



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Al and Fred Key Ole Miss Endurance Record Certificate

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Al and Fred Key <i>Ole Miss</i> Endurance Record Certificate
Date:	December 31, 1935
Identifier:	NASM.XXXX.0879
Creator:	National Aeronautic Association (U.S.)
Extent:	0.05 Cubic feet (1 folder)
Language:	English .
Summary:	Algene Earl "Al" Key (1905—1976) and Frederick Maurice "Fred" Key (1909—1971) established a world record in 1935 for sustained flight, using air-to-air refueling, in a modified Curtiss Robin J-1 (Model 50H) named <i>Ole Miss</i> . This collection consists of the certificate of record issued to the Keys by the National Aeronautic Association (NAA) to document that flight.
Digital Content:	Image(s): Al and Fred Key Ole Miss Endurance Record Certificate

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Unknown.

Related Materials

Curtiss Robin J-1 Deluxe "Ole Miss" in the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Collection:
[Curtiss Robin J-1 Deluxe "Ole Miss," A19560041000](#) .

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Jessamyn Lloyd, 2024.

Preferred Citation

Al and Fred Key *Ole Miss* Endurance Record Certificate, NASM.XXXX.0879, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Algene Earl "Al" Key (1905—1976) and Frederick Maurice "Fred" Key (1909—1971) established a world record in 1935 for sustained flight, using air-to-air refueling, in a modified Curtiss Robin J-1 (Model 50H) named *Ole Miss*. Al and Fred Key both attended flying school in Missouri upon their respective high school graduations, and both made a living through barnstorming and flying for various businesses. By 1930, the Key brothers had opened a flying school outside Meridian, Mississippi, and later served as managers of the newly established Meridian Municipal Airport. The Keys decided to attempt a record flight and got a friend, William H. Ward, to provide his Curtiss Robin J-1 (Model 50H) aircraft for the flight. The Keys worked with A. D. Hunter to modify the aircraft, including a new fuel tank, engine servicing catwalk, and a sliding top hatch for receiving supplies in flight, as well as fitting it with an automatic cutoff valve that was designed by Hunter for easier aerial refueling – an important innovation that would become widely used thereafter. The modified aircraft was christened *Ole Miss* and the Key Brothers made two unsuccessful attempts at their endurance flight before taking off from Meridian, Mississippi, on June 4, 1935, not touching the ground again until July 1, for a total time in the air of 653 hours and 34 minutes, or 27 days. During the flight, the Keys received fuel and supplies 432 times from another aircraft. They braved severe thunderstorms and an electrical fire in the cabin before returning to a safe landing in Meridian, where they were greeted by 35,000 wildly cheering spectators. During the flight, Fred and Al Key took turns manning the controls and sleeping on the extra fuel tank behind them in the cabin. Their estimated ground track was 52,320 miles, or more than twice the circumference of the earth. Meridian Municipal Airport was renamed Key Field in their honor. The Key brothers later donated *Ole Miss* to the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum (A19560041000). Both Key brothers later served in the US Army Air Corps as bomber pilots in the Pacific theater during World War II. Fred was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, and Al was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross, a Distinguished Service Cross, an Air Medal, a British Distinguished Service Cross and seven Bronze Stars. Al Key remained in the US Air Force until retiring at the rank of colonel in 1960. Fred Key ran Key Brothers Flying Service at Key Field until his death.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of the certificate of record issued to Fred and Al Key by the National Aeronautic Association (NAA) to document the endurance record they set in the Curtiss Robin J-1 (Model 50H) *Ole Miss*, June 4 to July 1, 1935. The certificate bears the NAA seal and is dated December 31, 1935.

Arrangement

Collection is a single item.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Aeronautics -- Records
Curtiss Robin J-1 (Model 50H) "Ole Miss"

Types of Materials:

Certificates

Names:

Key, Algene Earl, 1905-1976
Key, Frederick Maurice, 1909-1971