Ruth Bacon Buchanan corresponded with thousands of Michigan students who went off to war. Her archive is extraordinary documentation of lives anchored at U-M in the midst of the world crisis.
Night after night during World War II, Ruth Buchanan would leave her workplace at the University of Michigan and return home to her second job.

By the thousands and with clockwork precision, Buchanan wrote to U-M students, faculty, staff and alumni serving in the war. She mailed letters, greeting cards, and copies of The Michigan Daily. Whether they were stationed stateside, recuperating in hospitals, or seeing action in Europe and the Pacific, students could expect to hear news about Ann Arbor from Buchanan.

Her correspondence was staggering: 17,828 letters; 6,952 birthday cards; 7,398 get-well cards. Over the course of the war, she mailed more than 57,000 copies of the Daily to servicemen and women with U-M ties.

Their response was dramatic, and makes for one of the country’s richest collections of wartime correspondence. Archived at the Bentley Historical Library, the Ruth B. Buchanan Papers provide insight into the mindset of U-M students encountering all aspects of war: camaraderie, loss, boredom, culture clash, and a deep longing for home.

In particular, students’ reminiscences of U-M and Ann Arbor carry themes that resonate with generations of Michigan alumni.

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Some reference text was present in the image.
No theme runs stronger through letters to Aunt Ruth than memories of Ann Arbor. Recollections of campus life, from the mundane to the majestic, clearly sustained students and alumni throughout their military training and service.

**John Sterling Chase, U.S. Army**  
Jan. 25, 1942  
California

“We are on seven-day week basis here, with a skeleton crew on Sunday afternoons. This is my Sunday on the skeleton crew and since work is pretty well caught up, I’m typing a few letters here at the office. My work is similar to the work done in the File Room at University Hospital of which Miss Batchelder has charge. We are kept busy most of the time. Now that war has started, the training program has been intensified and takes up the time left after our hours of duty in the hospital.

“While sitting here writing this letter, many Ann Arbor memories return to mind. While there, I lived on the corner of State and Catherine. It wasn’t a bad walk to school while I was attending the University but sometimes it seemed a long way to the hospital on a cold, stormy morning.”

**Margaret “Peg” (Ross) Emery, USNR WAVES**  
Wife of Richard Emery, who was stationed in Norfolk, Va.  
Date unknown, most likely 1943

“I want to start this letter because I also am enjoying the Dailies more than you’ll ever know. When my parents and sorority sisters get a little bit negligent about writing I still can get some word of Ann Arbor. So you see you are keeping up the morale of the boys in a second, indirect way. By keeping their wives happy and un-homesick (is there such a word?), the wives are more able to keep their husbands happy. And something from home certainly keeps me happy since Ann Arbor is also my home as well as the place I go to school.”

**Philip F. Wicklund, U.S. Coast Guard**  
May 24, 1943  
“Overseas”

“I received my degree (A.B.) from the hand of Alexander (Ruthven) in June 1938 in Ann Arbor, and so of course I have a certain interest in the University and the town. I have many pleasant memories of the place.”

“Little did I dream when I left the stately portals of Angell Hall that in four years I would be running around in bell-bottom pants. But so it goes.”

**Philip F. Wicklund, U.S. Coast Guard**  
July 26, 1943

“Too bad the girls have to take over the job of beautifying the campus. … I myself, in my humble way, spent many an hour washing the windows in Angell Hall. Later I got a more refined job in the Middle English Dictionary office. Today I know more about window washing than I do about the Middle English Dictionary. All I recall about it is a man named Price who spoke perfect English (probably Middle), but whose son, for some unknown reason, had a strong German accent.

“Sorry to see the dances at the League have been discontinued. I had some fine times there trucking around. But everything changes.”

**Alvin C. Clark, U.S. Army**  
April 5, 1944  
Camp McCoy, Wis.

“This is a lovely camp but I had much rather be back in Ann Arbor. I did so want to be there when the trees started leafing out again.”

