5**  
**APPROX. NO. OF PAGES: 1,000**

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Edward Otis McComas (June 25, 1919 – June 22, 1954) was a United States Air Force colonel and flying ace who served in the United States Army Air Forces as a fighter pilot during World War II.

Born in Winfield, Kansas, McComas graduated from Winfield High School in 1937 and attended Southwestern College and the University of Kansas. He enlisted in the Army Air Forces as a flying cadet in 1940, receiving a commission as a second lieutenant in 1941. In October 1943, McComas was made the commanding officer of the 118th Fighter Squadron, 23rd Fighter Group, which served in the China Burma India Theater from 1944 until the war's end. McComas's P-51 Mustang was shot down in September of 1944, and he was forced to bail out over China behind enemy lines. He was rescued by Chinese Nationalist guerillas and was safely returned to his squadron. Several months later, on December 23, McComas shot down five Japanese planes in a single day, making him the only pilot in the China Burma India Theater to achieve "ace in a day" status. The next day, McComas claimed his fourteenth and final aerial victory of the war, making him one of the top aces of the 14th Air Force. On Christmas Day, his commanding general, Claire Chennault, presented McComas a brand new P-51 Mustang.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The most significant item from this collection is an album (Series Two) that contains hundreds of photographs from McComas's World War II service in the China Burma India Theater. Some soldiers and staff members from the 23rd Fighter Group are identified, though the handwriting is often difficult to read. Materials from this album have been removed and placed in folders for preservation purposes but are kept in their original order with the captions that were attributed to them affixed to their photo sleeves. In all, this collection consists of three boxes and one oversized folder divided into three series, outlined below.

**SERIES ONE: PAPER RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS**

Consists of official and unofficial records and correspondence from McComas's military career, along with several copies of his will.

**SERIES TWO: PHOTOGRAPHS**

Consists of hundreds of photographs from McComas's World War II service in the China Burma India Theater. Photos include images of landscapes, buildings, and people from across eastern Asia and India, as well as pilots and staff from McComas's 23rd Fighter

Group. There are some materials in Series Two that are not photographs, but were retrieved from the photo album and are kept in their original order to preserve context.

**SERIES THREE: MEMORABILIA**

Consists of patches, pins, medals, and commendations from McComas's military career, along with several maps and charts that were printed on fabric.

**Keywords and Terms:** World War II; World War, 1939-1945; United States Army Air Forces; Fighter Pilots; Flying Aces; 118th Fighter Squadron; 23rd Fighter Group; Flying Tigers; Chinese Soldiers; Indian Soldiers; Currency; Nose Art; United Services Organizations (U.S.O.); Awards; Citations; Maps; Asia; Southeast Asia; China; Chinese; India; Indian

**Names:** McComas, Edward O.; Chennault, Claire L.; Williams, Herndon F.

For information on how to cite the materials in this collection, see the Clark Special Collections Citation Guide at <https://usafa.libguides.com/spc>, or contact Clark Special Collections at (719) 333-4674.

**ARRANGEMENT AND DESCRIPTION**

**SERIES ONE: PAPER RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS**

**BOX 1**

Folder 1      Paper Records

- Personal identifications documents and photos
- Official military documents and records
- Certificates
- Parachute Busters Ball program
- *Fight for America* booklet from the Korean War
- *Pointie Talkie* translation booklet from the Korean War
- Last Will and Testament of Edward McComas (4 copies)

Folder 2      Correspondence

- Letter to Lt. Col. McComas from "Charlie and Sweet Pea," 20 December 1944
- Report of Survey to Col. Edward O. McComas, April 1952
- Letter to Lt. Col. McComas, *The Wichita Beacon*, 2 February 1945
- Letter to Major McComas, *The August Herald*, 18 September 1943
- Correspondence regarding the assignment of Maj. Herndon F. Williams, 1952
- Letter from Maj. Hugh Jordan to Col. McComas, 11 January 1952
- Letter from Lt. Col. Nick Arabinko to Col. McComas, 2 June 1952

- Letter from Herndon F. Williams to Col. and Mrs. McComas, 20 June 1952

## **SERIES TWO: PHOTOGRAPHS**

### **BOX 1**

Album            Empty album that held the photographs and other items listed in folders 1-8 in Box 2. Several patches and photo captions can still be found in the album

