Finding aid for the Arthur Ronnie collection of Los Angeles aviation photographs 7088

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USC Libraries Special Collections
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Title: Arthur Ronnie collection of Los Angeles aviation photographs
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Date (inclusive): 1928-1972
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Abstract: A collection of 115 early Los Angeles aviation photographs, including several of Amelia Earhart, Charles Lindbergh, and other pioneering pilots, from the first National Air Races meet held in Los Angeles in September of 1928 at Mines Field (now the location of the Los Angeles International Airport). Arthur Ronnie--former Los Angeles Herald Examiner reporter and studio publicist--initially collected and identified the material in this collection. Also included are copies of a caption sheet that lists descriptions of some of the images, correspondence between Arthur Ronnie and various magazine editors, and two scrapbooks with material covering the National Air Races held between 1935 and 1947.

Biographical / Historical
Arthur Ronnie (born 1930)--former Los Angeles Herald Examiner reporter and studio publicist--initially collected and identified the material in this collection. Ronnie held a lifelong passion for aviation, beginning with his first job at the age of 14 washing aircrafts at a local flying school and continuing throughout his life as a major collector of books and historic aviation imagery. The Altadena resident wrote in a 1971 letter to a magazine editor, which accompanies this archive, that he acquired the photographs 15 years prior at a local junk shop.

"I do not believe any of these pictures have ever been published before," Ronnie wrote to the editor of American Heritage magazine, who rejected one of Ronnie's proposals for an article that would feature some of the images. Ronnie also described the extent of his personal collection in the letter: "A portion of my library comprises some 4,000 books on aviation which includes almost every book on air racing published in the last 30 years, as well as every book by or about Lindbergh and Miss Earhart. None of these pictures appear in the books."

The National Air Races, which were established in 1920 by publisher Joseph Pulitzer, came to Los Angeles for eight days in September of 1928. The event was organized by a group of Los Angeles business and community leaders, including Los Angeles Mayor George Cryer, Los Angeles Times publisher Harry Chandler, aircraft pioneer Donald Douglas, and Hollywood impresario Sid Grauman. The Races featured daily special themes, such as "World Flight Day" and "Navy Day" as well as events with cash prizes and trophies for such goals as setting new distance or endurance records. Notably, some seventy entrants competed for $40,000 in prizes in a transcontinental air race from New York to Los Angeles. Band concerts, fireworks, parachute jumps, formation flying, and air extravaganzas that included film and theater stars, dancers, and others were held throughout the Races' eight days. The host airport was Mines Field, which was specially built on a former barley field in only 58 days for the event. The California Air Race Association oversaw the establishment of three runways of 7,000 feet length and an exposition building of 20,000 square feet. Following the event, Mines Field was turned over to the City of Los Angeles for operation as a municipal airport, which now operates as the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).

Content Description
A collection of 115 photographic prints of early Los Angeles aviation, including several of Amelia Earhart, Charles Lindbergh, and other pioneering pilots, from the first National Air Meet held in Los Angeles in September of 1928 at Mines Field (now the location of the Los Angeles International Airport). The collection also includes two scrapbooks that cover the National Air Races held between 1935 and 1947 -- along with correspondence between Arthur Ronnie--the collector of the material--and various magazine editors regarding potential use of his collected photographs in publications.

A few of the photographs in the collection are inscribed by people featured in the photographs "to Art Ronnie." Among these is a group photograph taken in front of an airplane hangar that pictures actress Mary Pickford holding a large bouquet of roses and standing next to Charles Lindbergh. The photograph is signed by Pickford. Two other photographs of the airplane Yankee Doodle are signed by Captain Art Goebel, who piloted the airplane to west-east and east-west speed records. There is also a group portrait of the "three musketeers" army aerobatic team, which included Lindbergh, Lt. J. A. Woodring, and Lt. W. L. Cornelius. Lastly, the collection holds four copies of a caption sheet that lists descriptions for a portion of the images. The caption sheet is accompanied by a corresponding set of small photo reproductions, which are numbered according to the caption sheet's sequence.

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Subjects and Indexing Terms
Air pilots -- California -- Photographs
Airplanes -- California -- Los Angeles -- Photographs
Women air pilots -- United States -- History -- 20th century -- Archival resources
Photographs
Scrapbooks
Earhart, Amelia, 1897-1937 -- Photographs
Lindbergh, Charles A. (Charles Augustus), 1902-1974 -- Photographs
Los Angeles International Airport -- Photographs
National Championship Air Races -- Photographs
Ronnie, Arthur -- Archives

Box 1, Folder 2

1928 National Air Races caption sheet and reproduced set of photographs undated

Scope and Contents
Four copies of a caption sheet describing the images accompanied by a small, reproduced set of the photographs, which are numbered and correspond to the caption sheet.

Box 1, Folder 3

Aerial view of Mines Field during the National Air Race 1928

Physical Description: 9 x 7" photographic print.

Box 1, Folder 4

Amelia Earhart and Dudley M. Steele, director of the air race 1928

Physical Description: 5 x 7" print has pin holes at corners. 8 x 10" print has soiling on top edge.

Scope and Contents
Two photographic prints.

