



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Bendix Air Races Collection

Melissa A. N. Keiser

2020

National Air and Space Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Bendix Air Races Collection
Date:	1931-1985 (bulk 1931-1939) (bulk 1946-1962)
Identifier:	NASM.1988.0115
Creator:	Bendix Corporation. Bendix Aviation Corp
Extent:	7.28 Cubic feet (5 records center boxes, 1 16 x 20 x 3 inch flatbox, 1 12 x 16 x 3 inch flatbox) 7.66 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The Bendix Corporation (1924-1983), manufacturers of devices for the automotive and aviation industries, sponsored the Bendix Trophy Race—a transcontinental speed competition for aircraft—annually from 1931-1939, then sporadically from 1946-1962. This collection includes race-related materials from the Bendix Advertising and Publicity department, along with materials from other aviation events for which Bendix was a sponsor. Approximately a third of the collection relates to the corporation's activities from circa 1960 to 1983, including military and commercial avionics and communications systems, and support for the United States space program, particularly the construction of Kennedy Space Center (KSC) Launch Complex 39.
Digital Content:	Image(s): Bendix Air Races Collection

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Allied-Signal Aerospace Corp, gift, 1988, NASM.1988.0115

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Melissa A. N. Keiser, 2020.

Preferred Citation

Bendix Air Races Collection, Acc. NASM.1988.0115, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

The Bendix Corporation, founded in 1924 by inventor Victor Bendix, began as a manufacturer of devices for use in the automotive industry, initially of engine-related items such as starting motors and carburetors, but soon expanding to brakes and hydraulic systems. In 1929, renamed as Bendix Aviation, the corporation branched out into the design and manufacture of equipment for the closely related aeronautics industry, including aircraft hydraulics for brake and flap systems, aircraft engine carburetors, and various electric and electronic instruments. In 1931, Bendix decided to sponsor the first Bendix Trophy Race—a transcontinental speed competition open to all comers, male or female—"to encourage experimental developments by airplane designers and to improve the skills of aviators in cross-country flying techniques such as weather plotting, high altitude and instrument flight." The Bendix Trophy Races were held in conjunction with the National Air Races, occurring with great fanfare annually from 1931-1939, but were suspended from 1940-1945 during World War II. In 1946, the races resumed, but now had to contend with the invention of the jet engine—accordingly, the Bendix Trophy Race was split into two categories: the "R" Division for reciprocating engine airplanes, and the "J" Division for U.S. military jet airplanes. Interest in air racing had declined in the post-war period, and no race was run in 1950. In 1951 the races resumed, and from this point on were limited to U.S. military jets only. Subsequent Bendix Trophy Races occurred in 1953-1957, and then (after a three-year gap) in 1961, with the last race held in 1962.

By this point in time, the Bendix Corporation—which had branched out to dominate the US market in aircraft radio and radar equipment during World War II—was producing missile and radar systems for the US military. In the 1960s Bendix was also building ground and airbourne telecommunications and telemetry systems for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The Bendix Field Engineering division worked on the construction of Kennedy Space Center (KSC) Launch Complex 39 at the Merritt Island Launch Area (MILA) adjacent to Cape Canaveral, Florida, including the Apollo Launch Control Center, Vehicle Assembly Building (VAB), and operational support equipment. In the 1970s, Bendix and its numerous Divisions were involved in a series of mergers, sales, and other changes involving the Raytheon and Allied (later Allied-Signal Aerospace) corporations, followed by a hostile takeover attempt in 1982 by Martin Marietta. In 1983, Bendix was acquired by Allied-Signal Aerospace (later Honeywell International) which retained the avionics part of the business.

The original Vincent Bendix Trophy was donated to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in 1985 [artifact number A19850368000]. On October 30, 1985, an event sponsored by Bendix/Allied-Signal was held at the museum in Washington, D.C., honoring aviators involved in the Bendix Trophy Races. Titled "The Golden Years," the program included interviews with several winners of the Bendix Trophy.