**George F. Ceithaml, U.S. Navy**  
April 9, 1944

“The weather over here is becoming more and more like Ann Arbor spring. Golly I sure think of A2 a lot and can’t wait till I see it and its citizens again. I never thought I would become such an enthusiastic supporter of any organization. I always felt that I just wasn’t built that way. But just have someone say, “boo” about good ole Mich and I’m down his throat in a hurry. I’ve got the “Joe College Spirit,” I guess. I’ve been meeting quite a few Michigan men in this area and boy do we talk over good times.”

**Stanley G. Waltz, U.S. Army**  
June 8, 1944  
“Somewhere in England”

“Suspect you may have thought I would go into France with the first invasion — can just imagine how (wife) Catherine must have worried. Please assure all my friends I am well and happy and not concerned about the future. I wanted to get foreign duty and
won’t complain, come what may. This is the biggest show the world has ever seen, and I am proud to play a small part in it."

Donzel Betts, U.S. Army
June 24, 1944
Camp McCoy, Wis.
“Now it seems that I have forgotten many of the things I learned in school there, but I have not forgotten the good times we had together. It is too bad we didn’t learn to know each other sooner.

“Are there many Army fellows left on the campus?”

Alvin C. Clark, U.S. Army
Aug. 24, 1944
Germany
“I dreamed last night or this morning that I came back to Ann Arbor for a visit. I could see the Tower and Hill Auditorium as plainly as if I had actually been there. Shows I really want to come back there. Somehow I never got any further than the museum door. I was afraid of those panthers. Silly dream, wasn’t it?”

Hildie A. Johnson, U.S. Navy WAVES
Dec. 6, 1944
U.S. Naval Training School (Women’s Reserve), Bronx, N.Y.
“I got your name through a friend of mine—a Lt. Bob Barrie of the Naval Air Corps. Bob and I have been great friends since our sophomore year… way back there in 1941… and we both regard Ann Arbor and its doings in sort of an ethereal light… since we’ve been away, it has also taken on the aura of a mecca.”

Hildie A. Johnson, U.S. Navy WAVES
Jan. 2, 1945
Written after visiting campus while on leave
“Leave in Ann Arbor was just grand! I got to Ship’s Ball… and I felt almost like a co-ed again. That college atmosphere is perpetual, I guess. Although faces were different, still the kids do the same things and think and talk about the same things as when I was in school. It does me a lot of good to realize that—I’d hate to have to come back to a totally different campus.”

James A. Baird, U.S. Navy
Feb. 21, 1945
“Somewhere on the Pacific”
“I can still remember the day that I was walking through the museum and you asked me to sign my name and birthday. The service still seemed far away, but looked like a lot of fun. It so happened that it was very close and not as much fun as I expected. Although I’ll have to admit I have had a lot of fun and have seen places I probably wouldn’t have seen otherwise.

“I imagine the University has changed a great deal since I left. More women and less men. I would certainly like to be back right now.”

James A. Baird, U.S. Navy
April 8, 1945
“Somewhere in the Pac.”
“I wish I could be back at school right now. The spring at Ann Arbor is the highlight of the season to me. It’s so hot here that you could fry an egg on the deck. However, the islands around here are very beautiful. The colored coral also add a great deal.

“I imagine that the campus is now loaded with girls. It certainly is different than it was in peacetime. I wonder what it would be like if the war wasn’t going? I think there would be just as many girls as there is now.”

Wallace K. Klager, U.S. Army
May 10, 1945
Goppingen, Germany, with the 7th Army
“Yesterday I heard re-broadcasts of the V-Day speeches of both the President and the Prime Minister, also some of the celebrating in London. I would have liked to have seen there again, or better still to have been at home or in Ann Arbor. One of these days not too distant all the fellows will be back there again and things will seem normal again, at least to me.”

