



National Museum of Health and Medicine

Otis Historical Archives

OHA 303 Silliphant Collection

Accession Number: AFIP 519,900

Date of Records: 1945-1969

Size: 2 linear feet, 3 boxes

Finding Aid: by Laura Cutter (2012); revised by Eric W. Boyle (2014)

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Biographical Note: William Merrill Silliphant was born on Prince Edward Island, Canada on August 23, 1900, the son of John Ambrose and Julia Beatrice (Binns). In 1924, he graduated with honors from Prince of Wales College in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. He completed a Bachelor of Arts (cum laude) from the University of Southern California two years later. In 1930, one year before earning his medical degree from Stanford University, Silliphant became a naturalized United States citizen.

In July 1930, Silliphant was commissioned a lieutenant in the Navel Medical Corps, and until 1933 served aboard the battleship USS Colorado and with Destroyer Division Five, Pacific Fleet. Over the next two years he received post graduate training in pathology at the Naval Medical School, followed by five years as a supervisor of laboratories and medical wards throughout the United States. In December 1941, as the United States entered World War II, Silliphant was stationed in the Philippines. From 1942 through 1945, he was interned by the Japanese and served as laboratory, ward medical and preventative medicine officer at the Bilibid Prison Hospital for Prisoners of War at Manila. The medical personnel at Bilibid, including Silliphant, struggled against overwhelming odds to care for their patients as the prison was ravaged by malnutrition and disease. Silliphant later wrote his memoirs of this period, entitled *Under Japanese Bayonets*.

After liberation, having been advanced to the rank of captain, Silliphant was sent to the Naval Hospital in Long Beach for eight months and was subsequently named director of laboratories and medical training at the United States Naval Medical School in Bethesda, Maryland, a post he held until February 1952. At that time he was named deputy director of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) and was promoted to director three years later, coinciding with the Institute's relocation to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center campus. Upon his retirement from the Navy in 1959, Silliphant was made a rear admiral for meritorious performance of duty in combat and accepted a position as associate director of the Cancer Research Institute at the University of California Medical School. He continued his own



research, adding to his long list of publications, as well as serving as a clinical professor of pathology. His professional affiliations were numerous, as were his honors, both military and civilian.

He was married in 1930 to Jean Rice Morse and was the father of two daughters, Mary Ruth Morse (Jett) and Elizabeth Ann (Goffinet). Silliphant died in San Francisco, California on May 29, 1967.

Series/Scope and Content Note: This collection includes the personal papers and histology slides of Rear Admiral William M. Silliphant. Paper records include photographs, manuscripts, reprints, curriculum vitae, news clippings, and correspondence documenting Silliphant's internment by the Japanese during World War II and his subsequent military career, including his time as the director of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. The histologic material is comprised of nine boxes containing Silliphant's personal collection of pathology slides. Related Material can be found in OHA 154.05: Epidemic Hemorrhagic Fever Lantern Slides. This was Dr. Silliphant's personal set and contains 65 slides.

SERIES 001: PERSONAL PAPERS

This series contains biographical and published material related to Silliphant's military career. The bulk of the material consists of professional publications and his personal memoirs documenting his experiences while interned by the Japanese in Philippines during World War II. Included in the collection is a letter from President Harry S. Truman to Silliphant, sent upon his return at the end of the war. There is a small amount of biographical material, as well as photographs and letters celebrating his retirement.

SERIES 002: HISTOLOGY SLIDES

This series contains the personal pathological slides of William Silliphant. Many of the slides include AFIP repository numbers, reflecting the eight years that Silliphant worked at AFIP. The slides were originally arranged alphabetically, by anatomical description, in 14 slide boxes. Five of the boxes are missing, but their contents are documented in the inventories accompanying the collection.

Of the boxes that remain with the collection, most are missing some slides. The description for each box includes the complete list of what the contents should be, and then indicates which slides are missing. In two instances, prior to the donation of the collection, the missing slides were replaced with slides from boxes that are now missing (The 50 missing slides from slide box 11 were replaced with slides from slide box 5. The 62 missing slides from slide box 12 were replaced with slides from slide box 14).

Notes on missing boxes:

- Slide box 1 (adrenals, aorta, appendix, bacteria, bladder, blood)
- Slide box 5 (kidney and liver)
- Slide box 6 (lung and lymph)
- Slide box 7 (muscles, pancreas, parasitic diseases, parotid gland, pituitary gland, prostate gland)



- Slide box 14 (carotid body tumor, glomus tumor, Whipple's disease, foreign body reaction, liposarcoma, nerve tissue, autopsy of Meyers Lympho-sarcoma)

BOX AND CONTENT LIST

SERIES 001: PERSONAL PAPERS

Box 001:

00001: Biographical material.

00002: Press releases and articles about William Silliphant.

00003: Letter from President Harry S. Truman, 1946.

00004: List of publications by William Silliphant, 1969.

00005: "Under the Japs in Bilibid" by William Silliphant [signed manuscript].

00006: "The Freeing of Bilibid," *The New Yorker*, 3 March 1945, p. 56.

00007: "Behind Japanese Bayonets" by William Silliphant.

00008: Publications by William Silliphant, 1948-1964.

00009: Bound volume of letters presented to Captain Silliphant upon his retirement from AFIP, 1959.

00010: Photographs of William Silliphant, 1959.

00011: Photographs of William Silliphant, 1959.

SERIES 002: HISTOLOGY SLIDES

Box 002:

00001: Slide Box 2: blood 1-25; bone 26-79; brain 80-100. Missing slides 14-21, 23-26, 39.

00002: Slide Box 3: brain 1-35; breast 36-84; esophagus 85-90; epididymis 91-100. Missing slides 19-25, 67-84, 86-90, 96-100.

00003: Slide Box 4: gall bladder 1-15; gastro-intestinal tract 16-35; heart 36-60; joints (including tendons) 61-80 ; kidney 81-100. Missing slides 39-67, 1-15.

00004: Slide Box 8: prostate 1-15; rectum 16-40; skin 41-100. Missing slides 8-15, 28-40.



00005: Slide Box 9: skin 1-25; spleen 26-55; stomach 56-75; testicle 76-92; thymus 93-100. Missing slides 18-25, 46-51, 55-58, 63-75, 86-92, 96-100.

00006: Slide Box 10: thyroid 1-35; trachea 36-42; urethra 43-50; cervix 51-84; uterus 85-100.

00007: Slide Box 11: uterus 1-10; tubal pregnancy 11-15; placenta 16-45; vagina 46-55; salpinx 56-70; ovary 71-100. Missing slides 50-100 replaced with slides from slide box 5 (kidney 50-68 and liver 69-100).

Box 003:

00001: Slide box 12: ovary 1-17; endometrium 51-69. Missing slides 18-50 and 70-100 replaced with slides from slide box 14 (Miscellaneous).

00002: Slide box 13: dental 1-9; eye 19-29; nasal 30-39; epiglottis 40-55; vocal cord 56-69; larynx 70-90; mouth and tongue 91-100.