



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Cross Section of Aviation Personnel Collection [Boedecker]

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Cross Section of Aviation Personnel Collection [Boedecker]
Date:	1936-1962
Identifier:	NASM.XXXX.0323
Creator:	Boedecker, Kenneth J.
Extent:	8.96 Cubic feet (15 flat boxes, 25 shoeboxes, 1 slim document box)
Language:	English .
Summary:	Kenneth Judson "Boedy" Boedecker (1892--1981) was an aircraft engine expert and avid amateur photographer who created a series of photo albums containing images of a wide variety of personnel employed in the aviation field. This collection consists of those albums, the negatives for the photographs in the albums, and one box of enlarged prints of some of the photographs.
Digital Content:	Digital Content: NASM-9A19972-073A, View of Kenneth Judson "Boedy" Boedecker

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Kenneth J. Boedecker, Gift, 1962, NASM.XXXX.0323.

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Jessamyn Lloyd, 2023.

Preferred Citation

Cross Section of Aviation Personnel Collection [Boedecker], NASM.XXXX.0323, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

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Biographical / Historical

Kenneth Judson "Boedy" Boedecker (1892--1981) was an aircraft engine expert and avid amateur photographer. Boedecker began his technical training at the Mechanics Institute in New York in 1910 and studied there until 1914, later studying at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn from 1914 to 1918. Boedecker also served in the US Naval Reserve (USNR) and was on active duty during World War I as a chief machinist's mate with the Northern Bombing Group in France and England. Boedecker worked as a machinist, draftsman, tool designer, and inspector for various companies before joining Lawrence Aero Engine Corporation as Chief Inspector in 1919, later becoming the Assistant Works Manager. When Lawrence merged with Wright Aeronautical, Boedecker became a Service Engineer for Wright before rising to Service Manager in 1927, General Service Manager in 1929, and Sales and Service Engineer in 1931. At the time of Boedecker's retirement in 1958, he was assistant to the vice president for sales at Curtiss-Wright. Boedecker learned to fly making test flights of Wright aircraft and made his first solo flight in 1930, going on to earn his pilot's license. During his time with Wright Aeronautical, Boedecker was assigned to test and inspect the Wright engines that powered numerous record-setting aircraft including Charles Lindbergh's Ryan NYP *Spirit of St Louis* that made the first solo transatlantic flight, the Fokker C-2 *Bird of Paradise* in which Lester Maitland and Albert Hegenberger made the first transpacific flight from the US mainland to Hawaii, and the Fokker F.VIIB-3m *Southern Cross* which Charles Kingsford-Smith and his crew flew to make the first transpacific flight from California to Australia. Boedecker also checked the engines of various aircraft that flew in the 1927 Dole Air Race. Boedecker was a member of numerous professional and aviation organizations including the Society of Automotive Engineers, Ancient and Secret Order of Quiet Birdmen, Wings Club, and Conquistadores del Cielo.

In the 1930s, Boedecker purchased a new camera and began to take portrait photographs of colleagues and other members of the aviation community as a way to familiarize himself with the equipment. Encouraged by the editor of Wright Aeronautical's internal employee newsletter who reproduced some of the photographs in that publication, the project grew to include sixteen volumes of photographs taken during the course of Boedecker's work as well as during his extensive travels to aviation-related events. Boedecker would print two copies of each photograph and send them to the subject, asking that person to sign one and return it to him for inclusion in his album. At least one volume of the album was reproduced and published in the late 1930s by Aero Digest Publishing Company. The first fifteen albums were officially presented to the Smithsonian at a ceremony in the Regents Room on May 16, 1962. The sixteenth volume was sent later as it was still being completed at the time of the presentation. In that volume there is a photograph taken at the presentation ceremony by a Smithsonian photographer which, according to Boedecker, is the only photograph in the collection not taken with his camera.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of sixteen volumes of photo albums containing photographs of a wide variety of personnel employed in the aviation field, including aircraft and engine manufacturing, the military, and airline and airport employees. The photographs are mostly taken by Kenneth Judson "Boedy" Boedecker, although some photos that show Boedecker himself were taken by others with his camera. Some are taken at the subject's workplace and others are taken at events such as air races or organization meetings, and it appears to have been Boedecker's practice to try to take photographs of the entire flight crew when he traveled by air. Most of the photographs are autographed by the subject and all are captioned with the subject's name, company, date, and location where the photo was taken. In the case of the photographs of flight crews, the airline route is also noted. Boedecker documented both large and small companies, and a large portion of the employees shown in the albums are women. The photographs appear in the albums in the order they were taken, and some include indexes of the people shown in the album. The collection also includes the negatives for the photographs in the albums, which are arranged alphabetically by last name of the subject, and one box of enlarged prints of some of the photographs.

Arrangement

Collection has three series defined by type of material. The first series consists of volumes of photo albums that are arranged by date. The second series consists of negatives arranged alphabetically by last name of subject. The third series contains copy prints.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Air pilots
- Aircraft industry
- Airlines
- Women in aeronautics

Types of Materials:

- Black-and-white negatives
- Photograph albums
- Photographic prints

Container Listing

Albums

Scope and Contents: Notations appear following the names of some people portrayed in the albums. (QB) after a name indicates the person was a member of the Ancient and Secret Order of Quiet Birdmen, (EB) indicates membership in the Early Birds of Aviation, and (99) indicates membership in the Ninety-Nines.

Processing Information: Many of the photo albums in this collection are constructed so that photographs and captions appear on only the front of each album page; the reverse of each album page is blank. For those albums which include an index pasted onto the album pages, both sides of the album page are usually utilized for the index portion. All pages with content have been digitally reproduced for all volumes.

In preparation for photographing the albums, Volumes I, II, IV, and VI were numbered to include the blank pages. The assigned image filenames for these albums may advance by more than one number as the blank pages (those not having content) have not been reproduced. Volumes III, V, and VII through XVI were numbered to exclude the blank pages. The assigned image filenames in these albums advance by one number.

Please note that in many of the albums, there are page number labels applied by Kenneth Judson "Boedy" Boedecker to the top righthand corner of each page. Image filenames, however, have been assigned based on NASM Archives numbering conventions rather than the original page numbers.

Box 1, Folder 1	Volume I
Box 2, Folder 1	Volume II
Box 3, Folder 1	Volume III
Box 4, Folder 1	Volume IV
Box 5, Folder 1	Volume V
Box 6, Folder 1	Volume VI
Box 7, Folder 1	Volume VII
Box 8, Folder 1	Volume VIII
Box 9, Folder 1	Volume IX
Box 10, Folder 1	Volume X
Box 11, Folder 1	Volume XI
Box 12, Folder 1	Volume XII
Box 13, Folder 1	Volume XIII

Box 14, Folder 1	Volume XIV
Box 15, Folder 1	Volume XV
Box 15, Folder 2	Volume XVI

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Negatives

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Negatives

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