

Preface to Hazel Heckman – Murray Morgan Correspondence

Born in Liberty, Kansas, Hazel (Price) Heckman demonstrated talent as a young student at the University of Kansas. After her marriage to Earle Heckman in 1926, she found employment as a beat writer for the *Gazette* in Blackwell, Oklahoma. In the late 1930's Hazel took several correspondence courses in creative writing at the University of Oklahoma from Professor W.S. Campbell (pen name Stanley Vestal), whose comments on her writing indicate that he believed she had a bright future. The Heckmans moved to Tacoma when Earle was hired by Atlas Foundry in 1946. Soon after, Hazel enrolled in the legendary Murray Morgan's writing course at the then College of Puget Sound. Thus began a long friendship in which Murray served as a coach, mentor, and advocate for Hazel's writing. As was typical in the days before email and texting, their friendship was reflected in the regular exchange of letters and occasional visits. Although Hazel almost certainly saved Murray's letters to her, they have not yet been found, but Murray Morgan's family has generously donated these carefully saved letters Hazel wrote to him. They richly document Hazel's literary career, the importance of Murray's mentorship, and her love for Anderson Island flora, fauna, community and institutions.

Ed Note: Many of the letters are dated simply in the format "Tuesday, June 6," or similar. Identification of the year has been possible in most cases, although it was often necessary to approximate the year based on the context.