George F. Ceithaml, U.S. Navy
Aug. 21, 1945
Stateside
“The Navy has its point system for discharge out and I don’t come close to it. It bothers me, for while I was more than willing to give up my personal safety and desires to share the burden of war—I am now of the opinion, that the share I contributed, no matter how small, is all I expected to do and how I want to return to Ann Arbor and a life I do desire. There are many more like me and I also feel they are right.”

Arlie D. Reagan, U.S. Navy
Aug. 24, 1945
U.S. Naval Hospital, Corona, Calif.
“I bet, already, many of your boys are coming back to Ann Arbor to see you. You, young lady, are going to have many callers from now on. WOO! WOO! Sure wish I could get back there sooner.”

RESOURCES
Learn more about Professor Hereward Thimbleby Price:
http://um2017.org/faculty-history/faculty/hereward-thimbleby-price
The love of U-M football remained strong regardless of where students and alumni were stationed. Through radio broadcasts and dated clippings from *The Michigan Daily*, they followed the ups and downs of their beloved Wolverines.

**John Sterling Chase, U.S. Army**  
**Nov. 15, 1942**  
**California**  
“Was glad to hear that Michigan beat Notre Dame. Didn’t get to hear it on the radio but heard the scores later in the evening. Wish they could beat the jinx that Minnesota has on them.”

U-M defeated Notre Dame, 32-20, after falling earlier to Minnesota, 16-14. The Wolverines would finish the 1942 season 7-3 and ranked 9th nationally.

**John Sterling Chase, U.S. Army**  
**Oct. 28, 1943**  
**California**  
“Am able to admit I’m a Michigan man these days, since Michigan has been doing well at football, except the Notre Dame game!”

Notre Dame topped Michigan, 35-12, for the Wolverines only loss in the 1943 season. The team finished 8-1 and ranked 3rd in the country.

**Arlie D. Reagan, U.S. Navy**  
**Aug. 26, 1944**  
**At sea**  
“The sport section always is the most interesting. It seems old Fritz Crisler is about ‘tops’ in his business. By the way, did I tell you Fritz sent me a letter a short while ago telling me to avoid the rush and get my season football tickets early? Boy if only I could use a few of them—even just one.”

Coach Fritz Crisler led the Wolverines for 10 seasons, compiling a 71-16-3 record.

**Wallace K. Klager, U.S. Army**  
**Sept. 10, 1944**  
**Camp Joseph T. Robinson, North Little Rock, Ark.**  
“I heard over the radio yesterday that the U-M-Iowa Cadets game is to be broadcast over a national network next Saturday from Ann Arbor. I sure hope I have a chance to listen.”

**Wallace K. Klager, U.S. Army**  
**Sept. 30, 1944**  
**Camp Joseph T. Robinson, North Little Rock, Ark.**  
“I heard the Michigan-Seahawks game O.K. that Saturday two weeks ago. It was so exciting and I really enjoyed it. It was on all three Little Rock stations so I had my choice of announcers. Each network had its own. Of course at every touchdown the band was picked up from the field microphones and I turned the volume way up on the radio. I think all of Camp Robinson heard ‘The Victors’ then! It really sounded like old times to hear the band, but the cheers didn’t seem as loud this year. Smaller audience perhaps.”

Michigan’s 1944 season opener was a 12-7 winning effort against the Iowa Pre-Flight School Seahawks, a team of Navy cadets in training at the University of Iowa. The Seahawks competed for three seasons—1942-44—and compiled an impressive 26-5 record. Their only loss in 1944 was to U-M.

**John Sterling Chase, U.S. Army**  
**Sept. 23, 1945**  
**California**  
“Was standing in line at the Service Club last night to get my Saturday chocolate sundae (some spree, huh?) and heard someone say Indiana had beaten Michigan yesterday. Sad!! Hope they get going, yet.”

Michigan suffered its first loss of the 1945 season to Indiana at home, 13-7.

