

Collection Number: MS-57

Title: Conquistadores Del Cielo Papers

Dates: 1940 - 1975

Creator: Ray G. Sparks

Summary/Abstract:

The Conquistadores Del Cielo Papers document the history and organization of the Conquistadores Del Cielo, an organization of aviation industry executives. The bulk of the collection consists of yearbooks from 1940 to 1975 celebrating the yearly get-togethers of the group in Arizona.

Quantity/Physical Description: 6 linear feet

Language(s): English

Repository:

Special Collections and Archives, Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435-001, (937) 775-2092

Restrictions on Access: There are no restrictions on accessing material in this collection.

Restrictions on Use:

Copyright restrictions may apply. Unpublished manuscripts are protected by copyright. Permission to publish, quote, or reproduce must be secured from the repository and the copyright holder.

Preferred Citation:

(Box Number, Folder Number), MS-57, Conquistadores Del Cielo Papers, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio

Acquisition:

The Conquistadores Del Cielo Papers were purchased from Glenn Books, Inc. in February 1978.

Revisions:

The yearbooks were re-boxed and the finding aid updated to the new EAD format in March 2009.

Processed by: The collection was initially processed by Susan Smith in June 1978 and revised by John Armstrong in March 2009.

Arrangement: The collection is divided into two series:

Series I: General Information

Series II: Yearbooks

Biographical/Historical Note:

Ray G. Sparks was initiated into the Conquistadores Del Cielo in 1941. He was a barnstormer, a racer, Vice-President and General Manager for Curtiss-Wright in the Midwest, and pioneered Group Life Insurance for pilots with the Connecticut General Life Insurance Company. This was in the days when no insurance company would issue pilot's insurance. At one time he carried TWA, Continental, Wien Air Alaska, and several other airline's Group Life Insurance. During WW II he flew a P-47 as a fighter pilot and attained the rank of Colonel.

In 1937 a group of aviation executives were invited to a weekend at an Arizona ranch by TWA's President, Jack Frye, and Vice-President, John B. Walker. The result was the formation of a non-profit corporation in 1938 called the Conquistadores Del Cielo (Conquerors of the Sky) by a group of 91 executives from the aviation industry - airlines, parts suppliers, engine manufactures, fuel companies, etc. When space exploration came into being, these men were also invited.

Scope and Content:

The collection pertains primarily to the Conquistadores Del Cielo and its organizations. The bulk of the collection consists of yearbooks celebrating the yearly get-together of the group.

Series I, General Information, contains contest rules for the many competitions held during the annual get-togethers and related correspondence with members. Colonel Ray Sparks was Chairman of the contests from 1956 to 1966. There is, in addition to the Conquistadores information, a small group of general memorabilia which includes pamphlet material related to Colonel Sparks' years as Curtiss-Wright General Manager, prospectuses for International Airways; Air Race, Flying School, Air Show Programs, and the dedication of the Kansas City International Airport in 1972. At that time a Ray Sparks Day was held. Included also are two original copies of TAT (Transcontinental Air Transport) Vol. 1, #7 issue of July, 1929, announcing the beginning of service coast-to-coast and Plane Talk. TAT was one of TWA's forerunners. There are also several letters to and from Rear Admiral Edwin C. Parsons, with several holograph letters from him. He was the last surviving member of the Lafayette Escadrille. The letters are dated in the 1960's. Signal Corps photographs of aviation combat WW II activities are also included.

