



Smithsonian  
*National Air and Space Museum*

Betty Skelton Collection

by Jordan Ferraro; Amanda Buel

2008

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## Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives Division
Creator:	Skelton, Betty, 1926-2011
Title:	Betty Skelton Collection
Dates:	circa 1920-2005
Quantity:	8.21 cubic feet, (10 legal document boxes, 4 flatboxes)
Abstract:	In 2002 Betty Skelton donated a collection of materials outlining her career as an aviatrix and race car driver to the National Air and Space Museum. The donated material consists primarily of news clippings, pamphlets, magazines, photographs, and scrapbooks covering the span of Ms. Skelton's career.
Language:	English

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Betty Skelton, Gift, 2001

### Processing Information

This collection was arranged and described by Jordan Ferraro, 2008. A second group of materials was brought to NASM in 2013. Those items were incorporated into the collection and were written into the structure of the original finding aid by Amanda Buel, 2013.

Encoded by Tyler Love/Amanda Buel, 2013

### Preferred Citation

Betty Skelton Collection, Acc. 2002-0002, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions on Access

No restrictions on access.

### Ownership & Literary Rights

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## Biographical Note

Betty Skelton Frankman, noted aviatrix, automobile test driver, race car driver, and business woman, was born in 1926 in Pensacola, Florida. Her interest in aviation was kindled at a young age while watching Navy stunt pilots practice. Soon, she and her parents began taking flying lessons and Betty soloed for the first time at age 12, four years before the legal age. As soon as she was legally able, age 16, Betty got her pilot's license. At age 19 she joined the Civil Air Patrol while also working as a flight instructor at her father's aviation school. She began a professional career as an aerobatic pilot in 1946, flying a 1929 Great Lakes 2T1A biplane. In 1948, while flying that aircraft, Betty won her first International Aerobatic Championship for Women. She would repeat this achievement in 1949 and 1950 while flying a Pitts-Special S-1C that she nicknamed "Little Stinker." By 1951 Betty realized that she had gone as far as a woman could go in aviation and retired.

Through a chance meeting with Bill France, the founder of the National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR), Betty began a second career as a test and race car driver. She set multiple land speed records and two transcontinental speed records. Her work with Dodge and Chevrolet led her to her next career as an advertising executive for Campbell-Ewald Advertising Agency, the firm that handled Chevrolet advertising.

In 1959, Betty was given the opportunity to train with the original Mercury 7 astronauts. She completed the same physical and physiological tests as the astronauts, but knew a woman was not destined to be the first American in space. The experience resulted in only a cover story in *LOOK* magazine (Vol. 24 No. 3, Feb. 2, 1960). In 1965, Betty married Donald Frankman and, eventually, the two moved to Florida and started a real estate business.

Betty held more combined aviation and automotive records than any other person. Her aviation achievements included: a world speed record for piston engine aircraft (unofficial), two light plane altitude records, and three international aerobatic championships. Her achievements in the automotive field included a women's closed course speed record (144.02 mph), a speed record for 200-249 cubic inch piston displacement (105.8 mph), a 24-hour stock car endurance record, a transcontinental record New York to Los Angeles (56 hrs 58 mins.), four land speed records, a South American transcontinental auto speed record, and multiple Bonneville Speed and Endurance Records.

She was also inducted into many halls of fame including, the International Aerobatic Hall of Fame, the NASCAR International Motorsports Hall of Fame, the Corvette Hall of Fame, the Tampa Sports Hall of Fame, and the Florida Women's Hall of Fame. In 1985, Betty and Don donated her Pitts Special "Little Stinker" to the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum (NASM). It currently hangs at the entrance to NASM's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center at Dulles, Virginia. Betty and her second husband, Dr. Allan Erde, retired to The Villages, Florida, a popular retirement community where many residents use golf carts to get from place to place. But Betty, in keeping with her moniker as the "fastest woman on Earth," drove a bright red Corvette convertible. She died at her home on August 31, 2011, at the age of 85.

