

MS-413, BILL SWEET COLLECTION

Collection Number: MS-413

Title: Bill Sweet Collection

Dates: 1928-1978

Creator: Sweet, William A. Jr.

Summary/Abstract:

Bill Sweet, Announcer and Director of the National Air Shows, was well-known in the world of air racing and air shows from the 1930s until his death in 1978. His collection consists of air show programs and press releases, air show newspaper clipping scrapbooks from the 1930s and 1940s, more than a thousand photographs of air shows events, including air show stunts and personalities, film of a number of air races and air shows, and a variety of memorabilia, including certificates of recognition, badges, and a painted "Linco" sign Sweet posted on his announcers podium during air shows.

Quantity/Physical Description: 19.78 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:

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Preferred Citation:

(Box Number, Folder Number), MS-413, Bill Sweet Collection, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio

Acquisition:

The collection was purchased from Thomas Kullgren, Early Aeronautica, Midland, Michigan on July 17, 2008.

Custodial History:

Hans Dam of Cincinnati, Ohio acquired the Bill Sweet Collection sometime after Bill Sweet's death in 1978. Mr. Dam merged some of the Sweet Collection into his own aviation collection (See MS-412, Hans Dam Aviation Collection). After Mr. Dam's death in 2007, Thomas

Kullgren acquired the Hans Dam Collection, and thus the Bill Sweet Collection. Mr. Kullgren reassembled the Sweet Collection, which was dispersed within the Dam Collection in 3-ring binders and boxes. Mr. Kullgren donated the Hans Dam Collection when the Bill Sweet Collection was purchased by Special Collections and Archives.

Separated Material:

Series III, Photographs (Boxes 8-16), is located in the Special Collections and Archives Wright Brothers Room.

Series IV, Film and Audio Tapes (Boxes 17-19), is located in the Special Collections and Archives Alternate Storage Facility located in the basement of the WSU Medical Sciences Building.

Related Material:

MS-412, Hans Dam Aviation Collection

Additional Sources:

Sweet, Bill, "They Call Me Mr. Airshow," by Bill Sweet as told to Bob Stailey," Milwaukee: Ken Cook Transnational, c1972.

Processed by: John L. Armstrong, 2010

Arrangement:

The Bill Sweet Collection is organized into four series:

Series I: General Information

Series II: Scrapbooks

Series III: Photographs

Series IV: Film and Audio Tapes

Biographical/Historical Note:

Sometime in the late 1920s, William "Bill" Sweet, Jr., became the manager of the Linden Airport in Ohio, and initially got into air shows by selling airplane rides. Not long after, he realized there was money to be made in the entertainment industry, and air shows were entertainment. He built his air show business using excitement, pizzazz, and star quality as the benchmark. Many experts in the air show business believe that the entire air show industry was established largely on the foundation that he built during his air show career.

In the 1940s, Bill Sweet helped to define the emerging air show business by bringing World War II heroes to the masses – pilots like Joe Mackey and Mike Murphy, and formation teams like the Linco Flying Aces. In the early 1950s, when the FAA cancelled all waivers following an air show accident in Colorado that killed 23 spectators, Bill Sweet traveled to Washington and spent the entire winter knocking on doors and lobbying for reinstatement of air shows. His efforts were successful.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Bill Sweet carried on the tradition of the traveling aerial circus by taking National Air Shows on the road. During these air shows, Sweet was at the microphone announcing in a carnival, barker-style for which he became well known. Sweet, and his National

Air Show, was also known for giving a start to well-known air show stunt performers such as Harold Krier, Rod Jocelyn, Charlie Hilliard, Eddie Green and others.

Bill Sweet died in 1978. In 2005, he was inducted into the International Council of Air Shows Foundation Hall of Fame.

Scope and Content:

William A. "Bill" Sweet, Jr. was the director and announcer for the National Air Shows from the early 1930s until his death in 1978. In his role as director, he was also the advance publicity man, arriving in town well in advance to promote the air show through whatever means possible – radio and TV spots, lining up sponsors, distributing posters, and contacting the local newspaper with stories and photographs. The success of the air show was dependent on these activities – and Bill Sweet was very good at. The Bill Sweet Collection is divided into four series containing a wide range of materials related to Sweet and the National Air Show. Researchers will find the scrapbooks, photographs, and film in the collection as a good starting point for writing a history of air shows in the United States.