Box 1, Folder 5

Amelia Earhart and Porter Adams 1928

Physical Description: 8 x 10" photographic print. Two inch repair to upper left corner, light soiling along to lower right edge.
Box 1, Folder 6

**Art Goebel being congratulated by race director Dudley M. Steele 1928**

Physical Description: 8 x 10” photographic print. Inscribed by Goebel to Arthur Ronnie in 1954.

Box 1, Folder 7

**Charles Lindbergh (back to camera) confers with Major General James E. Fechet, Chief of the Air Service 1928**

Physical Description: 8 x 10” photographic print.

Box 1, Folder 8

**Charles Lindbergh in Curtiss Pusher 1928**

Physical Description: 8 x 10” photographic print.

Box 1, Folder 9

**Charles Lindbergh shakes hands with Cliff Henderson, manager of the races 1928**

Physical Description: 8 x 10” photographic print.

Box 1, Folder 10

**Charles Lindbergh views races from the press box 1928**

Physical Description: 8 x 10” photographic print.

Box 1, Folder 1

**Correspondence between Arthur Ronnie and various magazine editors 1971-1972**

Box 1, Folder 11

**Dudley Steele with two unidentified U.S. military officials 1928**

Physical Description: 8 x 10” photographic print.

Box 1, Folder 12

**Earl Daugherty and Earl Ovington, aviation pioneers 1928**

Physical Description: 8 x 10” photographic print.

Box 1, Folder 13

**Heath “Baby Bullet” airplane flown by Ed Heath 1928**
Box 1, Folder 14

**Lockheed Vega owned by oilman Erle P. Halliburton 1928**

Physical Description: 8 x 10" photographic print.

General

A stamp on verso gives photographic credit to W. J. van Rossem, Hollywood, CA.

Box 1, Folder 15

**Movie stunt pilot Al Wilson with Ruth Elder and George W. Haldeman 1928**

Physical Description: 8 x 10" photographic print.

General

Ruth Elder and George W. Haldeman attempted a trans-Atlantic flight in 1927 that was forced down at sea.

Box 1, Folder 16

**Rear Admiral William A. Moffett, Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics 1928**

Physical Description: 8 x 10" photographic print.

General

Moffett was killed in 1933 when the dirigible Akron went down.

Box 1, Folder 17

**Ruth Elder, unidentified person, and Dudley M. Steele 1928**

Physical Description: 8 x 10" photographic print.

Box 1, Folder 18

**The Sea Hawks, Navy aerobatic trio: Lieutenants A. P. Storrs, D. W. Tomlinson, and W. V. Davis 1928**

Physical Description: 4.75 x 3.75" photographic print.

Box 1, Folder 19

**The Sea Hawks, Navy aerobatic trio, flying Boeing F2Bs 1928**

Physical Description: 8 x 10" photographic print.

Box 1, Folder 20

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Carl “Tooey” Spatz with Dudley Steele 1928

Physical Description: 8 x 10” photographic print.

General

Spatz signed the photograph in 1955.

Box 1, Folder 21

The Three Musketeers flying Boeing Model 15s with rolling hills and oil wells in background 1928

Physical Description: 8 x 10” photographic print.

Box 1, Folder 22

The Three Musketeers: Lts. J. A. Woodring and W. L. Cornelius with Charles Lindbergh 1928

Physical Description: 4.75 x 3.75” photographic print.

Box 1, Folder 23

The Three Musketeers: Lts. J. A. Woodring, J. J. Williams, and W. L. Cornelius 1928

Physical Description: 4.75 x 3.75” photographic print.

General

Charles Lindbergh replaced J. J. Williams, the leader, when he was killed during a stunt.

Box 1, Folder 24

Unidentified naval aviator 1928

Physical Description: 8 x 10” photographic print.

General

Stamp on verso credits Art Streib as photographer.

Photographs and scrapbooks added to the collection in 2019 November
Photographs and scrapbooks added to the collection in 2019 November

Box 2

1928 National Air Races photographs 1928 September

Physical Description: The bulk of the photographs measure 10" x 8". There are also seven aerial photographs of Mines Field during the National Air Races, measuring 9.5" x 7".

Scope and Contents

93 black and white photographs of the 1928 National Air Races held at Mines Field in Los Angeles. The photographs show a variety of airplanes conducting maneuvers, including smoke screens and barrel rolls, as well as a variety of aviation leaders, dignitaries, and Hollywood stars.

Highlights include:

- Two images of a wooden framed building, the clipped caption affixed to the verso reads: "construction work on exposition building" and "erecting the exposition building";
- An image of a band and officials at a podium with a caption reading: "Mayor Cryer of Los Angeles and members of the executive committee open the great air show";
- An image of an airplane with its nose to the ground: "the flying locomotive comes to grief"
- Several men gathered around a hot air balloon with a film camera;
- Portrait of Lindbergh and Cliff Henderson, manager of the air races;
- A group of 19 smaller photographs measuring 3" x 5" which include shots of Lindbergh, as well as pictures of airplane wreckage.

Box 3

1935-1946 National Air Races scrapbook 1935-1946

Scope and Contents

One scrapbook with contents relating to the National Air Races held between 1935 and 1946.

Box 3

1947 National Air Races scrapbook 1947