



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Gene Nora Stumbough Jessen Papers

Sarah LeClaire

2023

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical	2
Scope and Contents	3
Arrangement	3
Names and Subjects	
Container Listing	
Series 1: <i>Professional materials, 1956-2017</i>	4
Series 2: <i>Personal materials, 1956-2019</i>	8
Series 3: <i>Beechcraft Owner's Manuals, Log Books and Bound Materials, 1954-2017</i>	9
Series 4: <i>Scrapbooks, Photo Albums and Oversized, 1956-2013 and undated</i> ...	10
Series 5: <i>Video Tapes and Audio Cassettes</i>	12

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Gene Nora Stumbough Jessen Papers
Date:	1950s-2010s
Identifier:	NASM.2023.0052
Creator:	Jessen, Gene Nora
Extent:	8 Cubic feet (22 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection consists of 8 cubic feet of archival material documenting the life of Gene Nora Stumbough Jessen from 1950s to the 2010s. She had a successful career as a flight instructor, Beech Aircraft sales demonstration pilot, Beech Aircraft dealership owner, flight school chief pilot, commercial pilot, Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) Safety Counselor, aviation insurance agent/broker, advisor to the FAA, president of the Ninety-Nines, Inc. (1988-1990), and published aviation author. Jessen also participated in the Women in Space Program, evaluating women's potential as possible astronauts at the Lovelace Medical Center in 1961.
Digital Content:	Image(s): NASM-9A20182 Formal portrait of Gene Nora Jessen, NASM.2023.0052

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Gene Nora Jessen, Gift, 2023, NASM.2023.0052

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Sarah LeClaire, 2023.

Preferred Citation

Gene Nora Stumbough Jessen Papers, NASM.2023.0052, 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](#) .

Biographical / Historical

Gene Nora (pronounced Janora) Stumbough Jessen was born on January 10, 1937, in Springfield, Illinois. While growing up, Jessen became interested in aviation after learning about the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) who served their country during World War II. She began flying while in her junior year of high school in the Civil Air Patrol and earned her private pilot license in 1956. She then attended the University of Oklahoma (OU), where she was a member of their flight team and entered her first National Intercollegiate Flying Association (NIFA) competition. While taking classes in 1959, Jessen became the first woman to work as a flight instructor for the school, which allowed her to also pay for college. During her time at OU, she earned seven collegiate-level flying trophies and remained on staff for six years after completing her English degree.

In 1961 Jessen quit her job as a flight instructor when she was selected as one of the women to participate in the Women in Space Program (1960-1962), also known as the Mercury 13 or Fellow Lady Astronaut Trainees (FLATs), at the Lovelace Medical Center in New Mexico. She was twenty-four years old. Dr. William Randall "Randy" Lovelace, who designed and carried out the rigorous testing for the thirty-two male Project Mercury candidates, and US Air Force Brigadier General Donald Flickinger, were curious to see how women would fare against their all-male peers. Unable to interest the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the undertaking, they conducted the experiment in secret independently. For Phase 1, this group of women underwent the same rigorous physical testing regimen used for NASA's Mercury astronauts. All participants passed. Armed with these results, Lovelace and Flickinger lobbied both Congress and the White House to consider including women in the Astronaut Corps, neither of which were keen on the idea; On a draft response letter, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson wrote "Let's stop this now!" Before the other parts of the test could begin, the Lovelace Program was cancelled.

Jessen moved to Wichita, Kansas, and accepted a job at Beech Aircraft in 1962. There, Jessen piloted planes for demonstration purposes for the company. On July 20, 1962, she embarked on a 90-day, 40,000 mile cross-country flight with fellow pilots Joyce Case and Mike Gordon. They were known as "The Three Musketeers", named after the Beech Musketeers the trio flew in formation across the United States. She and Case were the only female pilots flying for any aircraft manufacturer at that time. Soon, Jessen became rated to fly the entire line of Beech aircraft. In her spare time, she volunteered with the Wichita Wing Scouts from 1963-1967.

