



# Smithsonian

*National Air and Space Museum*

Donald Sewell Lopez Collection

National Air and Space Museum Archives  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Air and Space Museum Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Donald Sewell Lopez Collection
<b>Date:</b>	1940s-2006
<b>Identifier:</b>	NASM.2008.0042
<b>Creator:</b>	Lopez, Donald S., 1923-2008
<b>Extent:</b>	.19 Cubic feet 3.218 Gigabytes
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	Donald Sewell Lopez (1923-2008) was a legendary figure in aviation having had a remarkable career as a fighter pilot in World War II and the Korean War, contributing significantly to aeronautical engineering and education, and playing critical roles in the planning and development of the National Air and Space Museum (NASM). This collection includes slides, digital images, and audio-visual material maintained by Donald S. Lopez during his time as the NASM Deputy Director.
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Image(s): NASM.2008.0042-dm01-A00_0520: Don Lopez</a>

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Donald S. Lopez, Transfer, 2008, NASM.2008.0042

### Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Amara Pugens, 2023.

### Preferred Citation

Donald Sewell Lopez Collection, NASM.2008.0042, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

No restrictions on access

### Conditions Governing Use

Material is subject to Smithsonian Terms of Use. Should you wish to use NASM material in any medium, please submit an Application for Permission to Reproduce NASM Material, available at [Permissions Requests](#) .

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## Biographical / Historical

Donald Sewell Lopez (1923-2008) joined the staff of the Smithsonian Institution in 1972 as part of the team responsible for planning the construction and opening of the National Air and Space Museum (NASM). As assistant director for Aeronautics, Lopez was instrumental in developing the exhibits that welcomed visitors at the museum's opening on July 1, 1976. Lopez became deputy director of NASM in 1983, a position he held until 1990. He served as senior advisor to the director before retiring in 1993, holding a position as senior advisor emeritus until he was again appointed deputy director in 1996, a position he held until his death. Before coming to the Smithsonian, Lopez was already an aviation legend: he was a fighter pilot in the 23rd Fighter Group of the 14th Air Force - successors of the legendary Flying Tigers - in China. He flew Curtiss P-40s and North American P-51 Mustangs, demonstrating his extraordinary flying skills under the leadership of famous war heroes Col. Tex Hill and Gen. Claire Chennault. During his two years in China, Lopez flew 101 missions and tallied up five victories, the required number to be recognized as an "Ace." Lopez was awarded the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, and three Air Medals for his service during World War II. After the War, Lopez became an Air Force test pilot and then served in combat again during the Korean War flying North American F-86s. Lopez then served at the Pentagon, during which time he also earned a bachelor's degree in aeronautical engineering at the Air Force Institute of Technology and a master's degree in aeronautics from the California Institute of Technology. Lopez served at the US Air Force Academy as an associate professor of aeronautics and chief of academic counseling before retiring from the US Air Force in 1964 at the rank of lieutenant colonel. Lopez then worked as a Systems Engineer on the Apollo-Saturn Launch Vehicle and the Skylab Orbital Workshop for Bellcomm, Inc. Lopez was a member of the American Fighter Aces Association, the Experimental Aircraft Association and was a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society. Lopez was the recipient of many honors and awards, including being named an Elder Statesman of Aviation by the National Aeronautic Association (1995); the Federal Hispanic Heritage Month Excellence in Leadership Award recipient (1999); the Frank G. Brewer Trophy in Museum Education recipient; being inducted as a fellow by the Society of Experimental Test Pilots (2006); and being honored as one of the living legends at the Gathering of Mustangs and Legends at Rickenbacker Field in Columbus, Ohio (2007). Lopez's publications include *Into the Teeth of the Tiger* (Bantam, 1986), *The National Air and Space Museum: A Visit in Pictures* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989) and *Fighter Pilot's Heaven: Flight Testing the Early Jets* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

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## Scope and Contents

This collection consists of 48 slides, some of which are duplicates, mostly relating to Lopez's service in World War II. The slides, most of which are black and white, depict various aircraft including Lockheed P-38M Lightning, Curtiss C-46 Commando, Curtiss P-40 Warhawk, Dornier Do 215 B-5 Kauz 3 (Screech Owl)(Night Fighter Modification), Douglas P-70, Bell P-39 Airacobra, Nakajima J1N1-S Gekko (Moonlight) Irving (Night Fighter Model 11), North American P-51 Mustang, and Northrop P-61 Black Widow. The slides also depict Lopez and a number of people who served with him in China including Lieutenant Jessie Gray, and Lieutenant Oswin "Moose" Elker. One slide also depicts the crash of a North American B-25 Mitchell that occurred in Chihkiang on January 19, 1945. There are also images of Lopez at work in the Museum and of his wife, Glindel Lopez in her wedding gown. Finally, there is an image of the William S. Phillips painting, "Into the Teeth of the Tiger," showing Lopez in combat (this piece is owned by the Lopez family). A number of these images were used in Lopez's book "Into the Teeth of the Tiger."