The following timeline covers key events in Skelton's life, as well as in the aerospace and automotive industries. Events involving Skelton are shown in normal type while those of the latter are shown in italics.

### Timeline of Betty Skelton

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
6/28/1926	Betty is born in Pensacola, Florida
May 1927	<i>Charles Lindbergh makes the first solo west to east transatlantic flight</i>
May 1932	<i>Amelia Earhart becomes first women to solo across the Atlantic</i>
1937	<i>Amelia Earhart and Captain Fred Noonan go missing</i>

12/7/1941	<i>Bombing of Pearl Harbor forces American entry into World War II</i>
1942	Officially soloed and received pilot's license at age 16
1944	<i>Women's Airforce Service Pilots program ends</i>
1945	Joins the Civil Air Patrol, eventually achieving rank of Major
May 1945	<i>End of War in Europe</i>
August 1945	<i>Atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki followed by Japanese surrender and end of World War II</i>
1946	Begins career as aerobat at Southeastern Air Exposition in Jacksonville, Florida
1947	<i>The United States Air Force becomes an independent military service</i> <i>Chuck Yeager breaks the sound barrier becoming the first man to fly faster than the speed of sound</i>
1948	Becomes International Aerobatics Champion for women Buys "Little Stinker" <i>Orville Wright dies at age 76</i> <i>Berlin Airlift begins operation</i> <i>NASCAR is formed</i>
1949	Retains title as International Aerobatics Champion for women Unofficially sets world Speed Record for engine aircraft (426 mph) Represents United States in International Air Pageant – London, United Kingdom Pilots the smallest plane to cross the Irish Sea Represents United States in RAF Pageant – Belfast, Ireland Sets World Light Plane Altitude Record (~26,000 ft) <i>First non-stop round the world flight is made by Capt. James Gallagher</i>
1950	Retains title of International Aerobatics Champion for women Becomes hostess of radio program "Van Wilson's Greeting Time"
1951	Sets World Light Plane Altitude Record (~29,000 ft) Retires from flying <i>Four monkeys become the first living creatures to travel in space</i>
1953	Meets Bill France and takes first ride in pace car Stars in a movie short about motor boat jumping <i>Jacqueline Cochran becomes first woman to fly faster than the speed of sound</i>
1954	Sets new world women's closed course record (143.44 mph) Sets new world women's closed course record (144.02 mph) Sets Stock Car Flying Mile Record (105.88 mph) First woman to drive an Indy Car
1955	Participates in Stock Car Endurance Run

- 1956 Becomes an advertising executive for Campbell-Ewald  
Sets new land speed record (145.044 mph)  
Sets transcontinental record New York to Los Angeles (56 hrs 58 mins)  
Participates in Stock Car Endurance Run  
*First successful launch of a Chrysler Redstone Rocket from Cape Canaveral*
- 1957 Participates in Mobilgas Economy Run  
*Sputnik is launched by the Soviet Union*  
*Sputnik 2 carries first dog into space*
- 1958 South American Transcontinental Auto Speed Record (41hrs 14 mins)  
*United States launches Explorer 1, the first US satellite to enter Earth's orbit*  
*National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is established*
- 1959 Trains with Mercury 7 astronauts
- 1960 Participates in Mobilgas Economy Run
- 1961 Participates in Mobilgas Economy Run  
*Yuri Gagarin becomes first man in space*  
*Alan Shepard becomes the first American in space*
- 1962 Participates in Baja Run  
*Cuban Missile Crisis*
- 1963 *Valentina Tereshkova becomes first women in space*  
*John F. Kennedy is assassinated*
- 1965 Marries Donald A. Frankman  
Sets new land speed record (315 mph)
- 1967 *An accident during testing of Apollo 1 kills Virgil Grissom, Roger Chaffee, and Edward White*
- 1969 Becomes Vice President of Campbell-Ewald's new Women's Market and Advertising Department  
Successfully lobbies to end discrimination against female pilots in air racing  
*Apollo 11 is launched with Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins, making Neil Armstrong the first man on the moon*
- 1970 *First scheduled service of the Boeing 747*  
*Explosion onboard Apollo 13*
- 1972 *President Nixon announces funding for the building of a reusable space shuttle*  
*The last manned mission to the moon, Apollo 17 is completed*
- 1974 *Charles Lindbergh dies at age 72*
- 1975 *Apollo/Soyuz Test Project and Soyuz 19 successfully dock in Earth orbit*
- 1977 Begins working for First Florida Realty

