

Guide to the Frank A. Armstrong Jr., Papers, 1927-1969 (Manuscript Collection #35)



East Carolina Manuscript Collection
Special Collections
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Descriptive Summary

- Title:** Frank A. Armstrong Jr., Papers
- Creator:** Frank A. Armstrong, Jr.
- Repository:** J. Y . Joyner Library, East Carolina University
- Language:** English
- Abstract:** Papers (1927-1969, undated) including correspondence, memoirs, reports, flight records, flight log, speeches, etc. relating to the career of pioneer aviator and US Army Air Corps general during and after World War II.
- Extent:** 1.740 cubic feet, 872 items, 21 items, consisting of correspondence, memoirs, reports, flight records, flight log, speeches, pamphlets, publications, clippings, albums, photographs, citations, awards, and miscellaneous.

Administrative Information

Accessions Information

October 16, 1967, ca. 250 items; Copies of correspondence, orders, flight records, citations, certificates, clippings, biographical information, and miscellaneous.

February 12, 1968, 17 items; Correspondence, photographs, citations, booklets, biographical material, and clippings.

November 5, 1968, 14 items; Tactical mission reports, speeches, clippings, photographs, a pamphlet, and a copy of *Twelve O'Clock High*.

November 12, 1968, 130 items; Correspondence, reports, photographs, clippings, manuals, yearbook, autobiography ("Wake the Sleeping Giant"), and miscellaneous.

April 6, 1971, 106-page diary ("So Near Heaven and Surrounded by Hell"). Gift of Mrs. I. T. Valentine, Nashville, NC, and Lt. General Armstrong, Tampa, FL.

January 15, 1997, 456 items; Copy of official personnel files (1927-1969), including efficiency reports, special orders, promotion appointments, commendation, medical records, photographs, and clippings. Gift of Honorable I. T. Valentine, Jr., Nashville, NC.

June 26, 1998, 6 volumes; Oversize scrapbooks, primarily reflecting General Armstrong's duty with the Alaskan Air Command, containing photographs, clippings, citations, programs, correspondence, etc. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. David H. Fuller and Miss Deborah Armstrong Fuller, Nashville, NC.

November 14, 2000, (unprocessed addition 1), 18 items; Films (ca. 1960, black and white, and color) documenting Brig. Gen. Frank A. Armstrong, Jr. and his service in command of Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, Norway, and in the Philippines. Donor: Valentine, Tim; Elizabeth V. Fuller; and Mary Hobbs V. McIntyre.

May 19, 2003, (unprocessed addition 2), 8 items; Videocassettes (6) of films (ca. 1960) documenting Brig. Gen. Frank A. Armstrong, Jr. and his service in command of Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, Norway, and in the Philippines; duplicates of videocassettes (2); also digital video discs (2); copies of 16mm films in Addition #1. Donor: Schaaf, Herbert.

July 23, 2003, (unprocessed addition 4), 10 items; Collection (1942-2001) of manuscript material, notes, photographs, and a clipping relating Armstrong's experience as a brigadier general and pilot leading U. S. 8th Air Force Bomber Command's B-17 raids over Germany

and Japan during World War II; including his typewritten diary, which became the basis of the popular novel and film "Twelve O' Clock High" ; also relating to his retirement from the military (as a Lt. General) and the dedication of a historical marker at his boyhood home; also photocopies of manuscript materials. Donor: Armstrong, Frank A.

Access Restrictions

No restrictions

Copyright Notice

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Preferred Citation

Frank A. Armstrong Jr., Papers (#35), Special Collections Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, USA.

Acquisition Information

Gift of Armstrong, Frank A.

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. David H. Fuller and Miss Deborah Armstrong Fuller

Gift of Honorable I. T. Valentine, Jr.

Gift of Lt. General Armstrong

Gift of Mrs. I. T. Valentine

Gift of Schaaf, Herbert

Gift of Tim Valentine, Elizabeth V. Fuller, and Mary Hobbs V. McIntyre

Processing Information

Processed by D. Lawson; M. Boccaccio; A. Merriman, November 1999

Encoded by Apex Data Services

Biographical/Historical Note

Frank Alton Armstrong, Jr., (1902-1969), was born in Hamilton, Martin County, NC, and entered the Army Air Corps as a flying cadet (1928). Armstrong witnessed the German blitz of England as a U.S. military observer (late 1941) and returned to England (1942) as commander of the VIIIth Bomber Command, which conducted the first U.S. Army Air Force raid over Axis territory. As a brigadier general, Armstrong led the first American daylight bombing mission of Germany proper over Wilhelmshaven. Armstrong's experiences as a B-17 flyer during these missions formed the basis for the popular novel and film, *Twelve O'Clock High*. In the Pacific Theatre, Armstrong led the longest and last heavy-bomber raid over Japan. After World War II, Armstrong served as Pacific Air chief-of-staff, senior air instructor at the Armed Forces Staff College, and commander-in-chief of the Alaskan Air Command. Armstrong also pioneered two record-breaking transatlantic flights, and retired with the rank of lieutenant general (1961).

