

Dixie Blandy Papers

MS – 80

Wright State University
Department of Special Collections and Archives

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Dixie Blandy Papers

The papers of Richard "Dixie" Blandy (1902-1974) cover the years 1940-1973. They were donated to the Wright State University Archives on March 13, 1979, by his son, Richard Blandy.

Linear feet of shelf space occupied: .11
Approximate number of items: 300

The letter of gift imposes no restrictions with regards to literary or publishing rights on materials in the collection.

Biography

Richard Blandy was born in 1902 and raised in Vieux Carre, Louisiana. He was a Creole, five feet, four inches tall, and generally maintained a weight of 150 pounds. Various accounts recall his experience as a circus worker, boxer, house painter, Merchant Marine, riveter, steeplejack, flagpole painter and salesman.

1929 - First flagpole sitting in answer to classified ad by Goodrich Rubber Company and Texaco, earning \$600 for climbing a spire atop a new service station in Tampa, Florida.

1933 - Claimed title as champion flagpole sitter during 77 days and nights at the Chicago World's Fair.

1954 - Set flagpole standing record after 10 days at the Michigan State Fair.

1960 - Established bicycle record for 13 days and nights atop a 50-foot pole in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

1964 - Broke 1933 sitting record on the Steelpier in Atlantic City, New Jersey after 78 days.

1965 - Proclaimed world title at Grona Luid Amusement Park in Stockholm, Sweden aster sitting 125 days in a chair 200 feet height.

1974 - May 6, died at 72 years when flagpole collapsed in Chicago

Blandy had six wives, having been divorced three times and widowed three times. He was known to meet his younger wives through telephone conversations with fans on the ground during his many flagpole sitting exhibitions. Johnny Carson interviewed him while he was sitting on a 155 foot pole for television's Tonight Show in the mid-1960s.

As others broke his records, he dismissed their attempts since they had built elaborate sitting platforms, while he continued to use a small seat as his primary vehicle.

Blandy made his winter home in Dayton, Ohio, for over 60 years, bartending to make ends meet. Known as "Dixie-on-the-Ball" and "Buckeye Dixie", he wanted his epitaph, to read: "The World Super Champion Flagpole Sitter and a good American." He was survived by his son, Richard, a high school principal living Tampa, Florida.

Scope and Content

The Dixie Blandy Papers span the years 1940-1973. The bulk of the material is comprised of newsclippings, photographs and advertisements, loose and in a scrapbook, and report the major events of his career, his motivation for flagpole sitting, and the promotional aspects of his employment. The loose items are arranged chronologically by type of document, excepting the scrapbook, which is maintained in tact.

The scrapbook contains news articles, promotional ads for contests and appearances, and programs, sketchily documenting the years between 1940 and 1958. Individual newsclippings span the later years, 1964-1973. These materials contain brief information concerning exhibitions, mishaps, fans, marriage proposals, contests and his thoughts on life. In addition, the collection includes still publicity photos, and a typical performance contract and accompanying rider. Promotional brochures of the 1950s and 1960s can be contrasted to demonstrate the evolution in approach to attracting sponsors and fans.

The reason for the gap in the scrapbook collecting of newsclippings prior to 1958 and the loose clippings after 1964 is not apparent, although the later new articles appear to recall the intervening period to a minimal extent. In total, the collection begins to document a colorful Daytonian and provides insights into an entertainment attraction, its promotion and appeal, spanning and reflection this aspect of American culture through four decades.

Container Listing

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	1	Scrapbook	1940-1958
	2	Newsclippings	1960-1973
	3	Business Documents	1950-1970
	4	Photographs	1930-1960