Descriptive Finding Guide for the Rear Admiral Eddie R. Sanders Personal Papers SDASM.SC.10122

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During September 1942, World War II Rear Admiral Eddie R. Sanders was a Lt. Commander at NAS Anacostia working as a test pilot. Early that month he received orders to precede to NAS San Diego to examine and test fly a recently capture Mitsubishi A6M2 fighter, the first to have been captured intact by US forces. His evaluation of the aircraft helped Allied forces develop tactics to overcome the “Zero,” as the A6M2 was called by the Allies.

As such, Sanders was the first Navy pilot to conduct extensive flight tests of a Japanese Mitsubishi A6M2 fighter plane, doing so first on September 2, 1942.

The downed, “Zero”, was recovered by the U.S. Navy on June 4, 1942, in the Aleutian Islands Alaska. It was brought, largely intact, to the North Island Naval Air Station in San Diego, California for inspection and repair. It was then put into operation and tested over San Diego’s air space. Eddie Sanders took less than one month to compile his significant findings.

Noteworthy contributions, discovered by Sanders, included the Zero’s capabilities in the areas of maneuverability, aileron control and sudden altitudes climbing limits, along with short turning radius noted within various given speeds and temperature ranges.

The implementation of Sanders’ combat recommendations are often described as an important turning point in the Pacific Theater.


The collection contains one flight book. Two separate photographs of the captured and restored fighter are also included along with one art print of a D1-108 Zero. Also in the set are four separate news clippings (one duplication), referring to the acquisition and purpose of testing the captured Zero. There are two separate magazine articles; one with reference to Eddie Sanders and his recollection of the test and its results, while the other talks about the famed fighter plane.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Mitsubishi A6M Reisen (Zero Fighter) Zeke (Ben, Ray) Family
Flight testing
World War, 1939-1945
World War, 1939-1945 -- Campaigns -- Pacific Area
Test pilots
Sanders, Rear Admiral Eddie R.
Naval Air Station North Island (Calif.)

Box 01
Folder 01 - Newspaper (3) and Magazine Articles (2)
Physical Description: 1. Two (2) duplicate newspaper articles showing photo comparisons of the captured Japanese Mitsubishi Zero A6M2 4593, first with Rising Sun Insignia along with the photo of the same repaired/repainted Zero 4593, then with the U.S. Navy Insignia replacing the Rising Sun. 2. One (1) newspaper article contains a photo of the restored U. S. Mitsubishi Zero. 3. Two (2) magazine articles. a. Addressing the functionality of the captured Zero. b. Addressing the importance of testing the Zero and its significance on the Pacific Theater effort in World War II.

Folder 02 - Flight book of Eddie Sanders (1)
Physical Description: 1. Flight book May 24, 1942, through January 1948, extension into February 1948 is crossed out.

Folder 03 - Photos (3)
Physical Description: 1. Three (3) images are contained in this collection. a. The downed Zero’s final landing position, flipped over with propellers dug in. b. Shows the captured Japanese Mitsubishi Zero A6M2 4593 with the U.S. Navy Insignia replacing the Rising Sun. c. Photo of art rendering of the Japanese D1-108 Zero in flight.