**Kathryn Baumeister, Cadet Nurse Corps**  
**Nov. 24, 1945**  
**Community Hospital, Irving Park, Battle Creek, Mich.**  
“I have the radio on here beside me and they are playing marches. It sure puts you in the mood for football, as one of the girls calls them. Wish I could be there for this game today. Bet my throat would be much more sore than it is at present time. I know that I won’t give in until I have to. Have had this cold for ages but it seems I can’t get over it. I’m keeping my fingers crossed. “They have started the broadcast and I take it the game is really going to be close. I just don’t know who is going to win, but Michigan had better.”

Michigan defeated Ohio State, 7-3, before more than 85,000 fans at Michigan Stadium. The team finished the season 7-3.

RESOURCES  
Learn more about Herbert O.(Fritz) Crisler:  
http://bentley.umich.edu/athdept/football/coaches/hcrisler.htm
Students' wartime letters to Aunt Ruth revealed a growing level of maturity as they encountered the lessons and responsibilities of adulthood, often far from home and family.

Arlie D. Reagan, U.S. Navy
Aug. 15, 1943
“You know, Aunt Ruth, since I have been in the Navy I’ve learned so much about life in such a short while. You’d be surprised really. My life has taken on so much added meaning that it astounds me. I’ve begun to realize ‘just what the score is.’ What liberty, freedom, the pursuit of happiness that I’ve heard so much about really means. The rights of all men to the freedoms must not be stepped on. Oh, and if only I could express just how I feel. People, I believe, just don’t realize how serious this thing really is. I certainly didn’t until I came face to face with realities here and about.”

George F. Ceithaml, U.S. Navy
Jan. 23, 1944
“Overseas”
“At the moment we are resting a bit after having a little “pow wow” with the other side. Our warpath took us the closest I’ve been to the enemy (couldn’t get any closer when you think about it). I can’t say much about it yet so I guess it will have to wait. I can say this—going into the beach I feel just as though I was going into my first football game. Tense, eager and anxious to get started.” (Ceithaml played on the U-M football team.)

James A. Baird, U.S. Navy
Feb. 21, 1945
“Somewhere on the Pacific”
“I can still remember the day that I was walking through the museum and you asked me to sign my name and birthday. The service still seemed far away, but looked like a lot of fun. It so happened that it was very close and not as much fun as I expected. Although I’ll have to admit I have had a lot of fun and have seen places I probably wouldn’t have seen otherwise.”

Philip F. Wicklund, U.S. Coast Guard
March 16, 1945
Southwest Pacific
“A very saddening thing has happened to me—my mother died the middle of February—she had been ill quite a while but I didn’t expect the end so soon. It was quite a shock. She worried about me a great deal, despite the fact I told her we never got in any combat and were perfectly safe. But I really believe that war is a greater strain on the serviceman’s family than on him—in most cases, at least.”

Philip F. Wicklund, U.S. Coast Guard
July 10, 1945
Steaming toward Manila
“We are underway, the blackout is ended, and tonight for the first time in my war experience we are burning lights while at sea. The running lights—red to port and green to starboard—the masthead light, the range lights and the blue stern light, all are burning, dimmer to a visibility of two miles.

“What a feeling of hope it gives me to see these lights—hope that since vast areas of the Pacific are safe for Allied ships, the war might end fairly soon. Such a small thing brought home to me the significance of our progress in the Pacific war much more forcibly than all the news reports of Japanese cities burning and the success of our arms to the north.”

Philip F. Wicklund, U.S. Coast Guard
Aug. 1, 1945
Manila
“Most of the buildings are completely wrecked; the place is dirty; and disease, inflation, bad liquor and loose women flourish there.”

Hildie A. Johnson, U.S. Navy WAVES
Aug. 13, 1945
Minneapolis
“Today, while we’re all anxiously awaiting for the news that Japan has finally realized that she is licked, one can’t help, somehow, but look back on the long years of struggle and heartbreak and be ever so thankful that it is almost over. In any reminiscing, however, there stands out clearly the memory of you, and the many people like you, who through their thoughtful kindnesses have made many a dark day brighter for those lonely and far away from home.

