

**FINDING AID FOR THE
JOSPEH G. THIBODAU PAPER, 1915-2008 (#2016-0006)**

Contact Information:

University of Houston-Clear Lake Archives
Neumann Library
2700 Bay Area Blvd.
Houston TX 77058
Phone: 281-283-3936
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Descriptive Summary

Repository (049) University Archives

Collection # (099) 2016-0006

Title (245) Joseph G. Thibodaux Papers

Creator (100/110) Joseph G. Thibodaux Jr.

Inclusive Dates: 1915-2008

Bulk Dates: 1960-1980

Abstract

The Joseph G. Thibodaux Papers contains five boxes of materials pertaining to the work of Joseph "Guy" Thibodaux Jr/ from the period of 1915 to 2008. The collection includes newspaper articles, journal articles, photographs, memoranda, telegrams, artwork, scrapbooks, and other materials, from his personal and professional career. There are also family records and information for the Thibodaux family in the collection. Very little of his personal materials from his time working at NASA are included in the collection, apart from photographs and his retirement materials.

Extent (300): 4 linear ft (5 boxes)

Language (546): English

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access (506) None

Restrictions on Use (540) None

Acquisition Information (541) Materials donated by Joseph Guy Thibodaux on May 23, 2011

Processed by: Erin Henry

Preferred Citation (524) Joseph "Guy" Thibodaux Papers (#2016-0006), University of Houston-Clear Lake Archives.

Biographical/Historical Note (545)

Joseph G. Thibodaux Jr. (who goes by “Guy”) was born on November 27, 1921, in Verett Parish, Louisiana, to Joseph Guy and Leone Falterman Thibodaux. Joseph Thibodaux attended grade school in New Orleans, Louisiana; and went on to receive a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from Louisiana State University in 1942. During his time at LSU which began in 1938, he was a cadet in the U.S. Army ROTC at the start of World War II. Upon graduation, Thibodaux served as an Officer in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He was stationed in the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater in Burma during World War II, where he played an instrumental role in the construction of the Ledo and Burma Roads.

Following his return home from the war, Thibodaux began his professional career in 1946 as an Aeronautical Research Scientist in the Pilotless Aircraft Research Division for the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics in Newport News, Virginia. In 1964, Thibodaux and his family moved to Houston, Texas, where he assumed the role of Chief of the Propulsion and Power Division at the newly-constructed NASA Manned Spacecraft Center (later Johnson Space Center) until his retirement in 1980. Thibodaux holds five patents on solid rockets and solid rocket manufacturing techniques. He specialized in the fields of vehicle propulsion, liquid rockets, thermal protection, high temperature materials, meteoroid and impact phenomena, thermal arc technology, flight test technology, and pyrotechnics during his career.

Thibodaux's early work consisted of modifying, redesigning and adapting military rockets to meet performance requirements of the various aerodynamic research programs using free-flying rocket propelled models. Later, he became an internationally recognized expert in all forms of propulsion used in both manned and unmanned spacecraft. In particular, Thibodaux distinguished himself as an authority on design, development, and application of solid and liquid propellant rockets to launching and boosting of sounding rockets, research vehicles and spacecrafts. His engineering leadership and technical knowledge contributed significantly to the success of the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab and Space Shuttle programs.

During his career, Thibodaux worked directly with every NASA Center (Langley, Kennedy, Marshall, Dryden, Wallops Station, National Space Technology Laboratory), aerospace contractor (Rockwell, Lockheed, Martin, McDonnell-Douglas, Grumman, Beech, Air Research), and rocket manufacturer for the United States government. He received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and was inducted into the LSU Engineering Hall of Distinction in 2005. Joseph Thibodaux died on April 26, 2016 in Houston, Texas.

[Information for this biographical note was taken directly from Thibodaux's obituary, viewed online at https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/bay_area/name/joseph-thibodaux-obituary?id=17919149; “Reflections of Joseph ‘Guy’ Thibodaux Jr.,” LSU College of Engineering Hall of Distinction website, viewed online at https://www.lsu.edu/eng/docs/HOD/joseph_thibodaux.pdf]

Scope and Content (520)

The collection contains five boxes of materials pertaining to the work of Joseph “Guy” Thibodaux Jr/ from the period of 1915 to 2008. The collection includes newspaper articles, journal articles, photographs, memoranda, telegrams, artwork, scrapbooks, and other materials, from his personal and professional career. There are also family records and information for the Thibodaux family in the collection. Very little of his personal materials from his time working at NASA are included in the collection, apart from photographs and his retirement materials.

Arrangement (351)

The collection is arranged in boxes and folders chronologically within the following twelve series: Biographical Materials, Correspondence, Photographs, Awards, Government Documents,

Meeting Minutes, Transcripts, Personal Documents, Retirement, Oral Histories, Artwork, and Periodicals.

Related Material (544)

Joseph G. "Guy" Thibodaux, Jr. Oral History Interview, conducted on October 20, 1999, Johnson Space Center History Office. Transcript online at https://historycollection.jsc.nasa.gov/JSCHistoryPortal/history/oral_histories/ThibodauxJG/ThibodauxJG_10-20-99.htm.