Description

The collection consists of correspondence, memoirs, autobiographical information, various

Army Air Corps and Air Force records, numerous photograph albums and memorabilia, and miscellaneous materials. Early correspondence includes letters in support of Armstrong and his nomination to the Flying Cadet Corps which was a part of the U.S. Army (July 12, November 2, 1927). Copies of correspondence pertain to a speech by Armstrong and his opinion concerning the nature and future of the Marine Corps (April 4 and 14, 1947). Later correspondence concerns President Eisenhower's impression of Elmendorf Air Force Base (June 12, 1960; a discussion by Lowell Thomas of an impersonator of Lowell Thomas, Jr. (Aug. 9, 1960); the awarding of the Distinguished Service Medal and a conservation award from the Department of the Interior (July 30, 1961); and a letter (December 5, 1967) to General Armstrong's sister describing the Vietnam combat death of Major Frank A. "Dutch" Armstrong III.

A typescript memoir (nd) written by Armstrong titled "So Near Heaven and Surrounded by Hell" describes his experiences as commander of the VIIIth Bomber Command, the first bomber unit to bomb Axis territory. The memoir relates details of the organization of the command, anecdotes, and accounts of Armstrong's experiences as a B-17 bomber pilot.

"Wake the Sleeping Giant" [ca. 1960] is the autobiography of Armstrong as told to William E. Hickenbotham. The account relates his experiences as an air cadet in the late twenties and comments on early air training methods. In relating his early flying career, Armstrong describes flying as a U.S. Army mail pilot for the U.S. Post Office. The autobiography incorporates a diary maintained during his tenure in England as a military observer (1941), and contains a lucid description of British life during the German Air Blitz. Some overlap exists between this account and his memoir concerning the VIIIth Bomber Command. This account describes Armstrong's command and training of the 97th Heavy Bombardment Group, the first American bomber crew to fly a mission over Europe; the 306th Heavy Bombardment Group, which flew the first daylight raid against Germany; the 46th Bomb Operational Training Wing; and the 315 Bombardment Wing (Very Heavy), which as a part of the XXIst Bomber Command bombarded targets in Japan. Armstrong's postwar account includes an attempted record-breaking flight from Hokkaido, Japan, to Washington, DC, as well as an account of a pioneering flight with Bernt Balchen from Alaska, over the North Pole, to Norway (1959). Armstrong also discusses the novel and film, *Twelve O'Clock High*, the basis of which were his wartime bomber experiences; his tenure as commander of the Second Air Force and the training of crews for the Strategic Air Command; and the SAC-Russian competition for strategical hegemony. As commander-in-chief of the Alaskan Command, Armstrong criticizes Alaskan defense strategy, proposes solutions, and warns of the dangers of Communism.

Other records include Tactical Mission Reports that consist of analyses of bombing raids of the 8th Command over Hanover, Hamburg, and Amsterdam (July 1943) as well as XXIth and XXIst Air Force reports of missions over mainland Japan (1945). A pilot information folder (1929-1945) and flight records (1932-1945) contain statistical information on Armstrong's flying career. A speeches file includes "Strategic Bombing of Germany," pertaining to the activities and damage sustained by the 46th Bombardment Wing (January 1943); four speeches addressed to officers and enlisted men of the 315th Command (1944); mimeographed speeches concerning Philippine Independence Day (1946); a short bond drive speech by Armstrong at Raleigh, NC; and a speech entitled "The Air War against Germany."

Pamphlets and publications are also included. Pamphlets concern the military retirement of Armstrong, in which the Alaskan Command is described (1961) and an undated pamphlet pertains to the Air Forces Rest and Recreation Center in the Mount McKinley National Park. Publications include a maintenance manual for the B-17 airplane (1943); the novel, *Twelve O'Clock High*; a copy of chapter 9 of "The Making of 12 O'Clock High" from the book *Celluloid Wings* (1989); and *Target Germany* (1943), which describes the role of the 8th Bomber Command during its first year in Europe. Also included are Officers' Wives Club magazines,

Totem Topics (1961) and *Petticoat Press* (1953, 1956), containing articles on Mrs. Armstrong. A newspaper clippings file consists of Norwegian clippings pertaining to the Alaska-Norway flight of Armstrong and Balchen (September 1949).

Photographs, brochures, and clippings pertain to the Inaugural Guest Program, as a member of which Mrs. Armstrong traveled to Norway (1958); general newspaper clippings pertain to Armstrong's career (1943-1969, nd); and clippings and photographs of an Alaskan visit of President Dwight D. Eisenhower are included (June 1960). Histories of the Alaskan Air Command (1948, 1950) are also included.