Series I, General Information, contains certificates of recognition, correspondence, articles written by Sweet, "Aviation Oddity" drawings by Sweet, press releases, newspaper clippings, air show programs, and air show/press badges, including one for Apollo 13. The material ranges in date from the mid-1930s to 1973. Of particular note, is a copy of Bill Sweet's book, "They Call Me Mr. Airshow" (1972). In the front of the book, and scattered throughout the book, are autographs of air show people. Also of note, located in the Oversize material, is an original 18" x 22" oil painting by Bill's brother, Robert Sweet. The subject of the sign is the Linco gasoline logo and the text is "Quality Gasoline – Aviation Fuel for Your Car." This sign was created in 1937 and placed on Bill Sweet's announcer podium.

Series II, Scrapbooks, contains 11 newspaper clipping scrapbooks, plus several folders of loose clippings. The scrapbooks begin in approximately 1930 and end in 1947. The scrapbooks are in poor condition, but they contain a rich history of the air show industry during the 1930s and 1940s. Of particular note are articles written by Sweet that appeared in local newspapers and a large number of ads placed by Sweet in local newspapers.

Series III, Photographs, contains more than a thousand photographs of air show events, people, and other activities related to air shows. The air show portion of the photographs are located in photograph album boxes. The major parts of the series include a box containing photographs used in Sweet's book, "The Call Me Mr. Airshow," three boxes of photographs of people (primarily stunt pilots), two boxes of air show flying demonstrations, and one box of scenes on the ground, including parades. Unfortunately, many of the photographs of the stunt flying are not identified as to location or who is flying. Finally, the series also contains two boxes containing photographs of a variety of airplanes. The photographs are organized according to manufacturer – many of which contain only one or two photographs.

Series IV, Film and Audio Tape, primarily contains 16mm film of air races and air shows. The film ranges from the 1938 National Air Races to a 1973 film entitled "Pistons Props and Pilots."

Overall, the film is in moderate condition and may not be easily transferable to a VHS or DVD format.

Subject Terms

Persons/Families

Sweet, William A. Jr. -1978
Krier, Harold
Hilliard, Charles
Mackey, Joseph

Organizations/Corporate Names

National Air Shows

Places

United States

Subjects (General)

Stunt flying
Stunt performers
Air pilots – United States
Airplane racing
Aeronautics – Exhibitions
Air shows
Air shows – United States -- Exhibitions
Linco Flying Aces

Material Types

Photographs
Scrapbooks
Memorabilia

Occupations

Stunt pilot
Air show announcer

Collection Inventory

Series I: General Information

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	1	Bill Sweet Certificates & Business Cards See also Box 2, File 1 – Award of Merit, Annual Miami Air Show	1944, 1974, Undated 1951
	2	Correspondence	1947-1948, 1972

	3	Article – “Persistent Joe Mackey” by Bill Sweet	c.a. 1957
	4	Article – C. R. “Sinnie” Sinclair, Early Cicero Pilot – Barnstormer – Instructor	Undated
<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	5	Drawing (Copy) – “Aviation Oddities” by Bill Sweet See also Box 2, File 2 – “Aviation Oddities” by Bill Sweet (Chamberlain, Husing & White)	Undated Undated
	6	Drawing (Copy) – “National Air Show” by Bill Sweet	c.a. 1938
	7	Press Releases and Cut Lines	Undated
	8	Press Release – U. S. Army Parachute Team, the “Golden Knights”	Nov. 1969
	9	Press Release – Precision Aerobatic Maneuvers by “The Flying Professor”	Undated
	10	Magazine Articles – Air Shows and Aircraft	1963-1969
	11	Magazine Articles – WWI Aircraft & the Albatross	Undated
	12	Newspaper Clippings	1935
	13	Newspaper Clippings	1937
	14	Newspaper Clippings	1939
	15	Program – Charity Newsies Air Show, Columbus, OH See also Box 2, File 3 – Program - 1938 National Air Races (Partial program)	1937 1938
	16	Program – National Air Carnival, Birmingham, AL	Jun. 1946
	17	Program – Casper Air Show, Casper, WY	Jul. 13, 1946
	18	Program – EAA, Oshkosh, WI (Partial)	1957
	19	Program – National History of Flight, Pittsburgh-Connellsville Airport, PA	Jul. 1958
	20	Program – 1963 National Air Show	1963
	21	Program – Canadian International Air Show, Toronto, Canada	Aug. 1969
	22	Program – The Beverly Howard Memorial Air Show, Charleston, SC	Jun. 17, 1973
	23	Magazine – “Contact”	Dec. 1943
	24	Book – “Modern Aerobatics and Precision Flying” by Harold Krier	1963
	25	Book – Antique Aircraft Directory	1966
	26	Book – “Maintenance for Keeping Your WACO Original and FAA Approved” by National WACO Club	Undated
	27	Book – “They Call Me Mr. Air Show” by Bill Sweet (Autographed by Air Show performers) See also Box 2, File 4 – Book – “Famous Planes and Pilots” by Charles H. Hubbel	1972 1939