In Kansas, she also met and married Leland Robert "Bob" Jessen (1925-2020), a B-29 pilot during World War II, on June 12, 1964, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. In 1967, they moved to Boise, Idaho, where they established their own Beech dealership and, later, an aviation insurance business and Boise Air Service, a full-service, fixed base operation on the Boise Airport.

Jessen was also an avid writer. She was the aviation columnist for *The Northwest Flyer*, and *The Idaho Statesman*. Jessen also wrote several books on the history of women in aviation, including *Sky Girls*, a chronicle of the 1929 Powder Puff Derby.

Additionally, Jessen was appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to serve on the Federal Aviation Agency's (FAA) Women in Aviation Advisory Board for five years. Between 1988 and 1990, Jessen was President of the Ninety-Nines, an international organization of licensed women pilots. She was also a Wing Scout Leader, treasurer of the Idaho Pilot's Association, an Accident Prevention Counselor for the FAA, and the Boise Airport Commissioner. She was recently inducted into the International Women in Aviation Pioneers Hall of Fame in Dayton, Ohio. Jessen holds over 4,000 hours of flying experience and earned ratings as a commercial pilot, single and multi-engine land, single-engine sea, instrument rating and a Gold Seal flight instructor.

Gene Nora Jessen passed away on May 21st, 2024.

HONORS:

Honorary PhD, University of Wisconsin

Idaho Aviation Hall of Fame

Pathfinder Award Wall of Fame, Seattle Museum of Flight

Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award
Ninety-Nines Amelia Earhart Award
Achievement Award, International Northwest Aviation Council
Evanston Township High School Distinguished Alumni Award
Adler Planetarium Women in Space Service Award
Mercury 13 NASA Award, International Human Space Flight Day
Women with Wings Award, International Air and Space Museum
Next Generation Indie Book Award, 2010
YMCA Pioneers of the Future Award
FAA Women's Advisory Committee on Aviation
Boise Airport Commissioner

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of approximately 8 cubic feet of archival material documenting the aviation career of Gene Nora Stumbough Jessen, including her involvement with the Ninety-Nines, her career with Beechcraft Aviation, and her writings on aviation; there is also a small amount of material related to her week-long testing with the Women in Space Program. The following types of materials are included: correspondence, photographs, pilot logs, scrapbooks, photo albums, programs, brochures, maps, magazine articles, manuals, handbooks, VHS tapes, and audiotapes.

Arrangement

When the National Air and Space Museums Archives received the Gene Nora Stumbough Jessen Collection, it was arranged alphabetically by folder name. All original folder titles have been retained. PII has been manually redacted. Any additional contextual information that was added by the processing archivist appears in brackets.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Aeronautics -- Flights
- Astronautics
- Beech Aircraft Family
- Women in aeronautics

Container Listing

Series 1: Professional materials, 1956-2017

Subseries 1.1: Aeronautics

Scope and Contents: Aeronautics includes material related to the Air Race Classic, Beech Aircraft, flight instruction, the Ninety-Nines (on the folders, Jessen refers to the group as "The 99s"), her involvement in Women in Aviation and the Idaho Aviation Museum Hall of Fame and other topics related to her aviation career.

Box 1, Folder 1	99s 501 (c)(3)
Box 1, Folder 2	99s convention, 2018
Box 1, Folder 3	99s Fly Now scholarship -- Ashley Taylor
Box 1, Folder 4	99s headquarters building
Box 1, Folder 5	99s history (1 of 2)
Box 1, Folder 6	99s history (2 of 2)
Box 1, Folder 7	99s international conference, 2017
Box 1, Folder 8	99s membership
Box 1, Folder 9	99s miscellaneous (1 of 2)
Box 2, Folder 1	99s miscellaneous (2 of 2)
Box 2, Folder 2	99s Museum of Women Pilots
Box 2, Folder 3	99s music
Box 2, Folder 4	99s newsletter, 1980
Box 2, Folder 5	99s president
Box 2, Folder 6	99s president's column
Box 2, Folder 7	99s president's correspondence
Box 2, Folder 8	Air Race Classic, 1998