Scope and Contents

This collection centers on the activities of the Bendix Advertising and Publicity department (later Advertising and Public Relations), for many years directed by William A. Mara (later Eldon E. Fox) and assisted by the New York public relations firm Carl Byoir and Associates, Inc. Materials include correspondence, telegrams, documents, brochures, press releases, photographs, and black and white and color negatives and transparencies. As the Bendix Trophy Races were closely associated with the National Air Races, the collection includes race programs, schedules, entry forms, and related air racing ephemera, as well as a number of photographs by Robert E. Burke and Associates, for many years the official photographer of the National Air Races in Cleveland, Ohio. Similar materials relate to the National Soaring Contest held in

Elmira, New York (1935-1946), and the All Woman Transcontinental Air Race (1956-1962) for which Bendix was a sponsor, various National Aircraft Shows and National Aviation Shows, and Bendix's membership in the Aircraft Industries Association of America (AIAA). The collection also includes materials relating to the design and production of the Vincent Bendix Trophy and related replicas and engraved plaques by the Medallion Art Company (New York, NY) and plaster models and plaques by The Potter-Bentley Studios, Inc. (Cleveland, Ohio). Also included are photographs and two sets of 11 audio cassette tape recordings each of interviews made as part of the 1985 program "The Golden Years," and photographs taken at the related October 30, 1985, event at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum. The later third of the collection relates to Bendix's activities circa 1960-1985, with documents and photographs relating to the construction of Kennedy Space Center (KSC) Launch Complex 39, followed by a small amount of assorted advertising ephemera for various Bendix electronic products and services.

Arrangement

The materials are arranged in the original physical order as received from the donor, and have been grouped into four series. Folders within a series generally run in chronological order, although the last series contains an assortment of materials many of which would be more logically placed in earlier series. Folders of correspondence are generally arranged in reverse chronological order within the folder. Many of the photographs appearing in Series 2 (Bendix Trophy Races, By Year) can be found duplicated elsewhere in the collection. Boxes 6 and 7 both contain oversized materials.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Aeronautics -- Competitions
- Aeronautics -- Exhibitions
- Apollo Project
- Avionics
- Gemini Project
- Gliding and soaring
- McDonnell F-4 (F4H) Phantom II Family
- Mercury Project
- Periodicals
- Project Apollo (U.S.)
- Radar air traffic control systems
- Saturn 5 Launch Vehicle
- Trophies

Types of Materials:

- Audiotapes
- Correspondence
- Ephemera
- Financial records
- Manuscripts
- Photographs
- Publications
- Telegrams

Names:

All-Women Trans-Continental Air Race
Bendix Air Races
Cochran, Jacqueline
Doolittle, James Harold, 1896-1993
First Annual Aircraft Show (Cleveland, 1946)
Gordon Bennett Balloon Race
Intercollegiate Air Meet
Mantz, Paul
Medallic Art Company
National Aeronautics and Space Administration. John F. Kennedy Space Center
National Air Races
National Intercollegiate Flying Association
National Soaring Contest
Soaring Society of America
Stewart, James
Thaden, Iris Louise McPhetridge

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	Image(s): 1935 National Air Races Official Program (Cleveland)
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Box 4, Folder 13	"Area Civic Officials and Chambers of Commerce," Air Force Eastern Test Range, Patrick AFB (Florida), March 1965 Notes: Directory of civic officials and chambers of commerce in Brevard County, Florida.
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Box 5, Folder 1	Bendix, Eclipse-Pioneer Division, Automatic Pilot Information Sheets, September 30, 1959
Box 5, Folder 1	Bendix Television Set, circa 1951-1952
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Box 5, Folder 1	Brochure, Bendix Communications Division, "Bendix Announces the BPS-1000 Long Range Radar Surveillance Family", January 1976
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Box 5, Folder 10	BENDIX 82 Magazine, February 1982
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Box 6, Folder 1	Bendix Trophy Races, Mounted Photographs, 1931-1962 Notes: Historic portraits; large-format print photographs retouched for publication, housed in the original retoucher's folders. August 1985. All but last two have no identification.
Box 7, Folder 1	Bendix Trophy Races, Miscellaneous Photos (7 of 7), 1931-1956 Notes: Historic photography; originals (often with source and descriptive information) of many of the retouched images in Box 6. Many appear to be mounted on board with publication instructions.

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