	Publishes book <i>Little Stinker</i>
	<i>British Airways and Air France begin regular Concorde service from New York's JFK Airport</i>
	<i>National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) launches Voyager I &amp; II</i>
1980	<i>Jacqueline Cochran dies at age 74</i>
1981	<i>Space Shuttle Columbia launches for the first shuttle mission</i>
1983	<i>Sally Ride becomes first American woman in space</i>
1985	Donates <i>Little Stinker</i> to NASM
1986	<i>Space Shuttle Challenger explodes on take off</i>
	<i>Soviet Union launches Mir Space Station</i>
1988	Inducted into International Aerobatic Hall of Fame (1st woman)
1989	<i>Destruction of the Berlin Wall</i>
1993	Inducted into NASCAR International Motorsports Hall of Fame (1st woman)
	Inducted into Florida Women's Hall of Fame
1997	Inducted into Women in Aviation Pioneer Hall of Fame
	<i>Mars Pathfinder lands on surface of Mars</i>
2001	Inducted into Corvette Hall of Fame (1st woman)
	<i>Space Station Mir ends its 15 year life in space</i>
	Donald A. Frankman dies
2003	Inducted into International Council of Air Shows Foundation Hall of Fame
	<i>Concorde service between the United States and Europe ends</i>
2005	Marries Allan Erde
	Inducted into National Aviation Hall of Fame
2008	Inducted into Motorsports Hall of Fame of America
8/31/2011	Betty dies at her home in The Villages, Florida

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## Scope and Content Note

This collection consists primarily of news clippings, pamphlets, magazines, photographs, and scrapbooks covering the span of Ms. Skelton's career.

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## Arrangement

The collection has been divided into three series. The first series contains information on Betty Skelton's personal life, including birth and wedding announcements and family photos. The second, pertaining to her professional life, spans a broad range of materials covering the various careers pursued by Ms. Skelton. The third series consists of oversized items such as scrapbooks and large format magazines.

Each series is further divided by format (i.e. news clippings, brochures, and photographs) and then chronologically.

SERIES I: Personal

News clippings; Photographs

SERIES II: Professional

News clippings, Programs and Pamphlets; Correspondence; Magazines/Press Releases; Photographs; Negatives

SERIES III: Oversized Materials

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Aeronautics--Competitions
- Airplane racing
- Automobile racing
- Pitts S-1 Special
- Pitts aircraft
- Stunt flying
- Women air pilots
- Women in aeronautics

Types of Materials:

- Advertisements
- Clippings
- Photographs
- Scrapbooks

Names:

- Fellow Lady Astronaut Trainees (FLATS, "Mercury 13").
- Pitts Aviation Enterprises, Inc.
- Pitts S-1 Special, Little Stinker.
- Project Mercury (U.S.).



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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Personal, 1920s-1999

*0.5 boxes; Box 1*

This series contains personal information on Betty Skelton. This information spans the entire course of her personal life to date (1925-2004).

The material in this series is primarily news clippings and photographs.