“Thank you, Aunt Ruth, for being you…and for your heart which is big enough to encompass so many of your ‘nieces and nephews’ now in the various services. It’s been a real privilege to have become acquainted with you.”

Alvin C. Clark, U.S. Army
Nov. 1, 1945
Kentucky
“Did I tell you that I was supposed to be married when I returned from overseas? Well, I was, but instead we had a misunderstanding and now she is engaged to another fellow. Supposed to be married the 22 of December. I received the ring in this morning’s mail. It is a pearl studded with diamonds on each side. What am I to do with it?”

CHAPTER 4
From Boys to Men
“War only touches us when a ship fails to return from a mission and a pilot one has known since Tuskegee is not around to return your salute. It hurts.”

– William P. Bostic
June 30, 1944
Italy

At least 450 U-M students, faculty, staff and alumni lost their lives to combat, disease or accidents during the war.

Writing from the Philippines in the fall of 1944, Engineering student and Navy Seabee Arlie Reagan shared the fear of being under Japanese attack.

“I saw my first Zero and they didn’t look good from where I sat—at least until they started falling into the water. We had pretty rough going because I was in charge of an unloading detail aboard ship and we sat like ducks on a pond while planes came over too regularly,” he wrote.

“We were at ‘condition red’ (planes in vicinity) almost constantly and when the bombers came over and started dropping their ‘eggs’ I was downright scared and I don’t mean maybe—because our ship wasn’t carrying only K-rations. A hit or even a near-miss would have been just too bad.”

Buchanan corresponded with Kuehn and his mother, Elsie, as the young sailor recuperated away from campus. Despite Buchanan’s encouragement, Kuehn was skeptical about returning to his studies.

“Rehabilitation clearly was a struggle for Kuehn.

“We have been lax in writing you, but I guess I must be getting lazy lying in bed all the time,” he wrote in the spring of 1945. “I haven’t been up in a wheelchair since last October, but have hopes it may soon come about. Otherwise I feel fine but am afraid I’m putting on quite a bit of weight. Guess they’ll have to roll me out of here like a barrel.”

Kuehn succumbed to his injury in October 1947. He was 24.

Buchanan was clearly fond of him, and went so far as to arrange a date for Dangler once he returned to Michigan.

“I realize that it is almost a year now for our acquaintance,” Dangler wrote, “and wish we could celebrate, together a little if possible. I dare not tell you where I am, or even give you the faintest hint, but rest assured that it is quite a distance. Someday when this is over and I will be able to tell you, I know you’ll be surprised and agree with me that you never thought so.”

After failing to hear from Dangler after several months, Buchanan turned to the Bureau of Naval Personnel for information. Officials there confirmed for her that Dangler died in a plane crash in May 1943. “The Navy Department extends sincere sympathy to you in the loss of your friend, Lawrence.”
CHAPTER 6

Lessons Learned

Soldiers and sailors relayed how the lessons of U-M faculty translated in wartime, and what those professors meant to them.

John Sterling Chase, U.S. Army
April 26, 1942
California
“This reminds me to tell you that my real hobby is travel… The means of travel have changed from thumb to railroad. I have been interested in railroads ever since taking a course under Prof. Sharfman at Michigan and have done quite a bit of reading on their problems as well as pursuing the secondary hobby of mastering the railroad timetables.”

Philip F. Wicklund, U.S. Coast Guard
Aug. 24, 1943
At sea
“I took some astronomy in Michigan, never dreaming I would ever have any use for it, but the little I can remember of it now comes in handy. It proves that all fields of learning are related, and maybe, if I understand Emerson right—everything is related to everything else.”

Wallace K. Klager, U.S. Army
Feb. 18, 1944
Army Specialized Training Program, City College of New York
“Oh, of course, this school doesn’t compare with U-M but still, I am getting some courses which may be of value when I return to Ann Arbor.”

