The Descriptive Finding Guide for the Robert V. Kerley Personal Papers. SDASM.SC.10085

Alan Renga
San Diego Air and Space Museum Library and Archives
10/23/2014
2001 Pan American Plaza, Balboa Park
San Diego 92101
URL: http://www.sandiegoairandspace.org/
Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: San Diego Air and Space Museum Library and Archives
Title: Robert V. Kerley Personal Papers
source: Kerley, Robert V.
Identifier/Call Number: SDASM.SC.10085
Physical Description: 0.42 Cubic Feet1 box, 12”x5”x10”.
Date (inclusive): 1909-1995
Abstract: Robert Kerley was an engineer at Wright Field, specifically researching, creating, and managing the production of lubricates and fuels through the 1930s until his retirement in 1970. After which he worked extensively on the autobiography of Sam D. Heron.
Conditions Governing Access
The collection is open to researchers by appointment.
Conditions Governing Use
Some copyright may be reserved. Consult with the library director for more information.
Preferred Citation
[Item], [Filing Unit], [Series Title], [Subgroups], [Record Group Title and Number], [Repository “San Diego Air & Space Museum Library & Archives”]
Immediate Source of Acquisition
The materials in this Collection were donated to the San Diego Air and Space Museum.
Biographical / Historical
Robert V. Kerley, often called Bob, was born June 20, 1909 in Helix, Oregon. He received his degree in Mechanical Engineering from Oregon State College in 1931. While there, he completed two years of Basic Training in Field Artillery however he was prevented from continuing due to eye-sight issues. On June 13, 1934, he married Elaine J. and they would have four children. He was employed at Wright Field from 1932 to 1945 where he was placed in charge of fuels and lubricants research and development in 1937. He received the War Department Commendation for exceptional Civilian Service for accomplishments in this field. In October 1945, he joined Ethyl Corporation in Gerndale, Michigan as Director of Aeronautical Research and retired in June 1972 as Director of Automotive Application.
A large portion of his collection relates to Sam D. Heron, who proved through his experimental work that the air-cooler cylinder could successfully match the liquid-cooled. Heron’s demonstration likely sparked the air-cooled engine revolution and all of the later successful air-cooled engines incorporated the features he utilized in some form. Kerley worked with him at Ethyl Corp and after Heron passed away in 1963, Kerley worked towards creating a biography and memorial fund for Heron. Kerley passed away January 21, 1995 at 85 years old.
Scope and Contents
Collection consists of 1 box, 12”x5”x10”. Contents have been left in original order. The collection consists primarily of correspondence with various individuals regarding the Sam D. Heron memorial fund and autobiography. There are also research notes and information regarding materials and development of fuel and engines – including the fuel Charles Lindbergh used in his transatlantic flight, and the Wright Brother’s engine.
Related Materials
Sam D. Heron Collection - http://www.sandiegoairandspace.org/collections/collection_item.php?id=90
https://www.flickr.com/photos/sdasmarchives/albums/72157642012091143
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Airplanes -- Fuel
Wright Flyer (Airplane)
Curtiss-Wright Corporation
Ethyl Corporation
Heron, Sam D.
Kerley, Robert V.
Smithsonian Institution, National Space and Air Museum
Spirit of St. Louis
Box 01
Folder 01 - Klein Letters
Physical Description: Select correspondence, 16 pages, with Frank D. Klein and two photographs (one autographed by Klein) that accompany some of the letters.

Folder 02 - Heron Memorial Fund 1963-83
Physical Description: Approximately 108 pages of correspondence between Kerley and mostly with various members of the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum regarding the arrangement of Sam Heron’s memorial fund.

Folder 03 - Personal Correspondence with Kerley
Physical Description: Folder contains biographical information about Kerley, including 39 pages of personal correspondence, 4 photos, 2 magazine clippings, 1 comic clipping with notes, and 10 pages of biographical information about Kerley.

Folder 04 - Project Record Computation Book, Personal Business Diary
Physical Description: One (1) notebook, the Personal Business Diary of Robert Kerley, while with the Air Corps Material Division at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio. The diary contains entries from Jan 3, 1933 to May 18, 1934.

Folder 05 - Lindbergh’s Fuel
Physical Description: Approximately 44 pages of materials regarding a letter Kerley wrote discussing the development and supply of Charles’s Lindbergh’s fuel during his trans-Atlantic flight. Includes correspondence with American Oil Company.

Folder 06 - Wright Brothers Engine
Physical Description: Approximately 57 pages of letters and drafts of materials related to the Wright Shop Engine, with a great deal of correspondence with Leonard S. Hobbs. Materials relate to drafts of a foreword to a book about the engine, and discussions of the Wright Brothers’ engine at the Henry Ford Museum (a 1908 engine), includes 2 photos with 3 duplicates each and original envelope.

Folder 07 - Heron Memorial Fund Study of Proposed Uses
Physical Description: Approximately 23 pages of correspondence discussing implementation of the Heron Memorial Fund with the Smithsonian Institute, from 1963 to 1964.

Folder 08 - Heron Memorial Fund, Contributions - Letters
Physical Description: Approximately 27 pages of correspondence noting individual donations to the Heron Memorial Fund and a list of recipients for the telegram of Heron’s death, includes one (1) photo.

Folder 09 - Heron Autobiography 1963-1964, Input
Physical Description: Over 100 letters and drafts discussing the biography of Sam Heron, which was dictated over about 6 hours and which Kerley was working to edit for publication, letters in this folder are often requests for elaboration or clarification.

Folder 10 - Comments on Sam D. Heron Biography 1964-68
Physical Description: Over 100 letters and documents discussing the Heron biography with the majority of letters being dated between 1964 and 1968.