



The letters are mostly from O'Loughlin to his mother in Connecticut while he was finishing his tour of duty as a shipfitter on the U.S.S. Mercy between 1918 and 1919. Much of the content of the letters has to do with O'Loughlin trying to leave the Navy. In a letter from early 1919 he writes, "I have in my request to get out of the Navy, but I don't know how soon it will be, but it can't be any too soon, I would be willing to go to work in the mine, and stay there to get out of here, there is nothing in it but about four hours sleep and eat, if you get a square meal once a week, you can consider yourself lucky." In April of 1919 he writes, "well I guess there isn't any chance of me getting out this time," he continues discussing a letter he wants his mom to write, "make it good and strong, a few lies won't hurt if I get out." By June he was still trying to get his discharge papers and writes, "they are discharging twelve hospital corp, it seems as if they have forgotten the carpenter shop, but some day my turn will come." Two letters from the U.S.S. Mercy are included in the lot and they are from April and July 1919. The first letter is to Thomas' mother in April of 1919 and regrets to inform her "it is not possible to discharge the above named man at this time. However, I trust it may be possible to release him in the near future." Included with that letter is a small leaflet "To the Relative of America's Soldiers and Sailors" which describes the role their family members are playing and why they should get medical insurance. The final letter from July 1919 is to Reverend John F. Donohue who wrote to the Navy on behalf of the O'Loughlins. This letter reads, "I have to inform you that every consideration has been given to his request, but owing to the large number of more urgent cases and the fact that only a small percent of the men are released each month it has not been possible to act favorably on his request." A certificate from the Treasury Department was sent to his wife, Ann, detailing the facts of his life insurance. A dinner menu from the July 4th celebration of 1918 and a newspaper clipping on a wedding that took place on board are also included in the archive.

The U.S.S. Mercy, formerly the U.S.S. Saratoga, was commissioned in 1917 as a hospital ship with the U.S. Navy. They made a total of four round trips to France to transport wounded which amounted to nearly 2,000 by 1919. The Mercy was also the first hospital ship to allow female nurses on board and was "outfitted with state-of-the-art operating rooms and X-ray labs and could accommodate 500 patients."

A modest but interesting collection of letters and ephemera pertaining to a U.S. Navy seaman during World War I. [BTC#414125]