Richard C. Emery, U.S. Navy
June 1, 1944
“I really can’t write very much without violating the regulations. I’ve learned a lot since we went to sea and put the ship through the paces. My particular work on board is radar and that is about all I can say about that except it’s great stuff and I really like the job pretty well. A lot of stuff that we learned in Ann Arbor is coming in handy now—but there are ever so many things that a guy must pick up by experience. I realize this is true in all fields but especially so in the Navy.”

RESOURCES
Learn more about Professor Isaiah Leo Sharfman:
http://um2017.org/faculty-history/faculty/isaiah-leo-sharfman

Learn more about Professor Hazel M. Losh:
http://um2017.org/faculty-history/faculty/hazel-m-losh
African-American students serving in the military often found themselves facing a domestic enemy: racism. Among the most telling letters were those from James R. Terrell, a 1943 graduate of LSA and 1939 alumnus of Ann Arbor High School.

As a U-M student, Terrell was active in the Choral Union, Student Religious Association and the Michiganensian yearbook staff. He also served as vice president of the Interracial Association.

Aunt Ruth noted Terrell as a “colored lad” in her filing system.

Terrell’s service in the U.S. Navy saw him stationed throughout the American South.

Nov. 22, 1945
Nashville, Tenn.
“As you may know, the Navy has embarked on a very rigorous policy of racial integration, a policy which is quite in keeping with America’s democratic heritage. … When I was assigned to Nashville I felt a bit alarmed, for life in the South hardly presents a pleasant prospect to a Negro. The city of Nashville, of course, follows the traditional Southern pattern of rigid segregation. To me personally it is humiliating and infuriating to have to submit to all of the segregation even in spite of the fact that I am a member of the armed forces. … It seems such a tragedy to see the effects of a bi-racial system. Not only does it have a crippling effect upon the personalities of the Negroes of the South, but likewise it has a crippling effect upon the whites. Together, each could do so much to stimulate the other.”

Feb. 28, 1946
Gulfport, Miss.
“But once I go outside the gates of the base things are not pleasant. Conditions for Negroes in Mississippi are the worst I have ever seen—so bad that the conditions I described in Nashville seem mild. The fact that we are in the uniform of our country means nothing here. One constantly is confronted with the most insulting and revolting conditions. I have simply adopted the policy of not frequenting these small towns any more than is necessary.”

June 3, 1946
Orange, Texas
“In many ways the people here seem more intolerant and I’ve encountered a few rather unpleasant moments. It has been harder to fight off this indiscriminate hatred—indeed it is because I have made such pleasant friendships with the Southern fellows stationed here that I know that all Southerners are not bad—perhaps only a few. Much of the evil of the South stems solely from the social structure here which forces people into certain molds often even in spite of themselves. It still amazes me that the Civil War is still such a live issue in these parts even in spite of the fact that two major world holocausts have occurred in the meantime.”

“It seems imperative to me that in order to best serve my country I must at all times do whatever is in my power to combat racial intolerance and bigotry.”
Home from the war, alumni had conflicting answers to Ruth Buchanan’s questions about future military service, America’s new role in the world, and their obligations as military veterans.

**Should military training be compulsory?**

**Wendell G. Anderson, U.S. Army**  
*Undated 1946  
*Aix-en-Provence, France*  
“Americans of two generations have witnessed the near disaster of unpreparedness at the beginnings of two great wars. It could only be termed foolhardy to tempt fate a third time… It has been rightly said that, as a nation, Americans are not very strongly inclined toward military activities… It seems to me that compulsion is the only solution. Surely we can well afford being shoved about a little for so great a cause.”

**Donzel Betts, U.S. Army**  
*April 15, 1946  
*Ann Arbor*  
“Compulsory military training may have some definite advantages, but the ill effects it would have upon young men and our society would far over-balance any good effects that it might have. A better plan would be to make the present army more democratic with less difference in the pay, clothes, and privileges, between officers and enlisted men… Not near all of the factors have been here discussed, but as a parting shot I would like to suggest that as long as we continue to train a great number of men and make atom bombs, the other nations will know that we have little hope of the United Nations preventing another war.”

