

Arthur C. Burns Collection
History of Aviation Collection

Biographical Information

Born: Brenham, TX., November 15, 1892

Died: Banning, CA., May 29, 1970

Aviation Background

Exposed to aviation at 18 years of age at the first air 1910 meet in the U.S. at Dominguez Field, Los Angeles, CA.

With Edwin C. Musick and Harry Reynolds built an 1912 airplane (note photos) that flew, with Musick as pilot, nine feet off the ground and pancaked.

November 15, soloed in a front elevator Curtiss airplane at Venice, CA., this airplane was rebuilt from one that crashed by Burns, Musick, and Reynolds. 1913

Worked for Glenn L. Martin. On December 10, 1914, Burns, Musick, and Reynolds bought their own airplane. 1913-14

July 15, Burns opened a flying school at Griffith Park, Los Angeles, CA., using a Martin headless pusher, powered by an eight cylinder Curtiss engine. the plane was originally used by Glenn L. Martin for exhibition flights. On November 7, flew test for F.A.I. license. 1915

Became an exhibition flyer in Los Angeles, CA area 1916

Became a civilian instructor at North Island, CA., then passed test for Junior Military Aviator on March 24. 1917

Went to Rockaway Long Island, NY., where he was licensed as Naval Aviator No. 610 on April 30, 1918. During most of WWI tested various seaplanes and flying boats. 1917-18

Returned to CA., on July 4, became first regular airline passenger pilot in the U.S. for Chaplin Airlines. 1919

Flew for Chaplin Airlines: San Pedro-Catalina Island, CA. 1919-20

- Flew one month each year with Naval Reserve. 1920-31
- Based at Manzanillo, Burns piloted passenger hops in 1920-21
Cuba using a Curtiss MF Flying Boat with K-6, 150h.p. motor.
- Flew for Pacific Marine Airways: San Pedro to Catalina Island. 1922-23
- November 22, 1923 – March 15, 1924, flew for Gulf Coast 1923-24
Airline: New Orleans to Pilot Town, Mississippi, in a Curtiss
HS2L Flying Boat with Liberty Engine. In 1924 met in CA.
and later married Mary Schwinn of Chicago, IL., in Houston, TX.
- Piloted passenger hops, mainly at Catalina, in Curtiss F 1924-28
Flying Boat and Douglas Seaplane; also flew at Clover Field,
Santa Monica, CA., in Waco 9, 10, and Fairchild.
October 27, started flying for Maddux in Lockheed Vega, J-5.
November 12, checked out in Ford Trimotor, J-5; during
remainder of 1928 flew alternately Ford and Lockheed.
- Piloted J-5 and Wasp powered Ford Tri-motors for Maddux, 1929-35
which merged with TAT to become TAT Maddux on or
around July 1, 1929.
Flew Fords for TAT Maddux, which became Transcontinental
and Western Air on November 1, 1930; then flew Fords, Fokkers,
Stearman and Waco Instrument Trainers as well as DC-1 and
DC-2 airplanes.
June 29, 1935 accepted position with Bureau of Air Commerce
(Civil Aeronautics Administration) and served as inspector
at St. Louis, Washington, DC., Santa Monica, Van Nuys, and
Los Angeles, CA.
- Donated his Hall-Scott four cylinder water-cooled airplane engine 1942-43
of 1911 to National Air Museum, Smithsonian Institution.
- June 29, received from CAA his twenty-year service pin; retired 1955
as an Air Carrier Inspector.
- Developed grape ranches in Coachella Valley of CA. 1955-65

Provenance

This collection was given to the History of Aviation Collection in a series of gifts from Mrs. Mary Burns, wife of the late aviator. It consists of photographs, philatelic materials, memorabilia and associated printed materials. The correspondence, both incoming and

outgoing, includes six letters (1955-70) arranged in chronological order. The most valuable document for research purposes is the pilot's early flight log book, spanning the years 1919 -1920. Contained originally in a ring binder measuring 7x9 inches with ruled paper of 5 ½ x 8 ½ , the flight log contains dates, times, authorization and verification signatures and stamps, types of aircraft and engines, and weather conditions. On opposite leaves are signatures and anecdotes of one hundred fifty to two hundred aviation figures such as Orville Wright. The thickness of the log is approximately ¾ inch with entries on both of many leaves.

Numerous items about the Early Birds appear in the collection. These and other items can be located in folders and separate listings. Philatelic and graphic materials are each given separate lists. Folders 4-7 contain photographs grouped as Early Years, Post World War II, Early Birds Reunion, and Negatives. In addition to these photographs that range from 1912/1913 are ones on display, identified in a separate list. Most of the display photographs are of planes, the dates of which range from 1919-24. One important photograph, dated 1912/13, shows Burns, Harry Reynolds, and Edwin C. Musick with a plane they designed and built. The blueprints labeled Curtiss IV and bearing Reynold's signature are also housed with the collection (OS). The plane flew only nine feet into the air before it pancaked. The young aviation enthusiasts later redesigned the plane.

Associated printed materials include copies of the Gulf Aviation Atlas, a map of the MacRobertson International Air race [London to Melbourne] [OS]. articles and clippings about the history of aviation (some in OS), as well as reports and newsletters (Bee-hive) of United Aircraft Company. Another item of note is The Jones Brothers Aviator 1936. a pamphlet of instructions for the device's use in aerial navigation. The biographical file contains an autobiographical sketch written for the Early Birds as well as a clipping, 1932, about Chaplin Air Lines, the first regularly scheduled air line that employed Burns at its first pilot. The collection contains approximately 130 items, 27 of which are photographs, and is stored in one manuscript box.

Box 1

"B" Computer/Slide rule

"B1" Sky Rule/Slide rule

"B1" Computer/Circular slide rule

"B1" Biographical Information/Register

1 Biographical Information 1963

2 Correspondence: Incoming/Outgoing 1955-1970

- 3 Philately: First Flight Anniversary/Flight Covers
- 4 Photographs: Early Years 1912, 1939
- 5 Photographs: Post World War II 1945, 1952
- 6 Photographs: Early Bird Reunion 1963
- 7 Negatives (2 envelopes)
- 8 Memorabilia: Early Birds
- 9 *Early Birds of Aviation (CHIRP) Publications* 1962-1968
- 10 Memorabilia: Aviation
- 11 Air Historian 1968
- 12 Air Transportation 1933
- 13 Famous aviation figures: Glenn Curtiss & Wiley Post 1933
- 14 *Flight Magazine* 1964
- 15 *Aviation Atlas*
- 16 *Outstanding Events in United States Naval History* 1936
- 17 2 Publications: Report of the United States National 1943
Museum and Masters of the Air 1954
- 18 Texas Aviation Program 1965
- 19 2 Publications: United Aircraft 1965
2 Publications: We Saw It Happen
- 20 Catalina and the Air Age 1962
- 21 Jones Brothers Avigator Slide Rule Calculator for
Aerial Navigation