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Melvin B. Zisfein Papers, 1947-1995 and undated

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Melvin B. Zisfein Papers
Identifier:	Accession 96-002
Date:	1947-1995 and undated
Extent:	3.43 cu. ft. (3 record storage boxes) (1 12x17 box)
Creator::	Zisfein, Melvin B.
Language:	Language of Materials: English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 96-002, Melvin B. Zisfein Papers

Historical Note

Melvin B. Zisfein (1926-1995) received Aeronautical Engineering degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (B.S., 1948; M.S., 1948). He worked at various companies as a designer and aerodynamicist from 1948 to 1953, including Lockheed Aircraft Corporation. He joined Bell Aircraft Corporation in 1953 as the Chief of the Dynamics Department. In 1960 Zisfein became General Manager of the Astromechanics Research Division of Giannini Controls Corporation until 1966, when he became Associate Director of the Franklin Institute Research Laboratories. From 1971 to 1982 he was at the National Air and Space Museum (NASM) as Deputy Director (1971-1982) and also as Acting Director (1978), where he was instrumental in the planning, construction and design of the new NASM building which opened in 1976. In 1982 Zisfein became the first Director of the Army Discovery Center at the National Science Center in Fort Gordon, Georgia. He retired in 1988 but continued to teach as Adjunct Professor at Augusta College (Georgia) until 1990.

Descriptive Entry

Included in this collection are articles, reports, notebooks, photographs, slides, and certificates and awards. There is very little personal correspondence, but papers written by Zisfein contained in this collection seem to represent some of his major writings. Of special note are 15 notebooks kept by Zisfein at NASM, which contain notes concerning exhibition concepts, planning, budgets, and schedules; museum policy, meetings, and agendas; and other professional activities. Also of note are a large number of photographic slides which depict the new NASM building and exhibition installations. Zisfein organized the slides into nine books, but books four to seven are missing from this accession.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Aeronautical museums
- Aerospace engineering
- Aerospace engineers
- Architectural design
- Building
- Museum buildings
- Museum exhibits

Types of Materials:

- Audiotapes
- Black-and-white photographs
- Clippings
- Color photographs
- Manuscripts

Names:

- Army Discovery Center (U.S.)
- Augusta College (Augusta, Ga.)
- Bell Aircraft Corporation
- Franklin Institute (Philadelphia, Pa.). Research Laboratories
- Giannini Controls Corporation
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- National Air and Space Museum (U.S.). Office of the Deputy Director
- National Air and Space Museum (U.S.). Office of the Director
- Zisfein, Melvin B.

Geographic Names:

- Fort Gordon (Ga.)

Container Listing

Box 1

Scholarly and Professional Papers, 1947-1971

- Box 1 of 4 Massachusetts Institute of Technology exam in "Dynamics of Aircraft Structures," taken by Zisfein, June 6, 1947
- Box 1 of 4 Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, technical data sheets and Zisfein notes, 1952
- Box 1 of 4 Bell Aircraft, reports and presentations, 1958, 1960. Includes preliminary report and presentation titled "An Approximate Method for Obtaining Surface Pressure Aerodynamic Influence Coefficients," 1958, by Zisfein, and presentation titled "Aeroelastic System Approximations," 1960, by Zisfein and Frank J. Frueh.
- Box 1 of 4 Giannini Controls Corporation, articles and reports, 1960-1966. Includes articles and reports written or co-written by Zisfein, or articles that cite Zisfein.
- Box 1 of 4 Franklin Institute Research Laboratories, reports, 1969, 1971. Co-written and written by Zisfein.
- Papers Relating to National Air and Space Museum, 1972-1981 and undated
- Box 1 of 4 National Air and Space Museum (NASM), memoranda, meetings, and statement, 1976, 1978. Concern exhibition and research policies, personnel incentives, and "NASM Five Year Forward Planning Statement."
- Box 1 of 4 "Visitors' Reactions to the National Air and Space Museum and the Individual Exhibits, Volume II: Detailed Findings," undated
- Box 1 of 4 Zisfein articles, papers, and lectures, 1972, and undated. Includes article, "Critical Thoughts on Structural Mechanics and NDE," with William B. Tarpley, 1972, and lectures describing the NASM "exhibits complex."
- Box 1 of 4 Articles concerning Zisfein and NASM, 1974, 1977
- Box 1 of 4 "Dennis the Menace at the National Air & Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution Washington, D.C.," 1977
- Box 1 of 4 Travel Vouchers, 1972-1980 (3 folders)
- Box 1 of 4 John E. Allen, resume and articles, 1979-1980
- Box 1 of 4 Zisfein biography, curriculum vitae, SF 171, and performance appraisal, circa 1978-1981. Appraisal by Walter J. Boyne.
- Box 1 of 4 Letters of recommendation, 1978. Letters supporting Zisfein's application to become NASM Director. Correspondents include Representative James H.

Scheuer and Raymond L. Bisplinghoff, with his enclosed article on "Principles of Aeroelasticity."

Box 1 of 4 Zisfein notebooks, 1973-1975. Include notes concerning exhibition concepts, planning, budgets, and schedules; museum policy, meetings, and agendas; and other professional activities. Also include photographs, correspondence, and internal memoranda. (3 folders)

Box 2

Box 2 of 4 Zisfein notebooks, 1975-1981. Include notes concerning exhibition concepts, planning, budgets, and schedules; museum policy, meetings, and agendas; and other professional activities. Also include photographs, correspondence, and internal memoranda. (12 folders)

Box 2 of 4 Zisfein notes on space history, undated

Box 3

Box 3 of 4 Color photographic slides, circa 1974-1976. Include photographs of NASM exhibitions, building construction, and exhibition installations, as well as photographs from other museums. Zisfein indexed nine books of slides. Only Books 1-3 and 8-9 are contained here. (9 folders)

Personal Papers, Awards, Photographs, and Sound Recording, 1948-1995 and undated

Box 3 of 4 "Flight: A Panorama of Aviation," children's book by Zisfein, reviews, publishing catalogs, correspondence and award, 1981-1982

Box 3 of 4 Civilian Performance Rating, 1986. During tenure as Physical Science Administrator at the National Science Center for Communications and Electronics.

Box 3 of 4 Who's Who in America, Zisfein entry, 1988-1989

Box 3 of 4 Zisfein's U.S. Passport

Box 3 of 4 Letters of condolence (copies), 1995. Sent to Zisfein's wife, Alice.

Box 3 of 4 Certificates and awards, 1948, 1976-1979, 1981, 1987, and undated. Copies and original documents.

Box 3 of 4 Personal photographs, 1949, 1983, 1985 and undated. Color and black and white. Include photographs of Zisfein as child, in high school, and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Zisfein's mother, Betty; Zisfein with his first and second wives, Elaine and Alice; and Zisfein at places of work, 1985.

Box 4

- Box 4 of 4 Aerobatic Pilots Interview, 1/4-inch audio tape, Ampex master, undated. Includes interviews with Zisfein, Walt Pierce, Sandy Pierce, Joe Hughes, Mike Murphy, Scotty McCray, Joe Kazian, Gene Soucy, Charlie Hilliard, Tom Paburezug, Mike Collins, and Lew Casey.
- Box 4 of 4 Photographs, circa 1972-1981. Color and black and white. Includes photos of Zisfein at the opening of the NASM Balloon exhibition, 1972; with Julia Child, 1973; at the centennial reenactment of the opening of the Arts & Industries Building, 1976; and at several NASM-sponsored festivals.
- Box 4 of 4 Plaque presented to Zisfein by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, February 24, 1979