Box 2, Folder 9	Air Race Classic, 2008
Box 2, Folder 10	Air Race Classic, 2011
Box 2, Folder 11	Air Race Classic, 2013
Box 2, Folder 12	Air Race Classic, 2014
Box 2, Folder 13	Air Race Classic, miscellaneous
Box 3, Folder 1	99s Amelia Earhart scholarship [2012, 2017]
Box 3, Folder 2	Air racing
Box 3, Folder 3	Aviation, miscellaneous
Box 3, Folder 4	Beech[craft Aviation] (1 of 2)
Box 3, Folder 5	Beech[craft Aviation] (2 of 2)
Box 3, Folder 5	Beech Aircraft: John I. Elliott Interview by Leroy Clay, 1989-09-26 Notes: Found within folder: Beech[craft Aviation] (2 of 2)
Box 3, Folder 6	Beech Aero Club
Box 3, Folder 7	Beechcraft Heritage Museum
Box 3, Folder 8	Beechcraft Heritage Museum Beech Party, 2018
Box 3, Folder 9	Beech Aircraft -- publicity pictures
Box 3, Folder 10	Beechcraft Bonanza N1873L
Box 3, Folder 11	Cessna
Box 3, Folder 12	Flight instruction
Box 4, Folder 1	Fly it Forward
Box 4, Folder 2	Flying Competition Seminar
Box 4, Folder 3	Gone Flying
Box 4, Folder 4	International Women's Air and Space Museum Quarterly [1987-1993]
Box 4, Folder 5	Idaho Aviation Hall of Fame

Box 4, Folder 6	Musketeer
Box 4, Folder 7	NIFA [National Intercollegiate Flying Association]
Box 4, Folder 8	N1873L Beechcraft
Box 4, Folder 9	NAA [National Aeronautic Association]
Box 4, Folder 10	Betty Skelton
Box 4, Folder 11	Three Musketeers, miscellaneous pictures
Box 4, Folder 12	WASP [Women Airforce Service Pilots]
Box 4, Folder 14	Wing Scouts
Box 5, Folder 1	Women in Aviation
Box 5, Folder 2	Women in Aviation International

Subseries 1.2: Astronautics

Scope and Contents: Astronautics includes material related to Dr. Randy Lovelace's Women in Space Program, Netflix's "Mercury 13" documentary and her correspondence with astronauts Barbara Morgan, Linda Godwin and Eileen Collins.

Box 5, Folder 3	Astronaut material
Box 5, Folder 4	Lovelace [Program]
Box 5, Folder 5	Mercury 13 reunion, 1994
Box 5, Folder 6	Mercury 13 screening at SF Film Festival, 2018
Box 5, Folder 7	WAEO -- World Aerospace Education Organization
Box 5, Folder 8	STS-37 Atlantis
Box 5, Folder 9	STS-84 Eileen Collins
Box 5, Folder 10	STS-93 Eileen Collins, Commander
Box 5, Folder 11	STS-114 Eileen Collins, Commander
Box 5, Folder 12	STS-118 Barbara Morgan

Subseries 1.3: Writing, Speeches and Presentations

Box 6, Folder 1	Amelia Was Right
Box 6, Folder 2	Book reviews
Box 6, Folder 3	The Fabulous Flight of the Three Musketeers
Box 6, Folder 4	Three Musketeers Powerpoint presentation
Box 6, Folder 5	Museum of Flight speech
Box 6, Folder 6	PPD [Powder Puff Derby] final edit (1 of 2)
Box 6, Folder 7	PPD [Powder Puff Derby] final edit (2 of 2)
Box 6, Folder 8	Powder Puff Derby marketing and correspondence
Box 7, Folder 1	PPD [Powder Puff Derby] -- publishers
Box 7, Folder 2	Skygirls editing
Box 7, Folder 3	Pancho [Florence "Pancho" Barnes] proposals -- Nick Sparks
Box 7, Folder 4	Speeches (1 of 2)
Box 7, Folder 5	Speeches (2 of 2)
Box 7, Folder 6	Louise Thaden
Box 7, Folder 7	Margaret Weitekamp
Box 8, Folder 1	Writing

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: *Personal materials, 1956-2019*

