



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

S. Sidney Pike Skywriting Corporation of America Collection

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National Air and Space Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	S. Sidney Pike Skywriting Corporation of America Collection
Date:	1923-1964 (bulk 1930-1940)
Identifier:	NASM.2012.0001
Creator:	S. Sidney Pike Skywriting Corporation of America Pike, S. Sidney
Extent:	5.5 Linear feet (4 flat boxes, 1 document box, 1 slim document box) 9 Film reels (5 16mm films - runtime 41:59 4 35mm films - runtime 27:04) 4 Cubic feet (6 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	Skywriting, defined as the process of writing a name or message with smoke from an aircraft against a blue sky, began in England after World War I, the brainchild of Major John C. Savage, Royal Air Force (RAF). His first successful demonstration was at the Derby at Epsom Downs, in May 1922, when Captain Cyril Turner wrote "Daily Mail" above the track. In October of that year, Turner travelled to the United States and wrote "Hello U.S.A." above New York City. Allan J. Cameron, along with Leroy Van Patten established the Skywriting Corporation of America at Curtiss Field, an American branch of Savage's original company. They acquired the patents for mixing the writing gas in the United States and as a result controlled the market for years. In 1923, using the Skywriting Corporation, the American Tobacco Company launched the first skywriting advertising campaign for Lucky Strike cigarettes. Pepsi-Cola Corporation became one of the longest-running contractors of skywriting; in the late 1930s and mid 1940s, it contracted or owned a total of 14 aircraft. In 1940 alone, Pepsi contracted for 2,225 writings over 48 states, Mexico, Canada, South America and Cuba.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Nancy M. Podurgiel, gift, 2011

Processing Information

Arranged by the archivist into series by subject, then in chronological order within series. Additional folder description by the archivist appears below folder titles.

Preferred Citation

S. Sidney Pike Skywriting Corporation of America Collection, Acc. 2012-0001, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions governing access.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

S. Sidney Pike (d. 1968) was born in Bennington, Vermont, and attended Vermont Military College. In 1928, Pike joined the Skywriting Corporation of America and became the corporation's president in 1935. During the early part of his tenure with the company, Pike was a pilot but soon trained a crew of pilots to do the flying. He introduced Sky-Typing, in which five to seven planes, with their smoke-producing mechanisms controlled from a "mother" plane formed different parts of the message. During World War II, Pike was a Major in the 415th Bombardment Squadron, Army Air Forces. He was member of the Quiet Birdmen, a secretive club in the United States for male aviators founded in 1921 by World War I pilots.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of 4 cubic feet of archival material related to the Skywriting Corporation of America. The material includes three scrapbooks of photographs and news clippings, two small manuals on skywriting, correspondence, and photographs and negatives of pilots and aircraft, as well as skywriting and sky-typing examples.

The researcher should note that the collection also contains five 16mm and four 35mm films totaling a 1:09:03 runtime. These films are not included in the container list but a NASM Archives staff person can assist you regarding access.

Arrangement

Arranged by the archivist into series by subject.

Series 1: Documents

Series 2: Images

Series 3: Scrapbooks

Series 4: Oversize Materials

Arranged in chronological order within series.

Additional folder description by the archivist appears below folder titles in italics.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Aeronautics
Skywriting
advertising

Types of Materials:

Articles
Manuals
Motion pictures (visual works)
Photographic prints
Scrapbooks

Container Listing

Series 1: Documents, 1936-1963

1 Boxe

Scope: Contains documents, ephemera and publicity materials for specific pilots who flew for the Pike Skywriting Company

Arrangement: Arranged in chronological order and then alphabetical. Undated materials placed after dated materials.

Box 1, Folder 1	Misc. Documents, 1936-1963 Notes: Correspondence, articles, brochures, flyers and 2 small technical manuals written by Liet. Joseph Mackey "Acrobatic and Inverted Flying" and "Skywriting and Skywriting Equipment"
Box 1, Folder 2	Pilot -- Lt. Thomas J. Campbell, 1946 Notes: Publicity materials including B&W portraits prepared by Pepsi-Cola.
Box 1, Folder 3	Pilot - Lt. Cecil Coffrin, undated Notes: Publicity materials including B&W portraits prepared by Pepsi-Cola.
Box 1, Folder 4	Pilot - Maj. August A. "Gus" Ficken, undated Notes: Publicity materials including B&W portraits prepared by Pepsi-Cola.
Box 1, Folder 5	Pilot - Cpt. Jim Gregg, undated Notes: Publicity materials including B&W portraits prepared by Pepsi-Cola.
Box 1, Folder 6	Pilot - Maj. Elwood "El" Keim, undated Notes: Publicity materials including B&W portraits prepared by Pepsi-Cola.
Box 1, Folder 7	Pilot - Tom Murphy, undated Notes: Publicity materials including B&W portraits prepared by Pepsi-Cola.
Box 1, Folder 8	Pilot - Lt. Winfred E. Souther, undated Notes: Publicity materials including B&W portraits prepared by Pepsi-Cola.
Box 1, Folder 9	Pilot - Maj. Andy Stinis, undated Notes: Publicity materials including B&W portraits prepared by Pepsi-Cola.

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Series 2: Images, 1930-1950

1 Boxe (Photographs & 2 negatives)

Arrangement: Arranged in chronological order and then alphabetical. Undated materials placed after dated materials. Negatives placed at end of series.

Box 2, Folder 1	Photographs, 1930-1950
Box 2, Folder 2	Banner Towing, 1933
Box 2, Folder 3	Skytyping, 1940
Box 2, Folder 4	Airplanes
Box 2, Folder 5	Aerial, undated
Box 2, Folder 6	Blimps & Gyros, undated
Box 2, Folder 7	Pilots, undated Notes: A few of the photos have IDs on the back.
Box 2, Folder 8	Skywriting, undated
Box 2, Folder 9	S. Sidney Pike Portrait, undated
Box 2, Folder 10	Negatives, undated Notes: Contains two 8x10 negatives.

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Series 3: Scrapbooks, 1923-1964

3 Boxes

Box 3	Scrapbook, undated Notes: Consisting mostly of photos, newspaper advertisement and short articles on the Martinson's Coffee autogiro.
Box 4	"Skywriting Press Clippings", 1937-1964 Notes: Newspaper & magazine articles most likely collected by a clipping service.
Box 5, Folder 1	Scrapbook, 1923-1931 Notes: Newspaper clippings most likely collected by a clipping service.
Box 5, Folder 2	"Photographs", undated Notes: 8x10s of people looking up, planes performing skywriting, finished skywritten advertisements, planes on the ground, planes and pilots.

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Series 4: Oversize Materials, 1938-1940

1 Boxe

Arrangement: Arranged in chronological order and then alphabetical. Undated materials placed after dated materials.

Box 6, Folder 1	Newspaper Clippings, 1938-1940
Box 6, Folder 2	David Ghilchik line drawing, undated
Box 6, Folder 3	Lithographs by David Ghilchik Reproduced from Punch Magazine, undated
Box 6, Folder 4	Photographs, undated Notes: Of pilot Louis Meier Jr., various airplanes and the NYC skyline

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