The collection also includes a DVD of a panel lecture at the Udvar-Hazy Center on the Northrop P-61 Black Widow on June 8, 2006 featuring Donald S. Lopez, Robert Bolinder, Louis Bost, Avery J. Miller, Robert Ferguson as speakers and Dik Daso as moderator; a CD of photographs taken at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, Oshkosh, Wisconsin in 2000 showing Lopez and other NASM staff as well as figures such as Charles Elwood "Chuck" Yeager, Robert A. "Bob" Hoover, Patricia "Patty" Rosalie Kearns Combs Wagstaff, James A. "Jim" Lovell, Robert L. "Hoot" Gibson, and Frank Borman; and a reel of 16mm color film, with sound, entitled *Reunions: Memories of an American Experience*.

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## Arrangement

Arranged in original order.

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Aeronautics

Types of Materials:

16mm films

DVDs

Digital images

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## Container Listing

[EAA AirVenture Oshkosh photography], 2000

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Don Lopez Early Hazy Presentation, 2004

Digital Content: [\[NASM.2008.0042\] DA 00019](#)

Notes: A Microsoft PowerPoint 97-2003 presentation created by Don Lopez, January 12, 2004, approximately one month after the opening of the National Air and Space Museum Udvar-Hazy Center. The presentation consists of 29 slides showing: late construction (landscaping); interior views (aircraft draped in plastic sheeting), delivery of the Concorde, Bell XV-15 and Space Shuttle, Don Lopez leading a tour of the facility with Vice President Dick Cheney, the dedication ceremony, opening day with the crowds lined up in the snow, interior views with the crowd of visitors.

Lecture: Night Fighting: The Northrop P-61 Black Widow, 2006

Image(s): [Night Fighting: The Northrop P-61 Black Widow \[NASM-NASM\\_DA-00017\]](#)

Legends of Air Power: Show 305 Don Lopez, 2003

Notes: Born in Brooklyn, NY in July 1923, Donald Lopez got the unique opportunity to fly a Curtiss P-40 Warhawk with the 14th Air Force's 23rd Fighter Group, also known as The Flying Tigers, under the expert leadership of Gen. Claire Chennault, in China. When the war was over, Lopez worked as a test pilot at Eglin AFB, Florida, before eventually becoming Deputy Director of the National Air & Space Museum in Washington, DC. Lopez, Deputy Director, National Air and Space Museum is interviewed. Ron Kaplan, Historian, National Aviation Hall of Fame is interviewed. Narrated by Gene Pell.

Reunions: Memories of an American Experience, 1978

Notes: Two films on one reel of 16mm color film with sound.

The first is an interview with Don Lopez of James H. 'Jimmy' Doolittle. Flashbacks include the Doolittle raid from the USS Hornet, air races with flashes of Earhart and Roscoe Turner, the Curtiss R3C-2 racer, the British Gloster, and the Italian Macchi. Doolittle as the winner of the Schneider trophy, Bendix trophy, and Thompson trophy talks of his experiences including bailing out three times. Aircraft shown include: the Laird ("Matty") LC-D Speedwing "Super Solution", Granville Gee Bee, and Shell Mystery Ship, crash of a Gee Bee is shown. This portion runs 14:53.

The second sequence runs 13:55 and depicts the story of Gustave Tafel, the manufacture of homeopathic medicines. Tafel is interviewed and flashbacks are shown with narration by Burgess Meredith. Also shown is the Arts and Industries centennial display on medicine in addition to the Philadelphia store and manufacture processes that shows little change in 100 years.

[Slides]

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### Wingwalker, 1978

Image(s): [Wingwalker \[NASM-NASM\\_DA-00021\]](#)

Notes:

A collage of film clips put together for the Exhibition Flight Gallery. 1. Smoke loop. 2. Piper J-3 Cub taking off from an automobile roof. 3. Running takeoff of a Piper Cub. 4. Automobile to airplane transfer (country road). 5. Hooded hook on transfer (by the feet). 6. Straight jacket and parachute escape. 7. Human pick-up with Stinson (Aircraft) SR-10F Reliant. 8. French ribbon snatch. 9. Belly slide. 10. Bendix race crash. 11. Mass parachute drop from a balloon. 12. Little girl tap dancing on top of a balloon. 13. Balloon gymnastics. 14. Glider over the cliff (French?). 15. Crashing into a house. 16. Motorcycle to airplane transfer (on the beach). 17. Hydroplane to airplane transfer. 18. Sport boxing on an Avro 504. 19. Diving out of an airplane into the water. 20. Lilian Boyar - wingwalker. 21. Hanging by teeth. 22. Wing to wing transfer. 23. Automobile to air aircraft transfer (beach). 24. Train to airplane transfer. 25. Flying into house. 26. Flying into house at the Minnesota State Fair (1935) with a bow from Captain Frank Frakes. 27. Roman C. Warren flying his Thomas Morse Scout under Mission Bridge (Santa Anna River) at Riverside California June 13, 1926. 28. Hanging by hair. 29. Wingwalking (Dougherty 'torn wing' aircraft). 30. Automobile (Ford Mustang) to airplane (Piper Cub) transfer with a flaming finish (crashing through a wall of fire). 31. Little girl tap dancing on the upper wing of a Curtiss JN-4 Jenny.

### WUSA-TV9 Fed Friday Segment, 2005

Notes:

WUSA-TV9 Fed Friday Segment on the Paul E. Garber Restoration Preservation and Storage Facility in Suitland, Md. John Shatz, Museum Technician is interviewed as he works on the restoration of the Northrop P-61 Black Widow. WUSA-TV9 Fed Friday Segment on Don Lopez, Deputy Director of the National Air and Space Museum.