



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Andy Granatelli Collection

NMAH.AC.1403

NMAH Staff

Archives Center, National Museum of American History
P.O. Box 37012
Suite 1100, MRC 601
Washington, D.C. 20013-7012
archivescenter@si.edu
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Andy Granatelli Collection
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1403
Date:	1940s-1990s
Extent:	66 Cubic feet
Creator:	Granatelli, Andy, 1923-2013 Granatelli, Vincent Grancor Automotive Specialists Hurricane Hot Rod Association Studebaker Corporation
Language:	English Some materials in French, German, and Spanish.
Digital Content:	Image(s): Andy Granatelli Collection

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Vince Granatelli.

Processing Information

Collection is unprocessed.

Preferred Citation

Andy Granatelli Collection, ca. 1940-1990s, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Andy Granatelli (1923-2013) was an automobile racing promoter, a race car engine designer and an automotive innovator. Two of his cars, a 1967 turbine engine race car and the 1969 Indy 500 winner, are in NMAH's Work & Industry collection. More than any other racing figure, Granatelli bridged the realms of garage tinkerers and professional motorsports, and he stimulated public interest in auto racing on a national level. His STP Corporation became a high-profile sponsor of Indianapolis 500 and NASCAR race cars, with Granatelli appearing in ads and commercials. His larger-than-life personality and flair for the dramatic made him an American cultural phenomenon. His career is well summed up in the profile written for his 2003 induction into the Automotive Hall of Fame:

Racer, entrepreneur, engineer, promoter, business executive. This is how one begins to describe the career of Andy Granatelli. But the title Mister 500 is the one that befits him most, for it describes a lifelong dream to conquer the famous 500-mile race in Indianapolis.

It was a preposterous dream for the scrappy kid growing up in the slums of Chicago, whose mother had died when he was twelve, and two years later, at the age of fourteen, dropped out of school to help his father feed the family. Andy Granatelli began his quest for Indy 500 fame at the age of 20 in 1943, when he and his brother pooled their meager, hard-earned money and purchased a Texaco gas station on the north side of Chicago, which he called Andy's Super Service. Andy, always the promoter, needed a gimmick to set himself apart from other service stations. His gimmick? Granatelli initiated the first pit stop service station, utilizing four or five mechanics to work on a car at one time.

Customers appreciated the true super service experience and would often wait in line for this unique treatment. With this unique service and Andy's P.T. Barnum style it was no wonder that the station was prosperous, and just two years later, in 1945, he formed the Granatelli Corporation, known as Grancor Automotive Specialists. As the head of Grancor, Andy Granatelli pioneered the concept of mass merchandising performance products and power and speed equipment to a generation of Americans who were discovering the joys of hot rodding.

Andy quickly learned that if you give the customer what he needs, you can make a living; give him what he wants, and you can make a fortune! Granatelli's racing career began in 1946, when he built the first rocket-powered car to race on an oval track. That same year, he took his first car to the Indianapolis 500 - a pre-war Harry Miller- designed Ford.

When Andy Granatelli wasn't burning up tracks, he was tearing up the business world. In 1958, Andy and his brother Joe purchased Paxton Products, a failing engineering firm that made superchargers. With Andy at the helm, Paxton Products became profitable in seven months. In 1961, Andy sold Paxton Products to Studebaker Corporation and stayed on as Paxton's CEO. Two years later, Studebaker management wanted Granatelli to work his magic on an under-performing division called Chemical Compounds Corporation. Chemical Compounds had only one, little known product . . . STP Oil Treatment. With virtually no advertising budget, Andy created a four-pronged approach to turn the company around: a recognizable corporate logo (the STP oval), a product (oil treatment), a product spokesman (himself) and a reason for existence (racing). The STP logo became one of the best recognized in history. STP could be found in virtually every venue of speed: on land, on the water or in the air. Andy Granatelli once said that in the 1960s, virtually every kid in America had an STP sticker on his bedroom door, his notebook or his lunchbox, and he was probably right!

Back at Indianapolis, Granatelli entered a revolutionary race car of his own design - one with a turbine engine in 1967 and 1968. Even though the car failed to finish both years due to mechanical failure, the cars demonstrated superior speed and performance. At the end of the 1968 season, the U.S. Auto Club revised engine specifications, effectively outlawing Granatelli's turbine car. Undeterred, Granatelli returned to Indy the following year with a conventional car and proceeded to win his first Indianapolis 500 with

Mario Andretti at the wheel. Four years later, in 1973, Andy won his second and last Indy 500 with a car driven by Gordon Johncock. Andy Granatelli's childhood dream of conquering Indy was fulfilled, not once, but twice.

Source

Andy Granatelli Biography, Automotive Hall of Fame (last accessed January 29, 2020 <https://www.automotivehalloffame.org/honoree/andy-granatelli/>)

Scope and Contents

The collection documents Granatelli's lifelong involvement with automobiles, from his youth through his career as an auto industry executive, and as a racing car owner, designer and promoter. The collection consists primarily of files, photographs, scrapbooks, and drawings. Some of the earliest files relate to Grancor, a company founded by Granatelli and his two brothers in 1945, which customized cars for clients. Other things contained in the files include meeting minutes, articles of association, business and financial records, legal records and profit and loss statements. Also included in the files are papers relating to an organization he started called the Hurricane Hot Rod Association. A large portion of the files relate to Granatelli's term as President of STP, a division of the Studebaker Corporation, from 1961-1974. These files detail the internal workings of the company during this period, and include papers relating to such things as strategic planning, sales, marketing, advertising and competitors' products. Additionally, this portion contains STP's Board of Directors' minutes, documents on policies and procedures, papers documenting advertising campaigns, comparative sales figures, sales manuals, and Granatelli's business correspondence. The largest part of the files relates to the Indianapolis 500 race. There are detailed files on the drivers and race teams he assembled for the annual race, but these files also include design drawings, specifications, test data, lap logs, performance statistics, and reports documenting the implementation of design changes. The scrapbooks in the collection contain clippings, biographical materials, and other documents relating to auto racing in America and especially the Indianapolis 500. Finally, the collection contains a large number of photographs covering all aspects of Granatelli's career.

Arrangement

Collection is unarranged.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Automobile driving
- Automobile industry and trade
- Automobile industry executives
- Automobiles
- Automobiles -- Design and construction
- Automobiles, Racing
- Engines, automobile
- Hot rods

Types of Materials:

Advertisements -- 20th century
Business records -- 20th century
Clippings -- 20th century
Correspondence -- 20th century
Design drawings -- 20th century
Drawings
Financial records -- 20th century
Legal records -- 20th century
Minutes -- 20th century
Photographs -- 20th century
Scrapbooks
Speeches

Names:

Indianapolis Speedway Race