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
		Memorabilia	
1	28	Decal – National Air Shows (2 copies) See also Box 2, File 5 – National Air Show Emblem	Undated Undated
	29	Metal Printing Plates a. “Interesting Pilots” by Bill Sweet b. “Aviation Oddities” by Bill Sweet	Undated Undated
	30	Metal Printing Plates – Linco Pilots	Undated
	31	Metal Printing Plates – Aircraft and Pilots – Unidentified	Undated
		Oversize Material	
OS 52	1	“Linco” painting by Robert Sweet (Oil painting on fiberboard)	1937
2	1	Award of Merit, Annual Miami Air Show	1951
	2	“Aviation Oddities” by Bill Sweet (Chamberlain, Husing & White)	Undated
	3	1938 National Air Races (Partial program)	1938
	4	Book – “Famous Planes and Pilots” by Charles H. Hubbel	1939
	5	National Air Show Emblem	Undated
	6	Badges a. Cleveland National Air Races b. Texas National Air Races c. Maryland National Air Races d. Florida National Air Races	1967 1967 1968 1968
	7	Badges a. 11 th Annual National Air Carnival, Birmingham, AL b. International Aero Classic c. National Jaycee Air Show	Jun. 1941 Undated Undated
	8	Badges a. International Grand Prix for the Amoco Trophy, Sebring, FL b. Aviation Day, Cloquet, MN c. USAF Fighter Weapons Meet, “William Tell,” Tyndall AFB, FL	1957 Jul. 31, 1966 Undated
	9	Badges – Apollo 13 Press Pass, for “The Flyer Magazine”	1970
	10	Badges – EAA Pilot Badge	Undated
	11	Paper Weight – “Florida National Air Races, Bill	1970

		Sweet, Announcer”	
		Photographs	
	12	Air Show and Air Demonstration – Unidentified	Undated

Series II: Scrapbooks

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
3	1	Scrapbook Cover (Drawing of Bee Gee Airplane on front by Sweet)	c.a.1935
	2	Loose Newspaper Scrapbook Pages	c.a. 1935
	3	Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook	1931-1945
	4	Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook – Air Shows	1933-1934
4	1	Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook – Air Shows	1935-1936
	2	Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook – Air Shows	1937
	3	Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook	1935-1942 Bulk 1936-1937
5	1	Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook – Sinclair Trainer	1940-1941
	2	Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook – Air Shows	1940-1942
	3	Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook – Naval Aviation Cadets and Sinclair Trainer	1942
6	1	Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook – Air Shows	1946
	2	Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook – Air Shows	1946
	3	Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook – Air Shows	1947
	4	Loose Newspaper Clipping Pages & Clippings	1928-1950

Series III: Photographs and Photograph Albums

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
7	1	Photograph Album	1930-1940
		<i>They Call Me Mr. Airshow Photographs</i>	
8	1	Chapter 1: How Does One Get Into this Crazy Business	1972
	2	Chapter 2: The LINCO Days – boy Did We Sell Gasoline	1972
	3	Chapter 3: The Busy Years	1972
	4	Chapter 4: Some Good Old Boys and Good Old Airplanes	1972

	5	Chapter 5: More Good Old Boys and Good Old Airplanes	1972
<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
8	6	Chapter 6: Danny Fowlie, the Picabacks and Sundry Other Tales	1972
	7	Chapter 7: The Fabulous Gee Bees, Ours and Others	1972
	8	Chapter 8: The Post War Years	1972
	9	Chapter 11: Johnny Rocket and His Vampires	1972
	10	Chapter 12: Bat Men and Other Strange Birds	1972
	11	Chapter 15: The Happiness Boys	1972
	12	Chapter 16: Some Tales from the Fabulous Fifties	1972
	13	Chapter 18: The Day it Rained Rattlesnakes in Okeene	1972
	14	Chapter 19: My 16 Years with Harold Krier	1972
	15	Chapter 20: The Recent Years	1972
9	1	Bill Sweet Photographs	1930-1978
	2	Photographs Inscribed to Bill Sweet	1930-1978
	3	Joe Mackey Photographs	1930-1961
	4	Red Grant Photographs	1950s
10	1	Howard Krier Photographs	1950-1971
	2	Charles Hilliard Photographs	1961-1968
	3	Patti Deck Photographs	c.a. 1960s
	4	Marilyn Rich Photographs	c.a. 1960s
	5	People – Miscellaneous Identified	1930-1978
11	1	People – Miscellaneous Unidentified	1930-1978
12	1	Air Shows – Air Stunts & Air Demonstrations	1950-1978
13	1	Air Shows – Air Stunts & Air Demonstrations (Continued)	1950-1978
	2	Air Shows – Parachutists	1935-1978
14	1	Air Shows – Ground Scenes	1930-1978
	2	Air Shows – Parades	1938-1950
		Aircraft Photographs	
15	1	Aerial Engineering	Undated
	2	Aero	Undated
	3	Aeronca	Undated
	4	Alliance	Undated