The information in this series is organized by format (i.e. news clippings or photographs) which are then arranged chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 1	News clippings - Early Life, 1925-1999
Box 1, Folder 2	Photographs - Family, 1920's-2006 and undated
Box 1, Box 3	Photographs - Portraits, 1930's - 2004
Box 1, Box 4	Photographs - Early Life, 1940-1969
Box 1, Folder 5	Photographs - Wedding, 1965
Box 1, Folder 6	Photographs - Late Life (Personal and Events), 2005-2011 and undated
Box 1, Folder 7	Parachutist Log Book, 1962-1963
Box 1, Folder 8	Manuscript by Betty, circa 1962, 2001
Box 1, Folder 9	"Should Our Space Standards be Lowered for Women?" by Betty Skelton, 1963
Box 1, Folder 10	Miscellaneous Materials, 1957-2009 and undated

## Series 2: Professional, 1928-2005

6.5 boxes; Box 1-10

This series contains information on Betty Skelton's various careers and professional endeavors.

Material consists of newspaper and magazine clippings, event brochures, flyers, complete issues of magazines, press releases, correspondence and photographs.

The information in this series is organized by format (i.e. news clippings, magazines, and photographs) which are then arranged chronologically.

Box 2, Folder 1	News clippings, Meeting notes - General, 1942-1979
Box 2, Folder 2	News clippings, Meeting notes - General, 1980-2005
Box 2, Folder 3	News clippings, Programs, Correspondence - Acting, 1943-1953
Box 2, Folder 4	News clippings - Family, Friends, Colleagues and Celebrities, 1943-1998
Box 2, Folder 5	News clippings, Event brochures, Pamphlets, Correspondence - Air Shows, 1946-1969
Box 2, Folder 6	News clippings, Event brochures, Pamphlets, Correspondence - Punta Gorda Air Show, 2008
Box 2, Folder 7	News clippings, Advertisements - Publicity/Advertising, 1947-1977
Box 2, Folder 8	News clippings - "Little Stinker"1947-2001
Box 2, Folder 9	News clippings, Correspondence - Betty Skelton Day, 1948
Box 2, Folder 10	News clippings, Event brochure - National Air Races, 1948-1949
Box 2, Folder 11	News clippings - Blue Angels, 1948-1950
Box 2, Folder 12	News clippings, Record books - Records, 1948-1966
Box 2, Folder 13	News clippings - Cypress Gardens, 1949-1964
Box 2, Folder 14	News clippings - Writer/Radio Host, 1949-1977
Box 3, Folder 1	News clippings, Event brochures - Indy Car, 1953-1956
Box 3, Folder 2	News clippings, Event brochures - Fashion, 1954-1960
Box 3, Folder 3	News clippings, Event brochures, Advertisements - NASCAR, 1954-1986
Box 3, Folder 4	News clippings, Calendar - Women, 1954-2002
Box 3, Folder 5	News clippings - Safety, 1955-1957
Box 3, Folder 6	News clippings - Auto shows, 1955-1961
Box 3, Folder 7	News clippings, Advertisements - Cross Country Run, 1956-1957
Box 3, Folder 8	News clippings - Business, 1956-1974