Collection Inventory

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1		Series I: Biographical Materials	
	1	Family Records	1922-1972
	2	Biographical Data Sheets	1971-2004
		Series II: Correspondence	
	3-5	Memoranda	1957-1987
	6	Telegrams	1965-1980
	7-9	Personal Letters	1938-1973
2	1-3	Personal Letters	1974-2010
	4	Invitations & Programs	1942-2007
	5	<i>Letters & Emails (THIS ITEM IS CLOSED)</i>	
		Series III: Photographs	
	6-7	NASA Photographs	1945-1987
	8	Award Ceremonies	1969-1975
	9	Family Photos	1972-2005
		Series IV: Awards	
	10	Certificates	1954-2001
	11	Nominations	1974-2007
		Series V: Government Documents	
3	1	"Law Establishing the NACA"	Mar 3, 1915
	2	"Large Solid Propellant Rockets fir the Initial Booster Stage of a Circumlunar and a Lunar Landing Vehicle" by NASA Space Task Group and Langley Research Center	1961
	3	U.S. Patents, Joseph G. Thibodaux	1963-1965
	4	"Project Apollo – A Study in Applications of Chemical Engineering Unit Processes and Technology" by Joseph G. Thibodaux, Jr.	Oct 13, 1967
	5	"Some Observations on the Development of the Rocket Industry in the United States: Solids and Liquids, 1946 – 1986" (4 copies) by J.G. Thibodaux	c. 1986
	6	"MPS LCC Review" by Zack Kirkland, Charles Wood, [Joseph] Guy Thibodaux, Owen Morris, John Watson	Oct 15, 1987
	7	Launch Vehicle History & Technical Data	2005-2006
	8	"Experience with Spherical Solid Propellant Rockets" by Joseph G. Thibodaux, Jr.	undated
	9	"The Use of Solid-Propellant Vehicle Stages for Manned Spacecraft" by NASA Space Task Group (Maxime Faget, Alan Kehlet, and Joseph Thibodaux)	undated
	10	"Ascent/Descent Propulsion Systems"	undated
	11	"PRA [Probalistic Risk Assessment] Scope"	undated
	12	NASA Apollo 11 – First Manned Lunar Landing Mission Information Display & Abbreviations by TRW Systems	undated
	13	Excerpts from "SP-4308 Spaceflight Revolution" by James R. Hansen	undated

14	Consulting Agreements (<i>THIS ITEM IS CLOSED</i>)	1987-1993
	Series VI: Meeting Minutes	
15	Hearing before the Select Committee on Astronautics and Space Exploration. "Authorizing Construction for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration"	Aug 1, 1958
16	Shuttle Block II/Technology Meeting	Feb 9, 1987
	Series VII: Transcripts	
17	Apollo 12 Air-to-Ground Voice Transcripts	undated
	Series VIII: Personal Documents	
18	Collected Poetry	undated
19	Recreational Materials	undated
	Series IX: Retirement	
20	Retirement Scrapbook Documents	1980
	Retirement Scrapbook	1980
4	Series X: Oral Histories	
1	Dr. Robert Gilruth	1986-1987
2	Joseph "Guy" Thibodaux	1983-1998
3	Partial Transcripts	1989-1999
4	Joseph "Guy" Thibodaux, Max Faget, and Paul Purser	1996
5	Paul G. Dembling	1998
6	Chris Kraft	1998
7	Dr. Eilene Galloway	1998
8	Kenneth B. Gilbreath	2003
9	Caldwell C. Johnson	undated
10	"Commentary on the Pappas/Purser Career & Life Parallels" By Paul E. Purser	undated
	Series XI: Artwork (Oversize)	
5		
1	"Just Retired" Tri-fold drawing w/ Signatures	c. 1980
2	"Program Office Decision Maker"	undated
	Series XII: Periodicals (Oversize)	
	<i>Sentinel</i> , vol. VI, no. 4	Feb 3, 1964
3	<i>La Recherche Aeronautique</i> . "Propulseur Sphérique a Propergol Solide Bi-Composition" by Pierre LaRue	Nov-Dec 1965
4	<i>The Lincoln Star</i> . "Astronauts Race Time...Not Russians, Says Expert"	1966
5	AIAA. "Apollo Spacecraft" by George M. Low	1969
6	<i>Defense Management Journal</i> . "I Dreamed We Went Nowhere in Our Solid Gold Airplane -Shuttle" by O.C. Boileau	1976
7	<i>The New Yorker</i> . "Annals of Space: We Don't Have to Prove Ourselves"	1991

8	<i>Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives.</i> "Never Was Life More Interesting:' The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, 1936-1945" by Roger D. Launius	Winter 1992
9	<i>Nasaproblems.com.</i> "Say 'No' to the Launch Service Gap...Privatize the Space Shuttle" by Don A. Nelson	Oct 9, 2007
10	<i>AIAA Houston Horizons.</i> "Interview with Norman H. Chaffee: Observations from a Long NASA Career" by Sean Keefe	Fall 2008