Series II, Yearbooks, contains yearbooks from 1940 to 1975. Since Ray Sparks became a member in 1941; this collection contains the yearbooks of the organization from 1941 to 1975. The 1944 volume is not included. The yearbooks were published after each annual meeting of the member's company; each company striving to outdo the previous year's effort. The yearbooks list all members present and give an overview of activities. There were many competitions during the week such as Pentanque, knife throwing, fast draw shooting, casting, target shooting, golf, tennis, and hunting. The books are primarily informal snapshots of members participating in various activities. The highlight of the week was the initiation ceremony for new members who had attended three meetings. This ceremony is a pantomime induction with processions of Conquistadores riding down from the hills with lighted torches. Initiates are sworn in and dubbed

"Conquistador." The script being read recounts the history of the Conquerors of the Sky. Fireworks conclude the ceremony. (It is costumed by the workshop which costumes the Royal Spanish Opera in Madrid. Authentic period costumes complete with armor, swords, and full regalia are used.) It is an extremely solemn occasion for members involved in the cause of promoting aviation in this country.

Subject Terms

Persons/Families

Sparks, Raymond G.

Organizations/Corporate Names

Conquistadores Del Cielo

Subjects (General)

Conquistadores Del Cielo – Archives
Aeronautics – Societies, etc.

Material Types

Yearbooks
Correspondence
Photographs

Occupations

Aviation Executives

Collection Inventory

Series I General Information

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	1	General Correspondence	Dec. 1964-Apr. 1968
	2	General Correspondence	Dec. 1967-Apr. 1969
	3	General Correspondence	Jul. 1970-Aug. 1974
	4	Curtiss-Wright Flying School	1929
	5	The Curtiss-Robin and the Challenger	1929
	6	D.H. Gipsy Moth and the Travel Air	1929
	7	Correspondence - Kansas City International Airport dedication	1972
	8	Kansas City International Airport Dedication Ceremony – Invitations, brochures, etc.	1972
	9	Conquistadores Del Cielo Correspondence	Jun. 1967-Jun, 1969
	10	Conquistadores Del Cielo Correspondence	Jul. 1969-May 1971
	11	Conquistadores Del Cielo Welcome Packet/Agenda	1966
	12	Conquistadores Del Cielo Welcome Packet/Agenda	1968
	13	Conquistadores Del Cielo Welcome Packet/Agenda	1970

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	14	Contest Rules	Oct. 1965-Aug. 1966
	15	Contest Rules	Aug. 1966-Oct. 1966
	16	North American Aviation Inc. Bomber Plant Ground Breaking, Fairfax Airport, KS	1941
	17	Eddie Rickenbacker Crash, Georgia	Feb. 1941
2	1	Magazine: National Air Races	1931
	2	Magazine: The Future of Aviation Is On the Ground, Fairfax Airport, KS	1929
	3	Magazine: Military Review	Feb. 1958
	4	Booklets: Handbook On the Law of Search and Seizure, Flight Instructor Practical Test Guide, Pilot's Weather How It Is Forecast; You and Your VOR	1968, 1964, Undated
	5	Booklets: 420 Hours In the Air; Denver Air Show, Command-Aire Stability	1940, Undated
	6	Pamphlets: Berlin Aircraft; From China Skies to Outer Space	Undated
	7	Miscellaneous Ray Sparks Material – Certificates, clippings, etc.	1963, 1969
	8	Miscellaneous pamphlets and brochures	1929, 1957, 1959
	9	Newspaper Clippings – Aviation and Conquistadores Del Cielo	Undated
	10	Book: “Boutelle Bugle” containing war songs. Songbook edition, privately published.	1951
	11	Notebook containing war songs	1944
	12	Photographs of Conquistadores Activities	Undated
	13	WWII Photographs (Primarily Aviation)	Circa. 1940-1945
	14	Book: “Curtis Ground Course” by Ray G. Sparks	Undated

Series II Yearbooks

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
3		Conquistadores Del Cielo Yearbooks – 1951, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1957, 1959-1969, 1971	1951-1971
4		Conquistadores Del Cielo Yearbooks – 1970, 1973- 1975	1970-1975
5		Conquistadores Del Cielo Yearbooks – 1941-1943, 1945-1950, 1952 (1944 missing)	1941-1952
6		Conquistadores Del Cielo Yearbooks	1956, 1958, 1972