Box 3, Folder 9	News clippings, Event brochures - Economy Run, 1957-1961
Box 3, Folder 10	News clippings, Event brochures, Advertisements, Maps - South America, 1958-1966
Box 3, Folder 11	News clippings - Space - Mercury Space Program, 1960-1998
Box 3, Folder 12	News clippings, Event brochures, Maps, Correspondence - Baja Run, 1962-1963
Box 3, Folder 13	News clippings, Programs - Appearances, 1963-2004
Box 4, Folder 1	News clippings, Correspondence, Pamphlets - Honors and Awards, 1965-2001
Box 4, Folder 2	News clippings, Pamphlet, Correspondence - Smithsonian Institution, 1985-1998
Box 4, Folder 3	News clippings, Programs, Correspondence, 2007-2010
Box 4	News clippings - Late life, 2000-2010
Box 4, Folder 5	First Day Covers, 1969, 1981, and 2001
Box 4, Folder 6	Correspondence, 1944-2010
Box 4, Folder 7	Correspondence - Halls of Fame, 2004-2007
Box 4, Folder 8	Correspondence - DCI Communications "The Betty Skelton Story", 1999, 2002, and undated (bulk 1999-2002)
Box 4, Folder 9	Correspondence - FAA Paperwork, 1950, 1981, and 1988
Box 4, Folder 10	Correspondence - Motorsports Hall of Fame, 2008-2010
Box 4, Folder 11	Correspondence - Florida Sports Hall of Fame, 2009-2010
Box 4, Folder 12	Correspondence - Tonya Stone (NASA Tests), 2007
Box 5, Folder 1	Correspondence - Smithsonian Institution, 1985-2008
Box 5, Folder 2	Corvette Materials, 2001-2010
Box 5, Folder 3	First Flight Society, 2010-2011
Box 5, Folder 4	National Aviation Hall of Fame Materials, 2004-2008
Box 5, Folder 5	National Aviation Hall of Fame Board of Nominations Materials, 2005-2006
Box 5, Folder 6	NASA Oral History, 1999
Box 5, Folder 7	Certificates, 2009 and 2011
Box 5, Folder 8	Magazines - <i>Model Airplane News</i> , (August 1950)
Box 5, Folder 9	Magazines - <i>Boat Sport</i> , Vol.4 No.2, (June 1955)
Box 5, Folder 10	Magazines - <i>Speed</i> , (1957)

- (article removed)
- Box 5, Folder 11 Magazines - *U.S. News & World Report*, L.25, (June 19,1961)
- Box 5, Folder 12 Magazines - *United States Auto Club Yearbook*, (1965)
- Box 5, Folder 13 Magazines - *Sport Aviation*, Vol.21 No.6, (June 1973)
- Box 5, Folder 14 Magazines - *Road and Track*, Vol.44 No.6, (Feb 1993)
- Box 5, Folder 15 Magazines - *Corvette Quarterly*, Vol.6 No.2, (Summer 1993)
- Box 6, Folder 1 Magazines - *Sport Aerobatics*, Vol.24 No.5 & Vol.26 No.3, (May 1995) & (March 1997)
- Box 6, Folder 2 Magazines - *Woman Pilot*, Vol.6 No.5, (Sept/Oct 1998)
- Box 6, Folder 3 Magazines - *Sports Car International*, Vol.18 No.3, May 2002
- Box 6, Folder 4 Magazines - *Aviation for Women*, May/June 2003
- Box 6, Folder 5 Magazines - *The Auto Pilot*, February/March 2008
- Box 6, Folder 6 Magazines - *Smithsonian Air & Space*, Vol.23 No.4, October/November 2008
- Box 6, Folder 7 Magazines - *America's Sports Car*, Jan/Feb 2009
- Box 6, Folder 8 Magazines - *Northern Reach*, Summer 2009
- Box 6, Folder 9 Magazines - *Lake Magazine*, Vol.12 No.11, November 2009
- Box 6, Folder 10 Magazine Placards, 2003 and 2009
- Box 6, Folder 11 Press Releases - Fact Sheets, 1947-1951
- Box 6, Folder 12 Press Kit Materials, 2010
- Box 6, Folder 13 Press Kit Materials, undated
- Box 6, Folder 14 Web Press Materials, 2003-2010
- Box 6, Folder 14 CDs - Web Press Materials and Photographs, 2004, 2005, and 2010  
*4 discs; One disc ("NAHF 2005") is so damaged it is unplayable.*
- Box 7, Folder 1 Photographs - 1929 Great Lakes 2T1A, 1946-1948
- Box 7, Folder 2 Photographs - Air Shows, 1946-1982
- Box 7, Folder 3 Photographs - Planes, 1946-1989
- Box 7, Folder 4 Photographs - Civil Air Patrol, 1947
- Box 7, Folder 5 Photographs - P-51, 1947-1961
- Box 7, Folder 6 Photographs - Celebrities, 1947-1965 and circa 2000s
- Box 7, Folder 7 Photographs - Friends and Colleagues, 1947-1974

