



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Charles F. Blair, Jr., Collection

2001

National Air and Space Museum Archives
14390 Air & Space Museum Parkway
Chantilly, VA 20151
NASMRefDesk@si.edu
<https://airandspace.si.edu/archives>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Charles F. Blair, Jr., Collection
Date:	[ca. 1950s]
Identifier:	NASM.1999.0042
Creator:	Blair, Charles F., Jr., 1909-1978
Extent:	1.74 Cubic feet ((1 shoebox) (1 23.5x19x4 flatbox) (1 16x13.5x3 flatbox))
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Image(s): Charles F. Blair, Jr., Collection

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Maureen O'Hara Blair, gift, 1999, 1999-0042, unknown

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Charles F. Blair, Jr. (1909-1978) graduated with a mechanical engineering degree from the University of Vermont in 1931. After flight training with the Navy and completing a tour of duty as a naval aviator, Blair went on to be a pilot for United Airlines, American Airlines, and for Pan American Airways. In 1951 he set a record for an Atlantic crossing (7 hours, 48 minutes) in his converted North American P-51 Excalibur III. The next year, Blair became the first individual to fly over the North Pole in a single engine aircraft, an achievement that earned him the Harmon International Trophy, Thurlow Award, and the Distinguished Flying Cross. Because of his Arctic solo, the Strategic Air Command invited Blair to help develop techniques for delivering thermonuclear weapons from long-range fighter aircraft. Blair worked as a special consultant to the Air Force during the week, and on weekends he continued to fly for Pan American. In 1956 Blair commanded Operation Sharkbait, a flight of jet fighters nonstop across the North Atlantic, and in 1959 he led Operation Julius Caesar, the first flight of jet fighters to cross the Arctic and the North Pole. After his retirement from the Air Force Reserves (as a Brigadier General) and Pan American, Blair operated Antilles Air Boats, a charter air service in the Caribbean. While piloting a regularly scheduled flight between St. Croix and St. Thomas, the aircraft crashed claiming Blair's life and those of three of his passengers.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of two large scrapbooks, 15 glass slides and a print and copy negative film of Blair on his historic polar flight.

General

Note: Mr. Blair's converted P-51, Excalibur III, is in the collections of the National Air and Space Museum, and will be on display at the Udvar-Hazy Center at Dulles, Virginia, USA.

General

NASMrev

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Aeronautics, Commercial -- United States
- Aeronautics, Military
- Harmon International Trophy
- Periodicals
- Rohrbach Ro III Rotri Flying Boat

Types of Materials:

- Correspondence
- Photographs

Names:

- Antilles Air Boats
- Blair, Charles F., Jr., 1909-1978
- Operation Julius Caesar
- Operation Sharkbait
- Pan American World Airways, Inc.
- United States. Air Force

Places:

- Arctic regions -- Aerial Exploration
- Arctic regions -- Discovery and exploration