**Should American troops withdraw from occupied countries?**

**Robert M. Barrie, U.S. Navy**  
*April 11, 1946  
*Ann Arbor*  
“From our own experience in the South during Reconstruction we should realize the limits to the efficacy of military occupation and government. I would therefore favor replacement of the occupation forces with strategically spotted civilian agencies as soon as the possibility of renewed armed resistance has been eliminated… Military occupation, as practiced today, smacks of the traditional, unilateral policy of subjecting and degrading the defeated enemy, and probably creates as many problems of reconstruction as it solves.”

**Ace R. Cory, U.S. Marines**  
*Oct. 15, 1946*  
“No withdrawal until we can see the shape of the future and the intentions of the occupied countries.”

**Where is the peace and why?**

**Robert M. Barrie, U.S. Navy**  
*April 11, 1946  
*Ann Arbor*  
“I should say that an effective, international, absolute control of atomic energy to obviate its application to military purposes is the first condition to permanent peace … The A-bomb has added ‘or else’ to the words of Christ … Beside this monumental problem, all others appear almost insignificant.”

**Richard C. Emery, U.S. Navy**  
*May 26, 1946*  
“The way of the present ‘peace’ is that our overwhelming production just plain wore out the enemy. It seems sure probable to me that we will have another war within the next 10 years, but I sincerely hope that as a starter, everyone will be afraid of the next guy so much that peace will be enforced and that gradually some such organization as the UN will become powerful enough to continue peace.”

**What will be your responsibility for the future of our country when you will return to civilian life/now that you are out of uniform?**

**Donzel Betts, U.S. Army**  
*April 15, 1946  
*Ann Arbor*  
“… to be forever and constantly on the alert to keep our country from following a course that will lead us to another war. I should be ever ready to support or secure by legislative action those laws which will preserve those principles of right for which we fought and many died. Especially I consider it my duty to keep oncoming generations informed that war is not glorious nor noble. That the life of a soldier is not desirable. And, that in war everyone loses; there is no victor in war.”

**John Sterling Chase, U.S. Army**  
*April 15, 1946*  
“The primary civic responsibility of all people, not just returned servicemen, is to study the issues involved in all governmental activities, and to know what candidates really stand for and what actions they will take, if elected to various offices of government, and then to always exert their influence at least by casting a vote in all elections.”
• Born Ruth Bacon in May 1882 in Harbor Beach, Mich. Her father, Elbridge Bacon, was an attorney who later moved his family to Detroit.

• Attended Michigan State Normal College, today known as Eastern Michigan University.

• Housemother of U-M’s first cooperative house, an all-male residence known as the Socialist House, which opened in 1932. She told the Detroit News: “I have always been interested in boys, especially the ones who work their way through college.” Today, an Inter-Cooperative Council house at 321 N. Thayer St. is called Ruth’s House, honoring Buchanan and former ICC President Ruth Bluck.

• Younger brother, Elbridge F. Bacon, earned a U-M degree in aeronautical engineering in 1922.

• Although divorced from their father, her three stepsons lived with her while attending U-M. Alexander D. Buchanan graduated in 1923 with a degree in aeronautical engineering; Charles D. Buchanan earned his degree in German in 1925; and Bruce Buchanan earned a civil engineering degree in 1926.

• Member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the International Order of The King’s Daughters and Sons.

• In her mid-40s, she enrolled in U-M classes in architecture, art, journalism and drama “to catch up on some courses I had missed earlier.”

• Wrote several plays that were later performed by U-M students with the Wesley Players.

• Collected stamps.

• President of the Washtenaw County Federation of Women’s Clubs.

• Sang alto with the University Choral Union.

• Retired from U-M in 1950.

• Died April 20, 1953, and is buried in Forest Hill Cemetery in Ann Arbor.

– Kim Clarke

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