Box 7, Folder 8	Photographs - Blue Angels, 1948-1950
Box 7, Folder 9	Photographs - Piper Cub, 1948-1951
Box 7, Folder 10	Photographs - "Little Stinker", 1948-1969
Box 7, Folder 11	Photographs - T34 to Wichita, 1949-1950 (Title given by Betty Skelton)
Box 7, Folder 12	Photographs - Tinker, 1949-1954
Box 8, Folder 1	Photographs - Head Shots, 1948-1994
Box 8, Folder 2	Photographs - Cypress Gardens, 1949-1980's
Box 8, Folder 3	Photographs - Bartow Air Base, 1951
Box 8, Folder 4	Photographs - Smithsonian Institution, 1951-2007
Box 8, Folder 5	Photographs - Dodge Records, 1954-1959
Box 8, Folder 6	Photographs - Bonneville, 1954-1965
Box 8, Folder 7	Photographs - Chevrolet, 1954-1987
Box 9, Folder 1	Photographs - Safety, 1955-1957
Box 9, Folder 2	Photographs - Daytona Beach, 1956-1986
Box 9, Folder 3	Photographs - Andes Run, 1958
Box 9, Folder 4	Photographs - Honors and Awards, 1948 - 2004
Box 9, Folder 5	Photographs - Space - Mercury Space Program, 1959
Box 9, Folder 6	Photographs - Space - Mercury Space Program - Color, 1959
Box 9, Folder 7	Photographs - Space - Mercury Space Program (Photocopies with Captions), 1959
Box 9, Folder 8	Photographs - Baja Run, 1962-1963
Box 9, Folder 9	Photographs - Skydiving, undated
Box 9, Folder 10	Photographs - Las Vegas (Album), circa 2000
Box 9, Folder 11	Photographs - Planes (Album), 1999-circa 2006
Box 10, Folder 1	Photographs - National Aviation Hall of Fame Induction (Album), 2005
Box 10, Folder 2	Negatives - Family, Friends, Colleagues and Celebrities, 1928-1960's
Box 10, Folder 3	Negatives - Aviation, 1940's - 1960's
Box 10, Folder 4	Negatives - Publicity/Advertising, 1947-1977
Box 10, Folder 5	Negatives - Cypress Gardens, 1949-1964

Box 10, Folder 6

Negatives - Automotive, 1950's - 1960's

Box 10, Folder 7

Negatives - Space - Mercury Space Program, 1959

## Series 3: Oversize Materials, 1940s-1998

*4 boxes ; Box 11-14*

Box 11, Folder 1	Oversized Placards, undated
Box 11, Folder 2	Oversized Photographs, 1940's-1960's
Box 11, Folder 3	Oversized Advertisements, 1948-1961
Box 11, Folder 4	Oversized Articles, 1950-1998
Box 11, Folder 5	Oversized Articles - Space - Mercury Space Program, 1959-1960
Box 11, Folder 6	Oversized Certificates, 1963 and 2007
Box 11, Folder 7	Oversized First Day Covers, 1980 and 1981
Box 14, Folder 2	Oversized Automotive Photograph, undated
Box 12, Folder 1	Scrapbook - Aviation and Early Life (fragile, scrapbook is unbound)
Box 13, Folder 1	Scrapbook - Aviation
Box 13, Folder 2	Scrapbook - Aviation
Box 14, Folder 1	Scrapbook - Automotive (fragile, scrapbook is unbound)
Map-case	Motorsports Hall of Fame Placard, circa 2005
Map-case	Matted Ephemera/Photos, undated
Map-case	Matted News Clippings, 1983
	Matted Mercury Seven Photograph, pre-1967