	5	American Automotive	Undated
	6	AVRO – Vulcan Bomber	c.a.1950s
	7	Beech	Undated
<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
15	8	Bell	Undated
	9	Bleriot	Undated
	10	Boeing	Undated
	11	Boeing-Stearman	Undated
	12	Bucker Flugzeugbau	Undated
	13	Canadair	Undated
	14	Cessna	Undated
	15	Chance-Vought	Undated
	16	Convair	Undated
	17	Curtiss	Undated
	18	DART	Undated
	19	DeHavilland	Undated
	20	Dornier-Merke	Undated
	21	Douglas	Undated
	22	English Electric	Undated
	23	Fairchild	Undated
	24	Focke-Wulf	Undated
	25	Fokker	Undated
	26	Ford	Undated
	27	Gauthier	Undated
	28	Geppilgen	Undated
	29	Grumman	Undated
	30	Heath	Undated
	31	Hughes	Undated
	32	Junkers	Undated
	33	Kamov	Undated
	34	Krier	Undated
	35	Lockheed	Undated
	36	Loening	Undated
	37	Luscombe	Undated
	38	Martin Company	Undated
	39	McDonnell	Undated
	40	Messerschmitt	Undated
	41	Miller	Undated
	42	Monocoupe	Undated
	43	Mooney	Undated
	44	Morane Saulnier	Undated
	45	Naval Aircraft Factory	Undated
	46	Nieuport	Undated
	47	North American	Undated

	48	Pietenpol	Undated
	49	Piper	Undated
	50	Pitcairn Autogiro	Undated
<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
15	51	Pitts Special	Undated
	52	Rose Parakeet	Undated
16	1	Ryan	Undated
	2	SAAB	Undated
	3	Sikorsky	Undated
	4	SPAD	Undated
	5	Schweizer	Undated
	6	Seversky	Undated
	7	Sopwith	Undated
	8	Stinson.	Undated
	9	Sud-Aviation	Undated
	10	Supermarine	Undated
	11	Thomas Morse	Undated
	12	Travel Air	Undated
	13	WACO	Undated
	14	Westland	Undated
	15	Wilson Special	Undated
	16	Wittman	Undated
	17	Wright Company	Undated
	18	YAK	Undated
	19	Zlin (Czechoslovak Automobile & Aircraft)	Undated
	20	Miscellaneous	Undated
	21	Aircraft – Crashes	Undated
	22	Balloons	Undated
	23	Blimps/Dirigibles	Undated
	24	Unidentified Sailplanes, Gliders & Microlights	Undated
	25	Unidentified Biplanes	Undated
	26	Unidentified Low Wing Monoplanes	Undated
	27	Unidentified High Wing Monoplanes	Undated
	28	Aircraft – Mixed types – Identified	Undated
	29	Aircraft – Mixed types – General Views	Undated
	30	Aerial Views of Ground – Unidentified	Undated
	31	Rockets	Undated
	32	Unidentified	Undated

Series IV: Film and Audio Tapes

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>

		16mm Film	
17	1	1938 National Air Races	1938
<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
17	2	1938 National Air Races & Pacific International Races	1938
	3	1948 National Air Races	1948
	4	Air Show, Fort Lauderdale, FL	1958
	5	Adventures of Auntie Kay	Undated
	6	Airline Film	Undated
	7	Pylon Dusters of 1948	1948
	8	Pistons, Props, and Pilots	c.a.1973
	9	The F-27 Fairchild	Undated
18	1	Fairchild 119's	Undated
	2	1931 Air Races, Pacific International Air Races, & 1938 Air Races	1931, 1938
	3	Ballet in the Blue, Art Scholl	Undated
	4	Women's Air Races	1934
	5	Aviation Film, C. Dunaway, Trivia Treasures	Undated
	6	Unidentified	Undated
	7	Krier, Wichita	April 1963
	8	Unidentified	Undated
	9	Unidentified	Undated
	10	Unidentified Film in bag	Undated
	11	Krier in Great Lakes	Undated
		Reel-to-Reel Audio Tape	
19	1	Music for Bill Adams Flying, 1959 National Air Races	1959
	2	Aviation Broadcast, Tampa, FL	Undated
	3	Dead Stick Landing	Undated
	4	Unidentified	Undated
	5	Unidentified	Undated
	6	Unidentified	Undated