



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Donald A. Hall Interview

Updated and digital assets attached by Amara Pugens.

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | National Air and Space Museum Archives |
| Title: | Donald A. Hall Interview |
| Date: | 1967 |
| Identifier: | NASM.2010.0039 |
| Creator: | Hall, Donald A. |
| Extent: | .23 Cubic feet ((1 box)) |
| Language: | English . |
| Summary: | Reproduction recording of an interview in April 1967 with Donald A. Hall, an engineer and designer of the Ryan NYP Spirit of St. Louis. |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Thomas Leech, Gift, 2010, NASM.2010.0039

Preferred Citation

Donald A. Hall Interview, NASM.2010.0039, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Donald A. Hall was an engineer who is best known as the designer of the Ryan NYP Spirit of St. Louis. Hall was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1898. In 1917, Hall graduated from the Pratt Institute with a certificate in mechanical engineering. Hall worked for Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company beginning in 1919 before going to Douglas Aircraft in 1924. Hall later accepted the job of chief, and only full-time, engineer at Ryan Airlines where he started on January 31, 1927. A telegram arrived four days later asking if Ryan could build an airplane capable of flying nonstop from New York to Paris, France. Hall reviewed the request and replied affirmatively and on February 21, 1927, Charles Augustus Lindbergh arrived at Ryan to discuss the aircraft. After reviewing Hall's preliminary design work, a contract was finalized between Ryan and Lindbergh on February 25, 1927. The aircraft Hall designed, the Ryan NYP Spirit of St. Louis was built and ready for flight testing on April 28, 1927, a process that took place in under two weeks. On May 21, 1927, Lindbergh completed the first solo nonstop transatlantic flight in history flying in the Spirit of St. Louis.

Later, Hall designed the Ryan X-1 Doodle Bug (Mahoney-Ryan Special). After Ryan relocated to St. Louis, Missouri, Hall stayed in San Diego, California and founded his own company, Hall Aeronautical Development Company. After the Great Depression hit, Hall was forced to close his company due to financial concerns and went to work for Consolidated in 1936. During his time with the company, Hall worked as a consultant to I. M. Laddon on the design of the Consolidated B-24 Liberator. In 1949, Hall went to work for the U.S. Navy at Naval Air Station North Island where he was an engineer before being promoted to head of the helicopter branch and later head of the structures branch before retiring in 1963. Donald A. Hall died in 1968.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of an audio reproduction recording on cassette tape of an interview conducted by telephone with Donald A. Hall in 1967. The interviewer is Thomas Leech who was working on behalf of the San Diego Section of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA). During the interview, Hall discusses his career, working with Charles Augustus Lindbergh, the design of the Ryan NYP Spirit of St. Louis, reaction to Lindbergh's New York to Paris flight, his involvement with AIAA, and his family.

Additionally, this collection contains an abridged transcript prepared by Thomas Leech in 2003 and a photocopy of the May 1967 issue of *The AIAA Tabloid* featuring an article on Donald A. Hall.

Also on the reverse side of the cassette tape is a recording of a speech by C. Northcote Parkinson to the General Dynamics Convair Management Club, circa 1968.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Gateway Arch (Saint Louis, Mo.)

Types of Materials:

- Audiocassettes
- Transcripts

Names:

- Lindbergh, Charles A. (Charles Augustus), 1902-1974

Container Listing

Interview Audio, 1967

Notes: Only side A of cassette digitized. End of interview not digitally available.

Genre/Form: Audiocassettes
CD-ROMs

Abridged Transcript, 2003

[Digital Content: Don Hall transcript](#)

Notes: Transcript prepared and created by donor in 2003. Due to editing for clarification, it is an abridged transcript of Hall's interview. The National Air and Space Museum Archives does not guarantee its accuracy.

A Visit with the Spirit of St. Louis Designer, 1967

[Digital Content: The AIAA Tabloid](#)

Notes: Photocopy of Tom Leech's article *A Visit with the Spirit of St. Louis Designer* published in the San Diego section of *The AIAA Tabloid*, the newsletter for the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics.