Descriptive Finding Guide for the Benjamin Cloud Personal Papers
SDASM.SC.10027

Finding aid prepared by Alan Renga
San Diego Air and Space Museum Library and Archives
2001 Pan American Plaza, Balboa Park
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10/17/2014
Title: Benjamin Cloud Personal Papers
Identifier/Call Number: SDASM.SC.10027
Contributing Institution: San Diego Air and Space Museum Library and Archives
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.0 Cubic feet; 2 boxes: one is 12 x 5, the other 17 x 13
Date (inclusive): 1931-2014
Abstract: Captain Benjamin Cloud was a U.S. Navy pilot who worked in reconnaissance at various stages of his long career, including on the cusp of the Vietnam War. Eventually he would be assigned command of that unit making him one of the first African-American officers to command a squadron. This collection focuses on photos taken by Cloud or his reconnaissance squadrons. This Collection includes numerous photos taken by Cloud.
Conditions Governing Access note
The collection is open to researchers by appointment.
Conditions Governing Use note
Some copyright may be reserved. Consult with the library director for more information.
Preferred Citation note
[Item], [Filing Unit], [Series Title], [Subgroups], [Record Group Title and Number], [Repository “San Diego Air & Space Museum Library & Archives”]
Immediate Source of Acquisition note
The materials in this Collection were donated to the San Diego Air and Space Museum.
Biographical/Historical note
Benjamin Cloud was born November 6, 1931, in San Diego. He grew up predominantly in El Cajon, a small city in San Diego County. After briefly majoring in Civil Engineering at San Diego State, he joined the US Navy and began pilot training in 1952. In 1954, he was assigned to the fighter reconnaissance program VC-61 (later designated as VFP-63), in San Diego, flying Grumman F9F Panthers. The unit was deployed to the Pacific several times. After participating in a Navy special program, Cloud earned a degree in Chinese language and culture and was returned to VC-61 in 1963 at the cusp of the Vietnam War. One of Cloud’s team, Charles Klausmann, was among the first to be wounded when his plane went down during a reconnaissance mission.
After his tour, Cloud was assigned as an aide to President Lyndon Johnson. Upon his return to flight duty Cloud was assigned to NAS Oceana in Virginia in 1966. From there, Cloud was assigned to command VFP-63, making him one of the first African-American officers to command a squadron. In 1972, after completing Navy War College in Rhode Island, Cloud was assigned Executive Officer of the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63). The fallout from a race riot onboard the carrier slowed Cloud’s career. He was transferred to Prairie View A&M University to run the ROTC program. After stints in Naples, Italy and Washington, D.C., Cloud retired in 1984. He was elected to SDASM board of directors in 1990, served until at least 2003.
Related Archival Materials note
The collection is stored in 2 boxes: one is 12 x 5, the other 17 x 13. Collection consists entirely of photograph, covering the years 1955–1968, approximately. The photos were organized in two binders, one envelope and several loose oversized photos. Binder 1 contained photos of U.S. Navy carrier-based aircraft, many taken from the perspective of a reconnaissance aircraft. Binder 2 contained photos of ships and locations. The envelope contained reconnaissance photos of the Tupolev TU-95 Bear. The loose oversized photos consisted of aircraft and ships. Photos were moved to archival folders and kept in these same groupings.
Related SDASM Resources:
The Museum has aircraft files on many of the aircraft in these photos, including the Grumman F9F Panther, Vought F8 Crusader Variants and Family, and Douglas F3D (F-10) Skyknight Family.
The Museum has many photos of the aircraft featured in the collection on Flicker. Below are links to two photos.
https://flic.kr/p/7X8niy https://flic.kr/p/aecQ3p
https://www.flickr.com/photos/sdasmarchives/albums/72157649821236486
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Cloud, Benjamin, 1931
Boxer (Aircraft Carrier)
Douglas A4D (A-4) Skyhawk Family
Douglas AD (A-1, BT2D) Skyraider Family
Grumman F9F Panther
Kitty Hawk Class (Aircraft carriers)
Vietnam War, 1961-1975

Box 01
Binder 01

Binder 02


Envelope 01

Physical Description: collection of Tupolev Tu-95 Bear photographs, various sizes. 1. 1971 Memorandum, from VLP-63 Det 4 Officer in Charge to Commanding Officer, VLP-63 concerning Bear interceptions. 2. 46 in flight views of Tupolev Tu-95 Bear from reconnaissance aircraft being intercepted by various U.S Navy aircraft. Color and B&W detail views. 3. 12 in flight views of Tupolev Tu-95 Bear from reconnaissance aircraft interceptions. Sizes from approximately 8x8 to 10x12.

Box 02