Numerous photograph albums and scrapbooks contain photographs, clippings, and memorabilia including a Christmas gift project undertaken jointly by the 9th Air Force and the North Carolina Junior Chamber of Commerce called "Operation Christmas" (nd) and another entitled "Second to None under General Armstrong," that traces the progress of the 2nd Air Force under Armstrong's administration. Further albums contain photographs of dignitaries, celebrities, and sports figures including Presidents Eisenhower and Harry S. Truman, General Douglas MacArthur, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, and numerous foreign diplomats; celebrities June Allyson, Jack Benny, Frank Capra, Jerry Colonna, Phil Harris, Bob Hope, Hedda Hopper, Boris Karloff, Mary Martin, Ginger Rogers, Jimmy Stewart, Ed Sullivan, The Three Stooges, and Don Wilson; and baseball player Mickey Mantle.

Online Catalog Headings

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog.

Subject Entries

Armstrong, Frank A. (Frank Alton), 1902-1969
Eisenhower, Dwight D. (Dwight David), 1890-1969—Photographs
Priest, Ivy Baker, 1905-
Thomas, Lowell, 1892-1981
Lay, Beirne, 1909- Twelve O'clock High
Udall, Stewart L.
United States. Air Force. Alaskan Air Command
United States. Air Force. Strategic Air Command
United States. Air Force. Air Force, 2nd
United States. Air Force. Bombardment Squadron (Light), 8th
World War, 1939-1945—Aerial operations, American
B-17 bomber—Maintenance and repair
World War, 1939-1945—England
World War, 1939-1945—Germany
World War, 1939-1945—Japan
Air pilots, Military—North Carolina—Hamilton

Autograph Entries

Devitt, Edward J[ames] 1947
Egan, William A[llen] 1960
Eisenhower, Dwight [David] 1960
McKee, William F. 1950
McLean, Angus W[ilton] 1927
Patterson, James P[orter] 1947
Pou, Edward W[illiam] 1927

[Priest], Ivy [Baker] 1960
[Thomas], Lowell 1960
[Twining, Nathan Farragut], Nate 1960
Udall, Stewart L[ee] 1961

Date Entries

1941-1949
1951-1959
1960-1961

Photo/Logo Information

Images below are listed alphabetically by subject. This list reflects only those portions of the collection for which negatives have been prepared.

ARMSTRONG, FRANK A., JR.

Description: Family
Call Number: p-35/78

BUILDING AND ARCHITECTURE--Japan

Description: Street scene
Location: Japan
Date: 1940's
Call Number: p-35/242(298)

CLOTHING AND DRESS--Japan

Description: Women in kimono on street
Location: Japan
Date: 1940's
Call Number: p-35/244(299)

EISENHOWER, DWIGHT D.

Description: Eisenhower, Dwight D.; Armstrong, Frank
Date: 1940's
Call Number: p-35/14

SOCIAL LIFE AND CUSTOMS--Entertainment

Description: Christmas party with Santa Claus
Call Number: p-35/11

U.S.--MILITARY--Air Force

Description: Speaking engagement and dinner
Call Number: p-35/207(293)

U.S. MILITARY--Air Force

Description: Plane over Arctic Circle, North Pole
Date: June 17, 1948
Call Number: p-35/255(300)

U.S. MILITARY--Air Force

Description: Armstrong preparing for fight over North Pole
Location: June 17, 1948
Call Number: p-35/257(301)

WAR-WORLD WAR II-Aerial Operations

Description: Gunnery officer Charles Hill

Date: 1940's

Call Number: p-35/137(291)

WAR--WORLD WAR II--Aerial Operations--Battles

Description: B-29 on Northwest Field

Location: Guam

Date: 1940's

Call Number: p-35/221(295)

WAR--WORLD WAR II--Aerial Operations--Eisenhower, Dwight D.

Description: Eisenhower checking list

Location: Pacific

Date: 1940's

Call Number: p-35/234(296)

WAR--WORLD WAR II--Aerial Operations--Japan

Description: 315th bomber group preparing for raid on Japan

Date: 1940's

Call Number: p-35/201(294)

WAR--WORLD WAR II--Aerial Operations--Japan

Description: Armstrong before first strike against Japan

Call Number: picture-35/202(292)

Date: 1945

WAR--WORLD WAR II--Aerial Operations--Japan

Description: 15th bomber group photo before the raid

Date: 1945

Call Number: p-35/203

WAR--WORLD WAR II--Aftermath

Description: Tokyo after the war

Location: Tokyo

Date: 1946

Call Number: p-35/240(297)

WOMEN--Japan

Description: Women in kimono on street

Location: Japan

Date: 1940's

Call Number: p-35/244(299)

Container List

Box 1

Folder a Correspondence, 1960-1967

Folder b [So Near Heaven and Surrounded by Hell]

Folder c [Wake the Sleeping Giant]

Frank Armstrong diary entry.