### **BOX 2**

- Folder 1        McComas Photo Album (1 of 8): “Scenes from China.” Dozens of photos taken across China from the World War II period. Includes photos of landscapes, indigenous people, fishing boats, local homes, and temples. It also includes military photographs of trains, vehicles, and soldiers
- Folder 2        McComas Photo Album (2 of 8). Includes aerial views of Hong Kong, China, Gen. Chennault, and members of the 23rd Fighter Group
- Folder 3        McComas Photo Album (3 of 8). Includes photos of the pilots and staff of the 23rd Fighter Group, along with some women in photos captioned “U.S.O.”
- Folder 4        McComas Photo Album (4 of 8): “India.” Dozens of photos taken across India from the World War II period. Includes photos of landscapes, indigenous people, Indian soldiers, shops, local homes, temples, and soldiers.
- Folder 5        McComas Photo Album (5 of 8). Photos taken in India. Includes photos of McComas and other members of the 23rd Fighter Group as they are relaxing or having fun. Also includes photos of the nose art from their airplanes
- Folder 6        McComas Photo Album (6 of 8). Photos taken in India. Includes photos of McComas and other members of the 23rd Fighter Group as they are relaxing or having fun. Also includes photos of the nose art from their airplanes
- Folder 7        McComas Photo Album (7 of 8): Documents. Includes news articles, press releases, correspondence, an American Red Cross map of Paris, and a booklet titled “XII TAC Guide”
- Folder 8        McComas Photo Album (8 of 8): Currency. Includes bank notes from all over the world, from countries including: France, Germany, China, Belgium, Japan, India, Morocco, Africa, Japan, Egypt, and the United

States including that issued by the U.S. Military. This currency was collected throughout Col. and Mrs. McComas's travel overseas

Folder 9 McComas Photos. Dozens of miscellaneous photos of McComas, members of the 23rd Fighter Group, and others from World War II and later. Some are duplicates of those from the McComas Photo Album, while others are in color and were taken later. Several post cards are also included, as is a photo of General Chennault autographed and dedicated to McComas

OS Folder 1 Portrait of James E. Briggs, 2nd Superintendent of the US Air Force Academy

**SERIES THREE: MEMORABILIA**  
**BOX 3**

Purple Heart medal, presented on 30 October 1944

Purple Heart certificate given to Major McComas, 29 October 1954

Silver Star medal, presented on 18 April 1945

Silver Star certificate given to Lt. Col. McComas for Gallantry in Action, 29 October 1954

Legion of Merit Medal, presented to Edward O. McComas

Legion of Merit certificate given to Lt. Col. McComas, 29 October 1954

Distinguished Flying Cross Medal, presented to Lt. Col. Edward O. McComas, 9 December 1944

Distinguished Flying Cross certificate given to Major McComas, 29 October 1954

Air Medal presented to Edward O. McComas

Air Medal certificate given to Lt. Col. McComas, 29 October 1954

Certificate of promotion given to Edward O. McComas, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. in the Air Corps, 7 December 1944

Certificate of promotion given to Edward O. McComas, Major USAF, 1 July 1948

Certificate presented to Lt. Col. Edward O. McComas, graduate of the Air Command and Staff School Regular Course, 17 June 1949

Medal and Certificate of Award presented to Lt. Col. McComas from the Republic of China, 21 January 1946

Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, USA 1941-1945

WWII Medal, freedom of speech and religion 1941-1945 (2 medals)

American Defense Medal for service during the limited emergency, proclaimed by the President on September 8, 1939

Medal for service in Korea of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations

Army of Occupation Medal, 1945

American Campaign, 1941-1945

Military identification tags (Dog Tags)

Various Pins and Patches

Harmonica-Tango brand made in Germany

Folder 1      USAF cloth chart of (CL 204) Mongolia (2 copies)

USAF cloth chart of (CL 206) Gulf of Tartary

USAF cloth chart of (CL 306) Yangtze River (2 copies)

USAF cloth chart of Formosa Strait

USAF cloth chart of Lower Burma and Siam (2 copies)

AAF cloth map-Asiatic series, No. 34, Southeast China

Cloth map of Eastern and Western China

American Flag cloth with autographs. Readable names include Johnny E. Voznica, Fred Poats, Oran S. Watts, R.M. Phillips, Wayne G. Johnson, though there are many more that are illegible

Scarf embroidered with the 14th U.S. Air Force Emblem, China 1945. The other side says "China Burma India," with an American flag and a Chinese flag