Box 8, Folder 2	Biography
Box 8, Folder 3	Book awards
Box 8, Folder 4	Correspondence
Box 8, Folder 5	Distinguished Citizen Award
Box 8, Folder 6	Awards and certificates
Box 8, Folder 7	C.V.
Box 8, Folder 8	Jessen one page
Box 8, Folder 9	GNJ [Gene Nora Jessen] photos, miscellaneous
Box 8, Folder 10	Negatives

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Beechcraft Owner's Manuals, Log Books and Bound Materials, 1954-2017

Box 9, Folder 1	Idaho aeronautical chart
Box 9, Folder 2	Handling Inflight Emergencies by Rod Machado [1996]
Box 9, Folder 3	Beechcraft Musketeer Flight and Ground Training Program
Box 9, Folder 4	Beechcraft Bonanza 1954 Handbook
Box 9, Folder 5	Beechcraft Queen Air Model 65 Owner's Manual [1960]
Box 9, Folder 6	Beechcraft B-33 Owner's Manual [1961]
Box 9, Folder 7	Beechcraft Travel Air B95A Owner's Manual [1961]
Box 9, Folder 8	Beechcraft Twin-Bonanza Flight Handbook, D50E [1961]
Box 9, Folder 9	Beechcraft Twin-Bonanza Flight Handbook, J50 [1961]
Box 9, Folder 10	Beechcraft Bonanza Model M35 Owner's Manual [1962]
Box 9, Folder 11	Beechcraft Musketeer Custom III Model A23A Owner's Manual [1965]
Box 9, Folder 12	Beechcraft Musketeer Model A23 Owner's Manual [1965]
Box 10, Folder 1	Beechcraft Debonair Model C33A Owner's Manual [1966]
Box 10, Folder 2	Beechcraft Musketeer Sport III Model A23-19 Owner's Manual [1966]
Box 10, Folder 3	Beechcraft Musketeer Super III Model A23-24 Owner's Manual [1967]
Box 10, Folder 4	Student Pilot Log Book, University of Oklahoma [1956-1957]
Box 10, Folder 5	Pilot Log [1957]
Box 10, Folder 6	Flight Record [1959-1964]
Box 10, Folder 7	Airline Log [1964-1991]
Box 10, Folder 8	The Standard Pilot Log [1991-2017]

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: *Scrapbooks, Photo Albums and Oversized, 1956-2013 and undated*

Box 11, Folder 1	Israel trip, July 1989, part 1 Notes: During this trip, Gene Nore Jessen presented the charter to the original Israeli section of the Ninety-Nines on July 20, 1989.
Box 11, Folder 2	Israel trip, July 1989, part 2
Box 11, Folder 3	Israel trip, July 1989, part 3
Box 11, Folder 4	Israel trip, July 1989, part 4
Box 11, Folder 5	Israel trip, July 1989, part 5
Box 12, Folder 1	Air Race Classic photo album [date unknown]
Box 12, Folder 2	"Introduction to Bob and Gene Nora Jessen" binder [date unknown]
Box 13, Folder 1	Gene Nora Jessen newspaper clippings, 1969-1996
Box 13, Folder 2	Gene Nora Jessen and family, 1962-1965
Box 14, Folder 1	Flying, 1956-1977
Box 15, Folder 1	Flying, 1966-1985
Box 15, Folder 2	"Women With Wings" and other Jessen columns, 1972-2013
Box 16, Folder 1	99s presidency, 1988-1990, volume 1
Box 17, Folder 1	99s presidency, 1988-1990, volume 2
Box 18, Folder 1	99s presidency, 1988-1990, volume 3
Box 19, Folder 1	Family, 1957-2016
Box 20, Folder 1	2009
Box 21, Folder 1	Eileen Collins' first launch, STS-63, February 1, 1995
Box 21, Folder 2	"Portrait of a Distinguished Citizen"
Box 22, Folder 1	Jordan, 1989 Notes: Sixth Biennial World Congress on Aerospace Education, July 23-26, 1989

Box 22, Folder 2

"Idaho Plane Talk" [date unknown]

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 5: *Video Tapes and Audio Cassettes*

Scope and Contents: This series includes videotapes and audiotapes of interviews with Jessen. The National Air and Space Museum Archives staff can assist you regarding access to these media.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)