Folder d Tactical Mission Report, July 1943

Folder e Tactical Mission Report, August 1945

Box 2 Tactical Mission Reports; Flight Records

Box 3 Flight Records; Logbook

- Box 4** Speeches; Pamphlets; Publications; Norwegian-Flight Clippings
- Box 5** Inaugural Guest Program Material; Clippings; Awards; Citations; Yearbook; Miscellaneous
- Box 6** Copies of Service Record 1927-1947
- Box 7** Copies of Service Record 1948-1969
- Box 8** Operation Christmas Photograph Album 1953; Photographs; Second to None Photograph Album
- Folder b**
- Item 14** [Photograph of Frank Armstrong and Dwight Eisenhower](#)
- Item 78** [Photograph of Frank Armstrong and family](#)
- Box 9** Photograph Album 1942-1951
- Item 116** [First B-17 over Roven, France](#)
- Item 117** [Mass decoration at base in Polebrook England](#)
- Item 137** [SS Chas Hill "Waist Gun"](#)
- Item 149a** [Formation of planes](#)
- Item 149b** [Bombs dropping](#)
- Item 158** [First A.A.F. Bombardment Crew to Raid Germany](#)
- Item 165** [Frank Armstrong and members of the 46th wing in front of the "Fluffy-Fuz"](#)
- Item 183** [General Frank Armstrong at desk](#)
- Item 198** [B-29 bomber, the Fluffy Fuz III](#)
- Item 201** [Crew members in front of Fluffy Fuz III](#)
- Item 202** [Take off - first strike against Japan](#)
- Item 203** [First crew of the 315th Bomber Wing to strike Japan in front of the Fluffy Fuz III June 27, 1945](#)
- Box 10** Photograph Album 1949
- Box 11** Photograph Album 1956
- Box 12** Photograph Album 1956-1959
- Box 13** Photograph Album 1960
- Box 14** Photograph Album 1960-1961
- Oversize Folder os1**
- Photograph Album 1951-1956; Newspapers; Diploma

Preliminary Inventory

Below is material taken from a preliminary inventory and represents content from the collection that is unprocessed.

- Box 15**
- Item** Presidential visit June 1960 (Elmendorf AFB, Alaska) Change of command parade.
- Item** 6-polar bear hunt: Seals & polar bear chase (Chuck).
- Item** Bear hunt, Alaska.
- Item** Bear hunt #1, Dick Poutelle.
- Item** Bear hunt #2.
- Item** Fishing at Naknek.
- Item** Norway.
- Item** Crash (Fluzz Fuz).
- Item** Family.
- Item** Misc. good out take.
- Item** Gunnin (out take).
- Item** Out take - Philippines.
- Box 16**
- Item** Address - Parade; Review - Alaska. 17 min. Sound.

Item Golf - Parade Review. 15 min. No Sound.
 Item B-36, F-86's, Shemya, Building Burning. 9 min. No Sound.
 Item Icebergs & Ice Flows. 19 min. No Sound.
 Item copy 1
 Item copy 2
 Item copy 1
 Item copy 2

Box 17

- Folder a** So Near Heaven and Surrounded by Hell (1942-1944), a diary of Armstrong's experience as brigadier general and pilot leading the U. S. 8th Air Force Bomber Command's B-17 raids over Germany during World War II, which later became the basis of the popular novel and film "Twelve O'Clock High." 2 items.
- Folder b** A Bigger Than Life Hero (n.d.), a speech by Major General "Cotton" Hildreth regarding General Armstrong's son, Frank Alton Armstrong, III (1930-1967), who was killed in Vietnam in 1967; the speech was read at the dedication ceremony for General Armstrong's birthplace; also portrait of Frank, III. 2 items.
- Folder c** Notes for a speech (n.d.) by General Armstrong's grandson, Frank A. Armstrong, read at the dedication ceremony for General Armstrong's birthplace. 1 item.
- Folder d** Armstrong # 1 – 6 (1961) scripts for introductions to television film of General Armstrong's retirement from the Air Force and the Alaska Air Command. 2 items.
- Folder e** Retirement ceremony clipping, *Sourdough Sentinel* (8/4/1961).
- Folder f** Photograph (3/28/2001) of the historical marker at the boyhood home of General Armstrong. 1 item.
- Folder g** The Japanese Surrender, U.S.S. Missouri, Tokyo Bay, 2 September 1945 (1945) a photograph showing Chester W. Nimitz signing the terms of surrender and dedicated by the Admiral "To Brigadier General Frank A. Armstrong, Jr., U.S.A.F. – with best wishes and great appreciation of your contribution to the war effort that made possible the above scene" and signed C. W. Nimitz – Fleet Admiral U.S.N." 1 item.